University of Glasgow

Elder, Claire M. (2026) *Formulaic language in an early modern Scottish community of practice: The Stewart Erskine correspondence, 1600–1644.* PhD thesis.

https://theses.gla.ac.uk/86105/

Copyright and moral rights for this work are retained by the author

A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge

This work cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the author

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the author

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given

Enlighten: Theses
https://theses.gla.ac.uk/
research-enlighten@glasgow.ac.uk

Formulaic Language in an Early Modern Scottish Community of Practice: The Stewart Erskine Correspondence, 1600–1644

Claire M. Elder

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Arts)

This work was supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council
Grant no: AH/R012717

Word count: 99,888

School of Critical Studies
College of Arts and Humanities
University of Glasgow

February 2026

Abstract

This thesis investigates an early modern Scottish epistolary Community of Practice (CoP), analysing how its members established and maintained social relationships through the shared communicative resource of formulaic language. The materials are drawn from the Papers of the Family of Erskine of Alva, held at the National Library of Scotland and National Records of Scotland. The dataset comprises 183 letters sent or received between 1600 and 1644 within the correspondence network of Marie Stewart, countess of Mar, and her husband, John Erskine, 2nd earl of Mar. By adopting the dual designation Stewart-Erskine letters, the thesis intentionally centres Marie Stewart and brings her into greater scholarly visibility.

The thesis argues that the correspondents whose ideologies, confessions, social positions, and linguistic practices both aligned and diverged, formed a cohesive and functional multilingual CoP. It demonstrates that the strategic use of formulaic language was central to effective communication within the CoP, which operated against a background of profound religious, political, and linguistic upheaval. Drawing on Bakhtin's (1981) theory of dialogism, the thesis treats formulae as remembered linguistic 'chunks' through which influence, alignment, and shared practice can be traced. In doing so, it highlights the communicative adaptability of the Stewart–Erskine CoP and contributes to broader understanding of how formulaic language reflects ideological and social dynamics in early modern Scotland.

Chapter 1 introduces the Stewart-Erskine correspondents, outlines the research questions, and contextualises the materials. It also provides a reader apparatus that overviews the StEr CoP members, biographical details, interpersonal relationships, and patterns of correspondence within the corpus. Chapter 2 sets out the interdisciplinary methodological framework, reflecting the need to situate historical documents within their conditions of production and reception. It reviews relevant work in historical pragmatics, sociolinguistics, corpus linguistics, manuscript studies, and social history, and establishes a pragmaphilological toolkit combining sociolinguistic variation analysis, discourse analysis, politeness theory, and Magnusson's (2004) theory of linguistic scripts.

Continuing this contextual emphasis, Chapter 3 examines the sociocultural and sociolinguistic environment in which the CoP operated, with particular attention to the complexities of confessional identity, linguistic and cultural contact, and how disruptions, from changes in personal status to the broader upheavals of war, shaped epistolary practice. This contextual grounding provides the interpretive framework necessary for analysing formulaic choice in the chapters that follow.

Chapter 4 addresses Research Question 1 'How can we assemble and digitally encode a corpus of the epistolary writings of an early modern Scottish CoP that enables both computational analysis and public access?' By detailing the workflow used to compile StErCor2, a novel 61,000-token TEI–encoded corpus, and its accompanying sociolinguistic metadata framework stored in an MS Excel workbook, the chapter establishes the empirical foundation on which the subsequent analyses depend.

Chapters 5–7 address Research Question 2: 'How did members of the StEr CoP use the following three types of formulaic language in their correspondence to construct and negotiate relationships, exert mutual influence, and reflect sociolinguistic identities: (a) religious formulae,

(b) epistolary formulae (address forms, subscriptions, and superscriptions), and (c) symbols?' Each chapter advances the argument by examining these distinct but interrelated components of the CoP's communicative repertoire in turn.

Chapter 5 demonstrates that the CoP shared a conventionalised repertoire of religious formulae that served pragmatic as well as devotional purposes, enabling community-building across differences of status, gender, and confession. At the same time, the chapter shows how individual patterns of use reveal ideological positioning and divergence within the CoP, underscoring the dialogic nature of formulaic practice.

Chapter 6 extends this argument to epistolary formulae, showing how correspondents employed widely attested conventions through honorifics, kinship terms, evaluative language, and textual layout in their address forms, subscriptions, and superscriptions. The chapter also demonstrates that the flexibility of epistolary formulae allowed writers to balance hierarchy, intimacy, and affect, and to strategically depart from convention to achieve particular communicative aims.

Chapter 7 completes the analysis by turning to graphic symbols, an aspect of formulaic language that has received little sustained attention. Focusing on the fermesse, it shows that symbolic practices formed an integral part of Scottish epistolary culture, extending patterns previously identified mainly in French and English contexts. The chapter argues that such symbols carried relational, affective, and potentially religious meanings, thereby reinforcing the thesis' central claim that formulaic language in this CoP operated across linguistic, visual, and material domains.

In conclusion, Chapter 8 synthesises the thesis' overall findings, arguing that religious and epistolary formulae, and symbols, collectively formed a single integrated, multimodal communicative repertoire. It demonstrates that correspondents strategically adapted formulaic language to manage relationships across sociolinguistic contexts and to construct multiple, overlapping identities linked to religious, familial, political, and social affiliations. The use of formulae across nations also reflects engagement with broader early modern epistolary conventions. Finally, the chapter outlines directions for future research and reiterates that a multidisciplinary approach is a productive method for studying early modern correspondence.

Table of Contents

Abstract **2**
Tables **7**
Figures **7**
Accompanying Material **9**
Acknowledgements **10**
Abbreviations **12**
Copyright Statement **13**
Conventions **14**
Chapter 1 Introduction **19**
1.1 Introduction 19
1.2 Research Questions 22
1.3 The StEr Letters 23
1.3.1 Archival Context and Historiographical Bias 23
1.3.2 Location and Selection of the StEr Letters 24
1.3.3 Overview of the StEr Letters and Informants 25
1.3.4 Authorship 38
1.3.5 Archival Format 41
Chapter 2 Scholarly Context **48**
2.1 Early Modern Correspondence 48
2.2 The Community of Practice Framework 52
2.2.1 Mutual Engagement 54
2.2.2 Joint Enterprise 62
2.2.3 Shared Repertoire 68
2.3 Historical Pragmatics, Sociolinguistics, and Corpus Linguistics 71
2.3.1 Understanding Correspondence in its Historical Context 72
2.3.2 Analysing Epistolary Exchanges through Linguistic Features 73
2.3.3 Collaborative and Mediated Authorship 74
2.3.4 Suitability of Pragmaphilology to Corpus Linguistics 75
2.4 Formulaic Language 75
2.4.1 Religious Formulaic Language 78
2.4.2 Epistolary Formulaic language: Address Forms, Subscriptions, and Superscriptions 80
2.4.3 Symbols 82
Chapter 3 Sociolinguistic Context **84**
3.1 Religion 84
3.2 Language and Culture 97
3.3 Widowhood and War 106
Chapter 4 Corpus Compilation and Methodology **114**
4.1 Preliminary Stages 114
4.1.1 Formatting, encoding, and software 114
4.1.2 StErCor2 Structure 116
4.1.3 StErCor2 Transcription process 116
4.2 Editing the StEr Letters 120

4.3 Transcription Policy 124
4.3.1 Text 124
4.3.2 Material and Visual Features 125
4.3.3 Spelling, Diacritics, and Special Characters 129
4.3.4 Numerals, Dates, and Sums of Money 130
4.3.5 Abbreviations: Suspensions, Contractions, and Special Symbols 130
4.3.6 Punctuation and Word Division 134
4.3.7 Symbols, Flourishes, and Underlinings 135
4.3.8 Deletions, Corrections, Gaps, Damage, and Indecipherable Words 135
4.4 Encoding Rationale 136
4.5 AntConc Corpus Compilation 138
4.6 Generating Plain-text Transcriptions 140
4.7 Sociolinguistic Metadata 141
Chapter 5 Religious Formulaic language 144
5.1 Identifying Religious Formulaic Language 144
5.1.1 Defining Religious Formulaic Language 149
5.1.2 Tagging the Religious Formulae 150
5.1.3 Classifying the Religious Formulae 151
5.2 Quantitative Overview of the Religious Formulae 153
5.3 Religious Formulaic Language in Familial Exchanges: Marie Stewart in Context 157
5.4 Religious Formulaic Language in Petitionary Letters 166
5.5 Religious Formulaic Language across Confessional Boundaries 174
5.6 Comparing Alexander Henderson and David Murray's Religious Formulaic Language 180
5.7 Religious Formulaic Language: Discussion of Findings 186
Chapter 6 Epistolary Formulaic Language 189
6.1 Identifying and Defining Epistolary Formulaic Language 189
6.1.1 The Address Form 189
6.1.2 The Subscription 193
6.1.3 The Superscription 195
6.2 Quantitative Overview of the Epistolary Formulae 197
6.3 Salutations 206
6.4 Conventional Formulae 212
6.4.1 Honorifics in Address Forms 215
6.4.2 Honorifics in the Body of Letters 216
6.5 Kinship Formulae 217
6.5.1 Extended Kinship Terms: Cousin 222
6.5.2 Extended Kinship Terms: Friend, Gossip, and Cumer 225
6.6 Affective and Unconventional Epistolary Formulae 228
6.7 Politeness Expressed Visually in Epistolary Formulae 231
6.8 Epistolary Formulaic Language: Discussion of Findings 237
Chapter 7 Symbols 239
7.1 The Material and Visual Features of Early Modern Letters 239
7.2 Extratextual Pen Marks in the StEr Letters 246
7.3 The Cross, the Hexagram, and a Monogram 248
7.4 The Fermesse 255

7.5 Identifying Fermesses 263
7.6 Quantitative Overview of the StEr Fermesses 268
7.7 Fermesses in Superscriptions 270
7.8 Fermesses in Address Forms 279
7.9 Fermesses in Signatures 281
7.10 Fermesses in Two or More Parts of a Letter 282
7.11 Symbols: Discussion of Findings 285
Chapter 8 Conclusions and Future Directions 287
8.1 Formulaic Language as a Communicative System 288
8.2 Formulaic Language as Relational Negotiation 289
8.3 Formulaic Language in Community and Identity Construction 291
8.4 Formulaic Language in Early Modern Epistolary Culture 292
8.5 Directions for Future Research 293
8.6 Implications for Historical Pragmatics and Epistolary Studies 294
References 295
Appendices 311
Appendix A Glossary 311
Appendix B Quick Guide to the Transcription 314

Tables

Table 1-1: Overview of StEr CoP members 29
Table 1-2: Biographical profiles of the StEr informants 31
Table 4-1: StErCor2 total letters and tokens 115
Table 4-2: StErCor2 metadata recorded in MS Excel 142
Table 5-1: Example of AntConc relform search (bl*) 145
Table 5-2: StEr French religious formulae 146
Table 5-3: Categories of religious formulae 152
Table 5-4: Religious formulae according to sender 153
Table 5-5: No. of StEr Letters by category of relform 156
Table 5-6: Religious formulae in Marie Stewart's sent letters (holograph) 158
Table 5-7: Religious formulae in Marie Stewart's sent letters (scribal) 159
Table 5-8: StEr letters with high relform counts 176
Table 6-1: Total counts of epistolary formulae in StErCor2 197
Table 6-2: Collated address forms by recipient sex with grammatical templates 201
Table 6-3: Collated subscriptions by sender's sex with grammatical templates 202
Table 6-4: Collated superscriptions by recipient's sex with grammatical templates 203
Table 7-1: Marie Stewart's fermessed superscriptions (holograph) 271
Table 7-2: Marie Stewart's fermessed superscriptions (scribal) 271
Table 7-3: Charles' fermessed superscription in StErCor2 274
Table 7-4: Marion Douglas' fermessed superscription 276
Table 7-5: Fermessed address forms 280
Table 7-6: Fermessed signatures 281
Table 7-7: Fermesses in other letter positions 283

Figures

Figure 1-1: StEr family tree 30
Figure 1-2: Preservation technique (Sir Henry Erskine to John Erskine, 2nd earl of Mar, NRS GD124/15/58, 1 March 1624) 42
Figure 1-3: Detail of wax and silk floss (Sir David Murray of Gorthy to Marie Stewart, countess of Mar, NLS MS 5070 fol. 1v, 20 October 1604) 42
Figure 1-4: Aperture in binding obscuring superscription fermesses (Marie Stewart, countess of Mar to William Douglas, 7th earl of Morton, NLS MS 80 fol. 55v, [1604]) 43
Figure 1-5: Detail of superscription, wax, and floss (Queen Elizabeth of Bohemia to Marie Stewart, countess of Mar, NLS MS 5087 fol. 104v, 2 August 1625) 44
Figure 2-1: Mutual engagement in the StEr dataset 55
Figure 4-1: Detail of secretary script handwriting (Sir David Murray of Gorthy to Marie Stewart, countess of Mar, NLS MS 5070 fol. 1, 20 October 1604) 117
Figure 4-2: Detail of italic script handwriting (James Stuart, 1st duke of Richmond, 4th duke of Lennox to William Douglas, 7th earl of Morton, NLS MS 80 fol. 20, 1 March 1631) 118

Figure 4-3: Holograph letter sent by Marie Stewart, countess of Mar to Mary Hope, Lady Bandeath, NLS MS 6070 fols. 63–64, 18 June 1640 118
Figure 4-4: Detail of water damage (Colonel Alexander Erskine to Marie Stewart, countess of Mar, NLS MS 5155 fol. 8, 31 July 1631) 119
Figure 4-5: Detail of paper tear (Sir George Stirling of Keir and Cawdor to John Wallace, NLS MS 5155 fols. 24–25, 27 June 1640) 119
Figure 4-6: Example of NLS archivist mark (Marie Stewart, countess of Mar to Sir Charles Erskine, NLS MS 5070 fol. 51r, 16 December 1639) 124
Figure 4-7: Example of NRS archivist mark (Sir Henry Erskine to John Erskine, 2nd earl of Mar, NRS GD124/15/34/6, 22 April 1618) 125
Figure 4-8: Judging significant space 127
Figure 4-9: Sir Henry Erskine's subscription layouts 128
Figure 4-10: Sir Henry Erskine's superscriptions illustrating change of hand 128
Figure 4-11: AntConc's token definition settings window 138
Figure 4-12: Test StErCor2 file with header info retained 139
Figure 4-13: Test StErCor2 file with <fw> content retained 139
Figure 5-1: Distribution of relforms by category 155
Figure 6-1: Epistolary formulae incorporating symbols 192
Figure 6-2 : Superscription with endorsement (Marie Stewart, countess of Mar to Sir Charles Erskine, NLS MS 5070 fols. 45–46, 9 November 1639) 196
Figure 6-3: Superscription with endorsement (Alexander Leslie, 1st earl of Leven to Marie Stewart, countess of Mar, NLS MS 5070 fols. 88–89, 14 May 1642) 196
Figure 6-4: Tuck-and-seal folding pattern (Marie Stewart, countess of Mar to Sir Charles Erskine, NLS MS 5070 fol. 51v, 16 December 1639) 199
Figure 6-5: Filing folding pattern (Marie Erskine, countess of Marischal to Marie Stewart, countess of Mar, NLS MS 5155 fol. 11v, 24 July 1635) 199
Figure 6-6: Significant space in Alexander and Henry Erskine's subscriptions 232
Figure 6-7: Significant space in openings and closings 233
Figure 6-8: Layout used to signify authority (Committee of Estates to Marie Stewart, countess of Mar, NLS MS 5070 fols. 75-76, 27 July 1640) 236
Figure 7-1: Accordion folded letter sent by Diane de Clére to Marie Stewart, countess of Mar NLS MS 5087 fol. 87, undated. 240
Figure 7-2: Tuck-and-seal folded letter sent by Marie Stewart, countess of Mar to George Norvell, NLS MS 5070 fols. 65–66, 20 June 1640 243
Figure 7-3: Marion Douglas, Lady Drum to Marie Stewart, countess of Mar, NLS MS 5070 fols. 69v–70r, 27 June 1640. 245
Figure 7-4: Sir Thomas Hope's decorated superscriptions 246
Figure 7-5: Embellished StEr signatures 247
Figure 7-6: Details of superscription with cross symbol (Lady Gabrielle Stuart to Marie Stewart, countess of Mar, NLS MS 5070 fol. 3v, 28 January 1617). 248
Figure 7-7: Detail of address form with cross symbol (I. Reade to Marie Stewart, countess of Mar, NLS MS 5088 fol. 50r, undated). 249
Figure 7-8: Diane de Clére's signature with monogram, hexagram and fermesses 252
Figure 7-9: Cross and five-pointed star on the grave marker for John Erskine, 1st earl of Mar 254

Figure 7-10: The fermesse in superscriptions 255
Figure 7-11: The fermesse in address forms 255
Figure 7-12: Token of Jeanne d'Albret 257
Figure 7-13: Queen Elizabeth I's fermesses to Henri IV 259
Figure 7-14: Lady Mary Sidney Wroth's fermesses in Pamphilia to Amphilanthus, ca. 1615–ca. 1620. 260
Figure 7-15: Lady Margaret Wemyss' fermesses in musical notation (NLS Dep 314/23, Lady Margaret Wemyss' song book, inscribed 'begun 1643'. 1643–c.1649., n.d. fol. 24r.). 261
Figure 7-16: Fermesses in Anne of Denmark's letter to Buckingham. 261
Figure 7-17: Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia's signature flourishes 264
Figure 7-18: Queen Elizabeth I's signature with fermesses 265
Figure 7-19: Henry Erskine's (potential) fermesses 267
Figure 7-20: Comparison of Henry Erskine's fermesses. 268
Figure 7-21: The Erskine brothers' fermessed superscriptions 275
Figure 7-22: Marion Douglas, Lady Drum's signature 276
Figure 7-23: Anna Livingstone, countess of Eglinton's letter, 1615 with enlarged detail showing fermesses. 278

Accompanying Material

The following files have been submitted together with the thesis. They are provided for reference purposes to show the structure of the corpus and its accompanying files. These will be shared with future users:

1. StErCor2.zip: A compressed archive containing 183 TEI-encoded corpus files in XML format.
2. README_StErCor2.txt: Copyright information and list of StErCor2 letters' shelfmarks and file names.
3. StErCor2_Tagging_System.txt: Details corpus tagging system.
4. Corpus_Compilation_and_Data_Extraction.txt: Instructions on corpus compilation and data extraction.
5. Generation_of_Transcriptions.txt: Instructions on transcription file generation.
6. run_get_text.sh: UNIX shell script (see Generation_of_Transcriptions.txt).
7. gettext2.py: Python script (see Generation_of_Transcriptions.txt).
8. file_order.txt: File ordering
9. StErCor2_Workbook.xlsx: MS Excel workbook containing StErCor2 metadata.
10. StErCor2_All_Scots+Eng_Letter_Transcriptions.txt: Transcriptions of the 165 letters in early modern Scots and eleven in early modern English included in StErCor2.
11. StErCor2_All_French_Letter_Transcriptions.txt: Transcriptions of the seven letters in early modern French included in StErCor2.

Acknowledgements

This work was supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council to whom I extend my sincere thanks. I am privileged to have received expert supervision from Professor Alison Wiggins and Professor Joanna Kopaczyk-McPherson, whose scholarship consistently inspires me. Alison taught me the importance of treating the writings of people in the past with the utmost care and respect, and I am deeply grateful for this. I am equally thankful to Joanna for sharing her expert knowledge of the Scots language. Both brilliant women have shown me endless kindness and encouragement. I also extend thanks to the staff of the Scottish Graduate School for Arts and Humanities for their assistance over the course of my studies.

Thank you to Dr Ulrike Hogg, Curator of Manuscripts at the National Library of Scotland (NLS), for her generous support and for introducing me to Marie Stewart, countess of Mar's correspondence. I also thank the staff of the NLS and the National Records of Scotland for their assistance. I am grateful to Dr Fraser Dallachy for programming help and to Martin Matthiesen at FIN-CLARIN for access to corpus files. Thanks to Dr Mark Curthoys and Dr Matthew Kilburn at the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* for commissioning and editing my entry on Marie Stewart, countess of Mar.

I gratefully acknowledge the Ranulf Higden Society for the bursary enabling my attendance at Keele University's Latin and Palaeography Summer School. Thank you to Dr Samuli Kaislaniemi for inviting me to present at his 2024 workshop, Visual and Material Aspects of Letter-writing in Early Modern Britain where I received valuable feedback. Thanks also to Sam for sharing my enthusiasm for the fermesse, as well as to other 'fermesse-spotters', including Dr Roslyn Potter, who have shared examples of this fascinating symbol: please keep sending me your fermesses! I also thank Timo Korkiakangas and the organisers of the 2025 Formulaic Language in Historical Linguistics: Data, Methods, Tools, and Theory conference in Helsinki for accepting my paper and supporting my participation with a bursary.

I am grateful to Dr Jamie Reid-Baxter, Dr Michael Pearce, and Dr Helen Newsome-Chandler for assistance with manuscript interpretation, and especially to Dr Reid-Baxter for generously sharing with me his unpublished editions and related analytical writings. Thanks to the Moffat Museum Trust for the opportunity to work as a Research Assistant on the 2024 Ten Towers of Moffat exhibition: an experience that enriched my understanding of archival research and project management.

My thanks to staff in the Department of English Language and Linguistics at the University of Glasgow, particularly Dr Kathryn Lowe for her enthusiasm and support from the start, Professor Jeremy Smith, for his capacity to inspire and sense of fun, and to Professor Jennifer Smith, for helping me navigate pivot tables. Thanks also to Alison Bennett and the administrative team, as well as to Morag Greig, Librarian for the College of Arts for her help locating resources.

My warm thanks go to Eilidh McDonald for her friendship and encouragement, as well as her collaboration in hosting our Seventeenth-Century Scots Letter-Writing Workshop in 2022. Together with participants we spent a memorable afternoon writing, folding, and locking letters. Thanks also to Farzane Zamen and the Glasgow Women's Library team for hosting the workshop and my online presentation on Marie Stewart's letters. Many thanks also go to my brilliant friend, Kate, for always showing interest in my research and consistently boosting my confidence.

Finally, I offer heartfelt thanks to my family: Stuart, Jamie, and Madeleine, for their unwavering support, and to my animal companions, Romie, Ash, Belinda, Frida, and Teddy, who brighten every day.

Abbreviations

Archives

NLS	National Library of Scotland
NRS	National Records of Scotland

Corpora

CEEC-400	Corpus of Early English Correspondence
ScotsCorr	Helsinki Corpus of Scottish Correspondence
StErCor	Stewart Erskine Corpus of Correspondence (pilot)
StErCor2	Stewart Erskine Corpus of Correspondence (expanded)

Dictionaries and references

DSL	*Dictionaries of the Scots Language (Online)*
ODNB	*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (Online)*
OED	*Oxford English Dictionary (Online)*
RPS	*The Records of the Parliaments of Scotland to 1707*
SSNE	*The Scotland, Scandinavia, and Northern European Biographical Database*

Language

EModE	Early Modern English
EModS	Early Modern Scots
EModF	Early Modern French
OS	Older Scots
PDE	Present Day English
SSE	Scottish Standard English

Religious texts

BCOrder	The Book of Common Order
KJB-1611	The Holy Bible: 1611 King James Version
Geneva	Geneva Bible
Douay-Rheims	Douay-Rheims Bible

Other

CoP	Community of Practice
Relform(s)	Religious formula(e)
StEr	Stewart Erskine (e.g., StEr letters, StEr family)
TEI	Text Encoding Initiative

Copyright Statement

This statement is based on copyright guidelines published by The National Archives (NAS 2020) and the National Library of Scotland (NLS 2016), and in consultation with staff at the National Records of Scotland (NRS). The manuscripts used as research materials for this thesis are held by the NLS and NRS, having been acquired through purchase. However, in many cases, copyright ownership remains with private individuals.[1] Although the manuscripts are publicly accessible, this availability does not constitute publication. According to NAS guidelines, such materials remain in copyright until 2039 (NAS 2020, 3). Activities that reproduce the manuscripts, including transcriptions and photographs, are subject to these copyright protections (NAS 2020, 3).

By kind permission of Dr Ulrike Hogg (Curator of Manuscripts, NLS) and Simon Johnson (Archivist, Digital Services, NRS), the author relies on certain exceptions to copyright as defined in Chapter III of the *Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988*: namely, 'research and private study', 'text and data analysis for non-commercial research' and 'illustration for instruction' (NLS 2020, 4). The quoted excerpts derived from the author's transcriptions and photographs of manuscript material included in this thesis comply with the principle of 'fair dealing' in several respects. The author derives no commercial benefit from their inclusion. The quantity reproduced is limited and appropriate to the scholarly aims of the thesis, with full and proper acknowledgment of the archival sources, including references to both the repositories and the original writers. All materials are reproduced faithfully and are not presented out of context or in any manner that could be considered derogatory. Their inclusion is considered unlikely to cause harm to the current copyright holders or to diminish the value or reputation of the original sources.

With regard to the set of 183 TEI-XML encoded corpus files that comprise the novel corpus created for this project, StErCor2, these will not be published until 2039 when they fall out of copyright. At that point, they will become available via Enlighten.

[1] The majority of the StEr letters are preserved in NLS volumes MS 5070, MS 5087, MS 5088, and MS 5155, which are part of the Papers of the family of Erskine of Alva. The author has made every effort to contact the current copyright holders, but without success.

Conventions

Page numbers

The thesis uses standard Arabic page numbering (e.g., 1, 2, 3).

Referencing

The thesis employs the Chicago author–date referencing system where a place of publication is no longer required for book citations in the list of references. It follows UK conventions for punctuation, including the use of single quotation marks. In this system, when multiple sources are cited in the text, they may be ordered either alphabetically by author or chronologically by publication date; in this thesis, they are ordered chronologically, with the earliest listed first. When multiple works by the same author are cited, they are likewise listed chronologically and separated by a semicolon, with the earliest publication first (e.g., Stewart 2013; 2016). In Chicago author-date style, the names of religious texts, including those in translation, are not italicised. Where abbreviated references are used the date may be omitted from in-text citations: e.g., (BCOrder, 100).

Numbers

Numbers from one to a hundred are generally spelled out, except in Chapters 5–7, where the sections analysing quantitative data (5.2; 6.2; 7.6) follow Chicago's alternative numbering system, spelling out numbers from one to ten and using numerals for larger values. Percentages in quantitative analysis are rounded to whole numbers unless greater precision is necessary for interpretation.

Currency

The Scots pound was the currency of Scotland prior to the Union of the Crowns in 1707. Silver coins were issued denominated in merk, each worth 13s 4d Scots, or two-thirds of a Scots pound (Rosie 2022, 8). In 1603, when James VI succeeded to the throne of England, £12 Scots was equal to £1 sterling. Both the Scots and English systems used 20 shillings (s.) per pound internally, with one shilling equal to 12 pence (d.).

Formatting Conventions

Single quotes are used for short linguistic examples from the Stewart-Erskine letters. These are followed by a Present Day English (PDE) translation in square brackets, for example, 'ʒowr Ladyship' [your Ladyship]. Longer transcribed extracts are presented in an indented, numbered format to facilitate cross-referencing. These extracts are not enclosed in quotation marks, and a PDE translation is provided below each extract in square brackets. Numbered examples are referred to either as, for instance, Example 1 or (ex. 1). While the transcribed examples follow the StErCor2 policy (Section 4.3), any square brackets indicating abbreviations have been removed, as have marks denoting line endings in the original manuscripts. Words divided across lines are silently rejoined, and original lineation is not preserved. Underlining within quotations indicates emphasis. All excerpts are cited with the item's archival shelf-mark and date (e.g., NLS MS 5070 fol. 10, 16 June 1632). For in-text discussions of letters in French, where PDE translations are quoted without the original text, such quotations are explicitly marked as translations by means of italics.

Lexical tokens are indicated by capital letters (e.g., UPON). Angle brackets indicate spellings (e.g., <ʒowr>), forward slashes denote phonemes (e.g., /jʌur/), and square brackets enclose allophones (e.g., [jʌur]). Italics are used to indicate abstract formulaic types (e.g., *Right Worshipful*) as well as modern standard lexical forms. Italics are also applied at the first mention of technical terms (e.g., *Secretary script*). A glossary of key terms and abbreviations is provided in Appendix A for reference. To avoid awkward run-on syntax, small caps are used throughout the thesis for the categories developed with reference to letter types (e.g., BUSINESS, FAMILIAR) and religious formulaic language (e.g., BLESSING, GOD'S WILL).

Coding and Digital Formatting

Following the Digital Humanities conventions, Computer coding is presented in `Courier New font`, XML elements are enclosed in angle brackets (e.g.,), and attributes are prefixed with the @ symbol (e.g., @type). Computer instructions are formatted in bold, e.g., go to **File > File New**.

Tables and Figures

In-text references to tables and figures are formatted as follows: 'Table 1-1 shows…' or (Table 1-1); 'Figure 1-1 shows' or (Figure 1-1).

Manuscript Photograph Sizing

The manuscript photographs are not reproduced to exact size unless stated.

Naming Conventions

The senders and recipients featured in the StEr CoP are referred to as *CoP members* or *informants*. The term informants is also used to describe other individuals linked to the CoP. With fifty-four CoP members, establishing a consistent naming practice presented several challenges. To begin with, early modern naming practices meant individuals often shared similar or identical names, which risked confusion. For instance, the dataset includes two women named Marie, and twelve men named John, two of whom are from the Erskine family, where the eldest sons were traditionally given that name.

Additionally, variant name spellings are common in both contemporary and later writings. Aristocratic informants often had titles appended to their names, some of which changed over time, especially after marriage. One example is Catherine de Balsac, duchess of Lennox whose given name sometimes appears as Katherine (e.g., Cust 1891, 87). Initially known as Catherine de Balsac d'Entragues, she became Scotland's first duchess when her husband, Esmé Stuart was awarded the title. Informants' names could also change depending on the lands they acquired or were associated with. Sir Charles Erskine, for example, eventually appended Alva, Bandeath and Cambuskenneth to his name as he inherited or gained control of these estates.

Despite these complexities, identifying married women who lived in early modern Scotland is somewhat simplified because before c.1750, women typically retained their birth family name after marriage (Ewan et al. 2018, xxvii). This practice enables clearer distinction between women and their spouses or children in the dataset.

Table 1-1 presents a list of the StErCor CoP members, including their full name and any titles or associated locations. Figure 1-1 depicts the StEr family tree. Elsewhere within the thesis, to ensure informants are distinguishable, particularly within the quantitative analysis, where data is compared using tables and figures, it was necessary to adopt a clear and consistent method of referencing. Drawing on the approach used in Elder's (2022) pilot study, each CoP member is represented by a unique shortened *informant name*. This comprises their given and birth family name, followed by any associated titles placed in round brackets: for example, Marie Stewart (Mar) (Table 1-1).

Deciding whether to include titles in the informant names was not straightforward. A central aim of this thesis is to challenge gender biases by resisting the categorisation of women solely by their marital status. Rather than framing a woman's identity in relation to her husband, for instance, referring to the woman who was married to John Leslie, 6th earl of Rothes as *Lady Rothes*, instead, the preference here would be to refer to her *Anna Erskine*. This approach aligns with the thesis' broader objective to build on scholarship which recognises the diverse roles women held in Scotland during this period (Ewan and Nugent 2008; Ewan et al. 2018; Mason 2019, 2023; Dawson 2024; Nugent, Spence, and Cowan 2024).

This choice is further supported by the self-representation practice of the primary research informant, Marie Stewart, countess of Mar, who consistently signed her name as *Marie Stewart*, omitting her title altogether. By contrast, her sisters, Henrietta and Gabrielle, signed with the French form *Stuart*, rather than the Scots *Stewart*, and are referred to as *Stuart* here. Her brothers' spellings are uncertain, as they signed only with their titles, Aubigny or Lennox. However, their *ODNB* entries record them as Esmé Stuart (Smuts 2004) and Ludovick Stuart [Stewart] (Macpherson 2004) and so following this, *Stuart* is used for both brothers here. To avoid confusion, these four siblings are generally referred to by their given names rather than by the surname *Stuart*.

Regarding the inclusion of titles more broadly, they are retained in certain contexts, particularly within tables and visual data representations, where they clarify relationships, such as marital connections between informants. For some male informants, historical precedent made the title inclusion more appropriate. For example, James Graham, marquis of Montrose is widely known in historical records simply as Montrose, and retaining the title here ensures consistency with established scholarship such as Brown (2011).

There are a few exceptional cases in the treatment of informant names. For example, the second and third earls of Mar, who share the same name, are distinguished as John Erskine (Mar elder) and John Erskine (Mar younger). The same convention applies to the first and third dukes of Lennox, who are referred to as Esmé Stuart (Lennox elder) and Esmé Stuart (Lennox younger). The sole royal informant, Elizabeth Stuart, Queen of Bohemia, is identified as: Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia. Where signatures could not be conclusively matched to a specific individual in the historical record, only the signature name is given.

This naming approach is also generally followed throughout the text. Informants are first introduced with their full name, known titles, and dates of birth and death (if available).

Subsequent references use either a shortened unique name or, for readability, the birth family name alone (e.g., Stewart). As noted above, to avoid confusion in discussions the Stewart/Stuart siblings, their given names are used, and on occasion, Marie Stewart and her husband are referred to simply as the Countess and the Earl.

The Term Early Modern Scots

This thesis adopts the term *Early Modern Scots* (EModS) to refer to the language spoken and written in Scotland between 1550 and 1700, the period in which the StEr letters were produced. The broader label *Older Scots* (OS) is often used for the pre-1700 period (Smith 2012, 1) with linguistic periodisation in Scots long relying on Aitken's (1985) framework. More recently, however, Kopaczyk-McPherson ([Kopaczyk] 2013, 253; forthcoming b, 14) has argued for replacing the term Late Middle Scots with EModS, asserting that the Scots variety did not lag behind EModE in any linguistic respect. Following Elder (2022, 13–14), this thesis adopts Kopaczyk-McPherson's terminology, whilst recognising both the artificiality and practical utility of periodisation.

Reference Works

Glosses throughout the text are based on the *Dictionaries of the Scots Language* (hence *DSL* 2004) and the *Oxford English Dictionary* (2025). Terminology relating to manuscripts and palaeography follows Peter Beal's *A Dictionary of English Manuscript Terminology 1450–2000* (2008). Biographical information is drawn from James Balfour Paul's nine-volume series, *The Scots Peerage: Founded on Wood's Edition of Sir Robert Douglas' Peerage of Scotland, Containing an Historical and Genealogical Account of the Nobility of That Kingdom* (1904–1914), and from the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (hence *ODNB*) as indicated in individual citations.

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The archival treasure trove of the Papers of the Family of Erskine of Alva, held at the National Library of Scotland (NLS) and National Records of Scotland (NRS), has received remarkably little scholarly attention, despite strong contemporary academic and public interest in Scotland's languages and history.[2] Harnessing the special fascination that letters hold to promote new forms of engagement, this thesis seeks to unlock the outstanding cache of early modern correspondence preserved in these papers. It challenges perceptions of archival collections as exclusive and contributes to the democratisation of access to historic writings, thereby enhancing public engagement with the past.

These letters, in Scots, English, and French, offer an especially appealing entry point to study the languages of early modern Scotland, revealing how a multilingual group of correspondents communicated during the period. Central to this study is the analysis of formulaic language, which the thesis argues mediated relationships across political, religious, and social divides. Following the usage of Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (1995), Nevala (2003; 2004), Pfeiffer and Schiegg (2020), Rutten and van der Wal (2012, 2013), and Elsweiler and Ronan (2023), individual formulaic expressions are termed *formulae* here.

A novel corpus compiled for the thesis, entitled StErCor2, comprises 183 letters exchanged between 1600 and 1644. Although the archival framing prioritises the Erskine male line, seventy-five of these letters were sent or received by Marie Stewart, countess of Mar (1576–1644), second wife of John Erskine, 2nd earl of Mar (c. 1562–1634) (Elder 2024). Born into the French Catholic faith on the d'Aubigny family estate in Bourges, Marie Stewart lived a life of reinvention. Over nearly seven decades, she transformed from Catholic to Protestant, courtier to Covenanter, devoted mother of twelve to supporter of war, cultured artistic patron to determined litigant. Her story connects France and Scotland, royal favour and political exile, religious conversion, and doctrinal resistance. Yet despite the breadth of her experiences, and the survival of her

[2] The legislative milestone of the *Scottish Languages Act 2025* (asp 10), which granted Scots and Gaelic official status in Scotland and reformed the framework for their support, forms part of a wider pattern of growing recognition across multiple sectors. In the cultural sphere, the annual Scots Language Awards, established in 2019, celebrate achievements in promoting the language. Alongside these developments, visits to Scottish historic attractions have increased, with almost 50 million recorded in 2024: a 3.9% rise on 2023 (Association of Scottish Visitor Attractions 2025). This renewed visibility is further reflected in the success of contemporary, award-winning writers such as Douglas Stuart and Len Pennie, who incorporate Scots into their work.

correspondence, Marie Stewart remains largely unknown. This thesis reframes the collection as *Stewart-Erskine* (hence *StEr*), a designation which foregrounds Stewart's overlooked yet pivotal role in seventeenth-century Scottish epistolary culture.

The thesis identifies the StEr correspondents as a functional and cohesive Community of Practice (CoP). Protestants and Catholics, Covenanters and Royalists alike participated in this CoP, bound by familial ties, social continuity, and pragmatic cooperation. Their multilingual letters demonstrate how relationships were sustained across political, religious, linguistic, and geographical divides. In particular, Marie Stewart's religious conversion, multilingualism, negotiation of gendered constraints, legal activism, and shifting loyalties reflect the wider tensions, evident both within the CoP and in early modern Britain, between Catholicism and Protestantism, Scots and English, women and men, monarchy and Covenanters, and competing allegiances within families. Centring Stewart within this correspondence network, the thesis investigates how such divisions were managed through shared epistolary practices. In doing so, it makes five principal contributions.

First, it expands the scope of Scots epistolary studies. Since the Helsinki Corpus of Older Scots Texts (1997) was expanded to incorporate the Scottish Corpus of Correspondence (hence ScotsCorr) (Meurman-Solin 2007), there have been few new Scottish corpora. This thesis aligns with recent initiatives in Scots language research, especially those that have made previously inaccessible texts publicly available such as *A Linguistic Atlas of Older Scots* (2008) and the Scottish History Society online publications (2016). It contributes to the field by producing a new multilingual dataset, StErCor2, accompanied by a transparent editorial policy and compilation methodology that others may follow step-by-step. The corpus is analysed to offer new perspectives on seventeenth-century linguistic practices in Scotland.

No full account has yet been made of the development of handwritten Scottish material (Simpson 2009, 1), and some past editors have even anglicised Scottish linguistic features without acknowledging the intervention (Newsome 2023, 344). Building on previous editorial work, this study examines fresh examples to interrogate the politics of editing handwritten EModS correspondence and the extent to which micro-level editorial choices shape understandings of language identity (Mapstone 2007, 2013; Simpson 2009; Smith 2012; Newsome 2023; Newsome-Chandler 2025). Moreover, upon publication StErCor2 will be available to researchers for educational research purposes and thereafter, from 2039 onwards, it will be available open access.

Second, the thesis breaks new ground regarding the use of formulaic language, generating novel findings by studying the phenomenon as used within an early modern CoP producing epistolary texts in Scots, English, and French.[3] It argues that formulaic language was central to sustaining cohesion within the StEr CoP, specifically, religious expressions; epistolary conventions such as address forms, subscriptions, and superscriptions; and symbols like the fermesse, a visual mark that is little-known today but which, as this thesis argues, held communicative and possibly religious or personal significance. Analysing these features reveals how correspondence functioned as a space for negotiated agreement within polarised circumstances. As routinised and recognisable units of meaning, formulae offer insight into how knowledge circulated, how social relationships were indexed and reinforced, and how a community identity was sustained through language and symbols across divides such as belief, gender, and geography.

Third, the thesis brings to light a rich and under-explored source for reassessing the social, political, and linguistic roles of elite women in early modern Scotland. Marie Stewart's position as a bilingual female covenanter active in financial, kirk, and political affairs, both as wife and widow, provides an especially valuable perspective on how women could exert influence and negotiate authority through correspondence. Moreover, like all early modern correspondence, the StEr letters were produced within a collaborative culture where gender and identity were often constructed, challenging modern assumptions of a direct relationship between author and sender (Daybell 2006a, 46; 2006b, 4; Wiggins 2017, 5). The corpus therefore offers an opportunity to study letters composed under varied circumstances, including those written in the hand of multiple senders or by scribes.

Fourth, the CoP captures both high-profile exchanges and routine household letters with correspondents ranging from prominent political and religious figures, such as Marie Stewart's husband, John Erskine, who was son of the Scots Regent Mar and childhood companion to James VI and I; Alexander Henderson (1583–1646), co-author of the National Covenant (Coffey 2004); Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia (1596–1662) (Akkerman 2015: 1, 1), and the poet Sir David Murray of Gorthy (1567–1629) (Reid-Baxter 2022, 56), to lesser-known and lower-ranked individuals. These include the couple's children, advisors, employees, and labourers. This wide sociolinguistic

[3] Chapter 2 offers a detailed discussion of the scholarship on historical formulaic language that underpins this thesis, including Bakhtin (1981); Meurman-Solin (1993, 2013); Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (1995); Magnusson (1999); Wray (2002); Nevala (2003, 2004); Wray and Namba (2003); Rutten and van der Wal (2012, 2013); Dossena (2013); Kopaczyk (2013); Cruickshank (2013, 2017); Williams (2013b); Daybell (2016); Wiggins (2017); Newsome (2018, 2023); Evans (2020); Pfeiffer and Schiegg (2020); Bengough-Smith (2023); and van Eyndhoven (2023).

range creates space to examine the interplay between social position and linguistic choice as represented in the letters of different CoP members.

Fifth, the thesis sheds light on the volatile political and religious context of the Jacobean and early Carolean eras in which the Stewart-Erskine CoP operated. Although there has been renewed scholarly interest in these periods, such as in Laura Stewart's *Rethinking the Scottish Revolution: Covenanted Scotland, 1637–1651* (2016) and Karin Bowie's *Public Opinion in Early Modern Scotland, c. 1560–1707* (2020), many contemporary personal writings remain unexamined. Steven J. Reid's *The Early Life of James VI: A Long Apprenticeship, 1566–1585* (2023) is the first scholarly biography to be published in the two decades since Alan Stewart's *The Cradle King: A Life of James VI and I* (2003), and a critical edition of James VI/I's letters has yet to be commissioned. This stands in marked contrast to the correspondence of his daughter, Elizabeth, edited by Nadine Akkerman in the three-volume *Correspondence of Elizabeth Stuart, Queen of Bohemia* (2011–). The StEr correspondence collection provides a valuable case study within this neglected period. Following the Scottish Reformation in 1560, and intensifying after James VI and I's death in 1625, Scotland faced increasing instability, culminating in the civil wars. Within this unsettled landscape, the StEr network offers a compelling microcosm: a set of correspondents who, despite their sociocultural differences, and at a time when political allegiances could shift with little warning, formed a recognisable CoP who shared linguistic resources grounded in social continuity, familial ties, and pragmatic cooperation.

1.2 Research Questions

This thesis is guided by two primary research questions:

1: How can we assemble and digitally encode a corpus of the epistolary writings of an early modern Scottish CoP that enables both computational analysis and public access?

2: How did members of the StEr CoP use the following three types of formulaic language in their correspondence to construct and negotiate relationships, exert mutual influence, and reflect sociolinguistic identities: (a) religious formulae (b) epistolary formulae (address forms, subscriptions, and superscriptions), and (c) symbols?

To address Research Question 1, the thesis defines the concept of a CoP, drawing on Wenger's (1998) framework, which identifies three essential characteristics: mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and a shared linguistic repertoire (Section 2.2). It then evaluates the extent to which

the StEr correspondents fulfil these criteria and considers the implications of identifying a distinctly Scottish CoP in this period, with particular attention to the processes of anglicisation, and early modern French usage (Sections 2.2.1–2.2.3). The thesis subsequently outlines the compilation of the TEI-encoded digital corpus, StErCor2, from which reader-friendly plain-text transcriptions can be derived (Chapter 4). The corpus is supplemented by a Microsoft Excel dataset capturing sociolinguistic metadata, enabling rich contextual and computational analysis.

In addressing the second research question, the thesis investigates the community's formulaic linguistic repertoire through a combination of corpus-based and manual methods. Chapter 5 focuses on religious formulaic language (2a), Chapter 6 on epistolary formulaic language (2b), and Chapter 7 on symbols (2c). Quantitative patterns are analysed alongside qualitative historical-pragmatic analysis techniques, providing a detailed account of formulaic communicative strategies within the CoP. The remainder of this chapter introduces the StEr letters and informants.

1.3 The StEr Letters

When studying historical letters, understanding the nature and extent of the surviving evidence is crucial (Daybell, 2015, 12; Wiggins 2024, 201). Moreover, a corpora compiled from such materials must supply metadata on the texts and their informants, thereby allowing users to identify variables pertinent to their research (Meurman-Solin 2004, 174). To this end, this section sets out the archival context of the StEr correspondence collection (Section 1.3.1) and then it explains the strategies and criteria used to identify and classify the letters (Section 1.3.2). An overview of the StEr dataset is accompanied by three types of apparatus: Table 1-1, *Overview of the StEr CoP members*; Figure 1-1, *StEr family tree* and Table 1-2, *Biographical profiles of the StEr informants* (Section 1.3.3). A discussion of the authorship of the letters (Section 1.3.4) is followed by a consideration of the preservation of the manuscripts in the archive (Section 1.3.5).

1.3.1 Archival Context and Historiographical Bias

While the NLS Online Catalogue describes the content of the Erskine Papers as 'chiefly that of Marie Stewart, Dowager Countess of Mar' (NLS 2017), the archival classification privileges her husband's name, *Erskine*. This reflects broader archival tendencies to subsume women's writing under male identities. Early modern women's letters are not inherently rare, but they are often obscured by cataloguing conventions that attribute materials to husbands, fathers, or sons. In the

context of early modern Scotland, the practice of women retaining their birth surnames after marriage can offer some advantage in tracing their writings, but challenges remain. For example, the 1874 *Historical Manuscripts Commission* report dismissed Stewart's letters as 'relating almost wholly to domestic matters, the references to public affairs being few and slight', a characterisation which may have discouraged scholarly attention. Similarly, Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, a descendant, expressed private derision toward Stewart, even as he oversaw the 1815 publication of excerpts from her household account book (Elder 2022, 18; Section 3.1).[4] This thesis counters such dismissals by foregrounding Stewart's epistolary voice and contributions.

1.3.2 Location and Selection of the StEr Letters

An invaluable starting point for identifying Stewart as a research subject has been Suzanne Trill's, *Early Modern Women's Writing in the Edinburgh Archives, c. 1550–1740: A Preliminary Checklist* (2004)[5]. Yet the checklist records only three extant letters for Stewart and lists her under three separate nomenclatures: 'Stewart, Marie, Countess of Mar'; 'MAR, Marie Stewart, Countess of' and 'Stewart, Marie' (Trill 2004, 208; 211; 221). This fragmentation illustrates the notorious difficulties of tracing women in the archive, where names and identities are dispersed across variant forms. (Elder 2022, 16).

To address such problems, this study employed digital searches with fuzzy keywords to capture variation in spelling, names, and titles.[6] While Marie Stewart appears to have been her preferred usage, she is also referred to as 'Mary Stewart' (Great Britain. RCHM 1904, 60; Bath 2018, 38–43) and as 'Mary Erskine (née Stewart)' (National Portrait Gallery 1798). Her titles likewise vary considerably: she is described as 'Countess', 'Lady', 'Dame' and 'Dowager-Countess', and in at least one case mockingly referred to by Sharpe as '*Miss* Mary Stewart' (Allardyce 1888, II:405–06; emphasis added). A similar strategy was applied to Stewart's immediate family, including targeted searches of French archives for letters by her mother and sister Gabrielle who remained in France.

---

[4] For example, seeking to satirise their perceived vanity, Sharpe drafted fake petitions attributed to Marie Stewart and her daughter-in-law, a form of mockery designed to expose their privileged circumstances (Allardyce 1888, 10; Elder 2022, 18).

[5] Also noted in Elder (2022, 16).

[6] In addition to digital searches, I conducted manual searches on the NLS and NRS and sought help from librarians and archivists. I also consulted a range of online resources, including The National Archives, ScotlandsPeople, *Calendars of State Papers Relating to Scotland*, vol. 13 edited by J. D. Mackie (1969), British History Online, the Helsinki Corpus of Scottish Correspondence (ScotsCorr 2007), Women's Early Modern Letters Online (2023), State Papers Online, and the Folger Shakespeare Library collections.

The corpus' inclusion criteria were fourfold: first, the letters must have been sent within Marie Stewart's lifetime (1576–1644), second, the corpus must contain all letters sent or received by Marie Stewart (either extant or in copies); third, it must contain all letters exchanged between her husband, children, parents, and siblings; and fourth, it must contain all letters sent to or from Stewart's husband, children, parents, and siblings by individuals who also corresponded directly with her. The use of 'sent' rather than 'written' or 'composed' is deliberate. Early modern letters were often co-authored, mediated by secretaries, or shaped by scribal conventions (Magnusson 2004, 52; Daybell 2006a, 46; Meurman-Solin 2016; Wiggins 2017, 5; Elsweiler 2022, 58), and the modern notion of personal correspondence maps poorly onto such collaborative practices (Wiggins 2017, 7). Here the term *sender* refers to the individual(s) who initiated the letter, including drafts and copies never formally dispatched.

1.3.3 Overview of the StEr Letters and Informants

Applying the corpus' inclusion criteria produced StErCor2*,* a new dataset which expands on Elder's (2022) which analysed forty-seven EModS letters exchanged by twelve informants in the pilot corpus, *StErCor*, totalling c.12,000 tokens (2022, 22–23; 50). StErCor2 incorporates an additional 136 letters, bringing the total to c.61,000 tokens. Of these letters, 165 are written in Scots, eleven in English and seven in French, exchanged by fifty-four individuals: thirteen women, thirty-nine men and two of unknown sex. This represents nearly four times the number of documents and five times the lexical content of the 2022 study. The enlarged corpus allows for more detailed analysis of EModS epistolary practices and enables investigation of a wide range of topics, including legal disputes, family dynamics, religious advocacy, and political-military affairs.[7]

The correspondents represented in StErCor2 are equally diverse, encompassing a range of social statuses, nationalities, and confessional identities. Alongside the letters sent to and from Marie Stewart and her husband John Erskine (Mar elder), the corpus includes correspondence involving seven of their twelve children: James, Anna, Marie, Alexander, Arthur, Henry, and Charles (Figure 1-1).[8] Nineteen of Stewart's letters were sent to her youngest son, Sir Charles Erskine of Alva, Cambuskenneth, and Bandeath (1611–1663) (Paul 1908, V:622). Others were

[7] A complete list of letters and filenames is provided in the corpus' accompanying file, README_StErCor2.txt.

[8] Correspondence between Charles and his younger brothers, John and William is also preserved in the NLS MS 5155, fols. 55 onwards); however, this material not included in StErCor2, as it was written after their mother's death in 1644.

addressed to Charles Erskine's wife, Mary Hope, Lady Bandeath (13 June 1620–1640) (Sharpe 1815, 15), and his father-in-law, Sir Thomas Hope of Craighall (1573–1646) (Burke 1838, IV: 458–9), and to prominent courtiers such as Sir John Murray of the Bedchamber (later 1st earl of Annandale, d. 1640) (MacDonald 2004), Robert Ker, earl of Ancram (1578–1654) (Stevenson 2004c), and William Douglas, 7th earl of Morton (1582–1648) (Sizer 2004).[9] Alongside his wife, John Erskine maintained correspondence with William Douglas (Morton), who was his kinsman: thirteen of Erskine's fifteen letters in StErCor2 are addressed to him. Stewart's received correspondence further includes letters from Margaret Feilding, duchess of Hamilton (1612/13?–1638), a confidante of Charles I's wife, Queen Henrietta Maria (Scally 2004); the philanthropist Marion Douglas, Lady Drum, Kelly, and Cuthlie (1577–1633) (Aberdeen Digital City Libraries 2025); and Alexander Leslie, 1st earl of Leven (1580–1661), commander of the Covenanting army (Stewart 2016, 55).[10]

Of the corpus' seven letters in French, five were sent to Stewart, by her siblings, Lady Gabrielle Stuart (before 1581–after 1630) and Esmé Stuart, 8th Seigneur d'Aubigny (later 3rd duke of Lennox) (1579–1624) [hereafter Esmé (Lennox younger)]; by her mother, Catherine de Balsac, duchess of Lennox (d. after 1630) (Cust 1891, 100); by her relative (likely her cousin) Diane de Clére (d'Hozier 1738, 217–18); and by an unidentified relative, [L] de Balsac.[11] A further two letters in French were sent by Stewart's sister, Henrietta Stuart, countess of Huntly (1573–1642).

The corpus also contains correspondence sent to and from employees of the family who administered the household and estate, including John Rollock (Stewart's legal representative), Henry Dow, John Wallace, and J. Lantie, alongside two petitions to Stewart from a tenant farmer, John Allisone and a landowner, John Forbes.

In order to provide an overview of relational dynamics within the group, the correspondents are broadly classified as *familial* or *non-familial*, whilst noting that the modern concept of the 'family' differs considerably from its early modern usage. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, family referred to all those living under the same roof or under the authority of a single head of household, including both relatives and servants (Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 1995, 563–64). Such a household could include some, all, or none of the head's biological children.

[9] Table 1-2 refers to William Douglas as 6th/7th earl of Morton (1562–1648) reflecting the variation in how he is identified in different sources. Following Sizer (2004), he is referred to throughout the remainder of the thesis as the 7th earl of Morton.

[10] My thanks to Michael Pearce for helping me to identify Marion Douglas, Lady of Drum, Kelly, and Cuthlie (1577–1633) (Aberdeen Digital City Libraries 2025) as the sender of NLS MS 5070 fol. 70v, 27 June 1640.

[11] I am thankful to Guillaume Coatalen for his assistance in identifying Diane de Clére in d'Hozier (1738).

Within the Highland clan system, children were frequently fostered in other households from a young age (Ewan and Nugent 2008, 6), while in elite Lowland families such as represented in the StEr corpus, boys were often sent away for education at the start of their teenage years as were Alexander and Henry Erskine (Tucker 2002, 116; 1.3.5, 2.2.1).

In this thesis, the categories of familial or non-familial are applied in their present-day sense, serving simply to distinguish types of relationships rather than to measure emotional or social closeness. Familial refers to the close blood relations of Marie Stewart and her husband, John Erskine, and includes parents, children, siblings, grandparents, grandchildren, aunts, uncles, and cousins. Familial also encompasses stepchildren and relatives by marriage, such as sons- and daughters-in-law and their respective parents. Given the highly interlinked nature of elite society in early modern Scotland, where intermarriage among wealthy families was common, many of the StEr correspondents may have been related at a distance. However, in this thesis, familial is restricted to relationships for which direct connections can be established within one or two degrees of separation, rather than to more remote ties. The alternative term, non-familial, applies to the remaining correspondents comprising friends, attendants, tenants, and other associates.

Within the 183 letters, there are 118 familial exchanges (65%) and sixty-five non-familial exchanges (35%). The following tables and figure illustrate the complexity and breadth of the relationships described in these exchanges, providing a reference for understanding the informants.

First, Table 1-1 categorises informants by sex and role. Within the set of forty-four individuals who acted as senders are ten women, thirty-two men, and two whose sex is unconfirmed: C.S. and [L] de Balsac). There is also Anna Erskine, who co-authored a letter with her husband, John Leslie, and George Baird and Ewan Dunmure, who co-wrote one letter. Another group letter was signed by six members of the Committee of Estates of the Scottish parliament.

Marie Stewart sent the highest number of letters in the corpus (twenty-eight), followed by John Schawe with twenty-three. There are nineteen individual recipients: four women and fifteen men. The four female recipients collectively received fifty letters, with Marie Stewart receiving the largest share (forty-seven). The remaining 133 letters were addressed to male recipients, among whom John Erskine received the greatest number (sixty-three).

Considering these correspondents within the CoP, Marie Stewart sent letters to seven individual members and received letters from twenty-eight individuals and four groups of senders. Two correspondents, Charles Erskine (Alva-Bandeath)and Thomas Hope (Craighall), appear in both

sets, acting both as sender and receiver in relation to the Countess. In total, Stewart corresponded with thirty-eight individuals as well as the group of Estates members, making her the member who interacted with the widest range of participants within the CoP.

Second, Figure 1-1 illustrates the StEr family tree. Each individual is represented as a node (visualised as a box), showing connections across generations. Not all individuals represented in the tree are members of the StEr CoP. Alongside CoP members connected to the StEr family, the diagram highlights other key relationships within their broader familial network. The earl and countess of Mar, Marie Stewart and John Erskine (Mar elder), are positioned at the centre, with their twelve children and spouses below. John Erskine (Mar elder)'s first marital relationship, to Anne Drummond, is indicated on the right-hand-side of his node, with his first-born son John Erskine (Mar younger) and his spouse Christian Hay below. The birth families of Marie Stewart and John Erskine (Figure 1-1, top left and right respectively) are also represented. The family tree does not include any non-familial informants, such as the attendants, George Baird and Ewan Dunmure, nobles like Robert Ker, earl of Ancram or petitioners like John Forbes.

Lastly, Table 1-2 provides biographical information for the StEr CoP members and some key individuals linked to them including their nationality, key relationships and roles, and confessional faiths. For some informants, gaps in the historical record make biographical information difficult to locate, so fewer details are available. Nevertheless, all salient information has been included where possible.

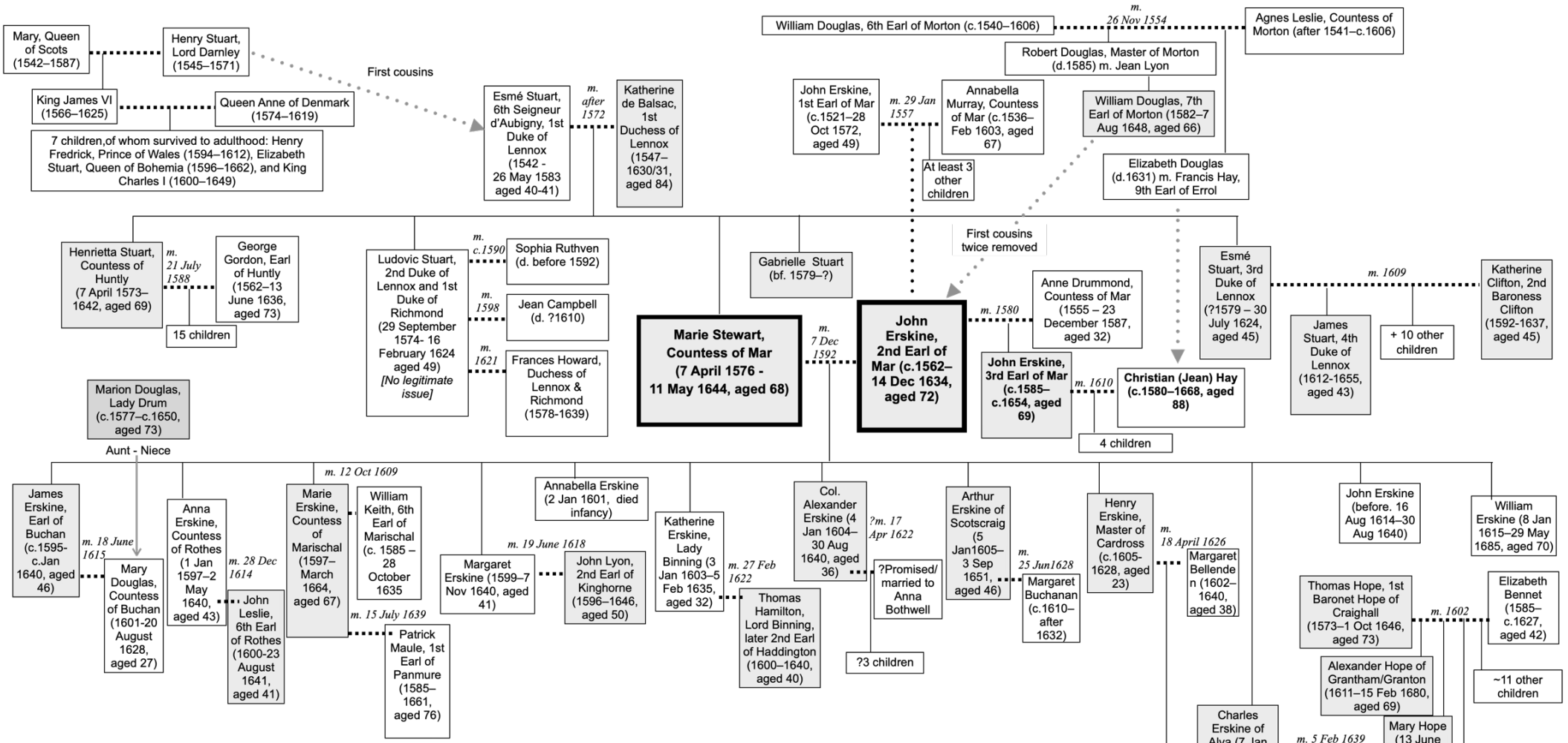
Table 1-1: Overview of StEr CoP members

Informants who both sent and received letters = 12			
Sex	**Informant name**	**Sent**	**Rcvd**
F=2 Sent=38 Rcd=48	Marie Stewart, countess of Mar [Marie Stewart, (Mar)]	28	47
	Elizabeth Stuart, Queen of Bohemia (Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia)	10	1
M=10 Sent=54 Rcd=107	John Erskine, 2nd earl of Mar [John Erskine (Mar elder)]	15	63
	Sir Henry Erskine, Master of Cardross [Henry Erskine (Cardross)]	16	1
	John Rollock	9	1
	Sir Thomas Hope, 1st Baronet Hope of Craighall [Thomas Hope (Craighall)]	6	3
	Henry Dow	2	1
	James Erskine, 6th earl of Buchan [James Erskine (Buchan)]	1	2
	John Erskine, 3rd earl of Mar [John Erskine (Mar younger)]	2	1
	John Leslie, 6th earl of Rothes [John Leslie (Rothes)]	1	1
	Sir Charles Erskine of Alva, Cambuskenneth and Bandeath [Charles Erskine (Alva-Bandeath)]	1	33
	George Norvell	1	1
		Totals sent = 92 / Total received = 155	

Informants who only received letters = 7		
Sex	**Informant name**	**Rcvd**
F=2 Rcd=2	Anna Livingstone, countess of Eglinton [Anna Livingstone (Eglinton)]	1
	Mary Hope, Lady Bandeath [Mary Hope (Alva)]	1
M=5 Rcd=26	William Douglas, 7th earl of Morton [William Douglas (Morton)]	21
	Sir John Murray of the bedchamber (later 1st earl of Annandale)	1
	James Hamilton, 2nd marquess of Hamilton and 4th earl of Arran[James Hamilton (Hamilton elder)]	1
	Robert Ker, earl of Ancram [Robert Ker (Ancram)]	1
	Sir Alexander Hope [Alexander Hope]	1
	Total received = 28	

Informants who only sent letters: Groups = 4		
Male group= 1	Various members of the Committee of Estates of the Scottish Parliament (Wigton, Dunfermline, Balmerino, Forbes of Leslie, Burleigh, [S]Murray) [Estates Members]	**1**
Pair of males= 2	John Leslie, 6th earl of Rothes & John Lyon, 2nd earl of Kinghorn [John Leslie (Rothes), & John Lyon (Kinghorn)]	**1**
	George Baird & Ewan Dunmure	**1**
Married couple=1	John Leslie, 6th earl of Rothes & Anna Erskine, countess of Rothes [John Leslie (Rothes) & Anna Erskine (Rothes)]	**1**

Informants who only sent letters: Individuals = 32		
Sex	**Informant name**	**Sent**
F=8 Sent=10	Katherine Clifton, duchess of Lennox [Katherine Clifton (Lennox)]	2
	Henrietta Stuart, countess of Huntly [Henrietta Stuart (Huntly)]	2
	Marion Douglas, Lady Drum [Marion Douglas (Drum)]	1
	Lady Gabrielle Stuart [Gabrielle Stuart]	1
	Catherine de Balsac, duchess of Lennox [Catherine de Balsac (Lennox)]	1
	Margaret Feilding, duchess of Hamilton [Margaret Feilding (Hamilton)]	1
	Marie Erskine, countess of Marischal [Marie Erskine (Marischal)]	1
	Diane de Clére	1
M=22 Sent=75	John Schawe	23
	Colonel Alexander Erskine [Alexander Erskine]	21
	Thomas Hamilton, Lord Binning, ltr. 2nd earl of Haddington [Thomas Hamilton (Binning)]	2
	Alexander Henderson	2
	Sir Arthur Erskine of Scotscraig [Arthur Erskine (Scotscraig)]	4
	Sir Louis Stuart of Kirkhill [Louis Stuart (Kirkhill)]	2
	John Wallace	3
	John Lyon, 2nd earl of Kinghorn [John Lyon (Kinghorn)]	3
	Thomas Erskine, 1st earl of Kellie [Thomas Erskine (Kellie)]	2
	Sir David Murray of Gorthy [David Murray (Gorthy)]	1
	Sir George Stirling of Keir and Cawdor [George Stirling (Keir)]	1
	Alexander Leslie, 1st earl of Leven [Alexander Leslie (Leven)]	1
	Ésme Stuart, seigneur d'Aubigny, later 3rd duke of Lennox [Ésme Stuart (Lennox younger)]	1
	Daniel Andersone	1
	Kinloch	1
	James Graham, marquess of Montrose [James Graham (Montrose)]	1
	I. Reade [Reade]	1
	James Stuart, 1st duke of Richmond, 4th duke of Lennox [James Stuart (Richmond-Lennox)]	1
	J. Lantie [Lantie]	1
	G. Johnston [Johnston]	1
	John Allison	1
	John Forbes	1
Unknown =2 R 2	C. S.	1
	[L] de Balsac	1
	Total sent = 87	



Grey shaded boxes indicate correspondents included in StErCor2.

Data adapted from Sharpe 1815, 15; Burke (1838: IV, 458–59; 1885); Fraser (1858, 48); Paul 1893, 83; Paul 1904, I: 26–28, 356–62, 614–19; Paul 1905: II, 271, 365–66; Paul 1906: III, 446; Paul 1907: IV, 315–16; Paul 1908, V: 84–86, 615–12, 621–23; Paul 1909: VI, 54; Paul 1910: VII, 299; Paul 1911: VIII, 298; Cust 1878, 76–79; Cust 1891, 78–95; Sanderson (1984, 49); Goodare 2004; MacDonald 2004; Macpherson 2004; Marshall 2004; Scally 2004; Sizer 2004; Smuts 2004; Stevenson (2004b, 2004c); Akkerman 2015: I, 1; Stewart 2016; Reid-Baxter (2022, 56; 2025, 30).

Figure 1-1: StEr family tree

Table 1-2: Biographical profiles of the StEr informants

(CoP members' names are underlined)

StEr Informant	Nationality	Key relationships	Key roles (inc. during civil wars)	Confessional faith(s)
StEr FAMILY				
Marie Stewart, countess of Mar (7 April 1576–11 May 1644) (Paul 1908, V:621)	French	Married to John Erskine, 2nd earl of Mar (2nd wife). Daughter of Esmé Stuart, 1st duke of Lennox, favourite of King James VI.	Covenanter.	Presbyterian (Converted from Catholicism 1592).
John Erskine, 2nd earl of Mar (c. 1562–1634) (Goodare 2004)	Scottish	Married to Marie Stewart, countess of Mar (2nd wife). First wife was Anna Drummond (d. 1587); brought up and educated with James VI; remained in favour despite some conflict (Goodare 2004).	Deceased before wars. Lord High Treasurer of Scotland. (Goodare 2004).	Presbyterian
John Erskine, 3rd earl of Mar (bf. 1587–d. 1653) (Goodare 2004)	Scottish	Stepson of Marie Stewart. John Erskine (Mar elder)'s first-born son from his first marriage. Married to Jean [Christian] Hay (d. 1688) (Paul 1908, V:624).	1617 appointed to Privy Council (Paul 1908, V:623).	Presbyterian
James Erskine, earl of Buchan (c. 1595–c. 1640) (Paul 1905, II:271)	Scottish	Son of Marie Stewart, countess of Mar. Married Mary Douglas, countess of Buchan (–d. 1628); created earl of Buchan 1617 (Paul 1905, II:271).	Lord of Bedchamber to Charles I, mostly lived in England (Paul 1905, II:271).	Presbyterian
Anna Erskine, countess of Rothes (1 January 1597–2 May 1640) (Paul 1910, VII: 299)	Scottish	Daughter of Marie Stewart, countess of Mar. Married John Leslie, 6th earl of Rothes, 1614 (Paul 1908, V:622).	Alongside her sisters Margaret Erskine, countess of Kinghorn, and Marie Erskine countess of Marischal, Anna opposed the introduction of the Book of Common Prayer (Wells 1997, 130).	Presbyterian
Marie Erskine, countess of Marischal (1597–March 1664) (Paul 1908, V:622)	Scottish	Daughter of Marie Stewart, countess of Mar. Married William Keith, 6th earl of Marischal (Paul 1908, V:622).	Alongside her sisters Anna Erskine, countess of Rothes and Margaret Erskine, countess of Kinghorn, Marie opposed the introduction of the Book of Common Prayer (Wells 1997, 130).	Presbyterian
Margaret Erskine, countess of Kinghorn (1599–7 November 1640) (Paul 1911, VIII:298)	Scottish	Daughter of Marie Stewart, countess of Mar. Married to John Lyon, earl of Kinghorn (Paul 1911, VIII:298).	Died without issue (Paul 1908, V:622). Alongside her sisters Anna Erskine, countess of Rothes and Marie Erskine countess of Marischal, Margaret opposed the introduction of the Book of Common Prayer (Wells 1997, 130).	Presbyterian
Annabella Erskine (2 Jan 1601; died infancy) (Paul 1908, V:622)	Scottish	Daughter of Marie Stewart, countess of Mar.	Died before civil wars.	Presbyterian
Katherine Erskine, Lady Binning (3 January 1603–5 February 1635) (Paul 1907, IV:315–16)	Scottish	Daughter of Marie Stewart, countess of Mar. Married to Thomas Hamilton, Lord Binning (later 2nd Earl of Haddington) (1600–1640) (Paul 1907, IV:315–16).	Died before civil wars. Katherine supported the Protestant minister John Livingstone who visited her at her home in the 1630s (Wells 1997, 107)	Presbyterian

(CoP members' names are underlined)

StEr Informant	Nationality	Key relationships	Key roles (inc. during civil wars)	Confessional faith(s)
Col. Alexander Erskine (4 January 1604–30 August 1640) (Paul 1908, V:621)	Scottish	Son of Marie Stewart, countess of Mar.	Colonel in army. Toured Europe with his brother Henry Erskine and their tutor John Schawe as part of their education. Killed in explosion at Dunglass Castle in 1640 (*SSNE* 5044).	Presbyterian
Sir Arthur Erskine of Scotscraig (1605–5 October 1652) (Paul 1908, V:622)	Scottish	Son of Marie Stewart, countess of Mar. Married, Margaret Buchanan, 1628 (Paul 1908, V:622).	Commander in covenanting army.	Presbyterian
Sir Henry Erskine, Master of Cardross (c.1605–1628) (Paul 1905, II:365)	Scottish	Son of Marie Stewart, countess of Mar.	Toured Europe with his brother Alexander Erskine and their tutor John Schawe as part of their education.	Presbyterian
Sir Charles Erskine of Alva, Cambuskenneth, and Bandeath (1611–8 July 1663) (Paul 1908, V:622).	Scottish	Son of Marie Stewart, countess of Mar. Married to Mary Hope, Lady Bandeath (13 June 1620–1640) (Sharpe 1815, 15).	Covenanter. Colonel in the Covenanting Army (*RPS*, 1649/5/35), Justice of the Peace, and elder at the Westminster Assembly (van Dixhoorn, Bower, and Breeden 2025)	Presbyterian
Sir John Erskine (d. bf.1668) (Paul 1908, V:622)	Scottish	Son of Marie Stewart, countess of Mar. Married Margaret Inglis, 1640 (Paul 1908, V:622).		Presbyterian
Sir William Erskine (d. 29 May 1685) (Paul 1893, 115)	Scottish	Son of Marie Stewart, countess of Mar.	Cupbearer to King Charles I; Master of the Charterhouse; did not marry (Paul 1908, V:622).	Presbyterian
Catherine de Balsac, duchess of Lennox (?1550s–1630/31) (Cust 1891, 95)	French	Mother of Marie Stewart, countess of Mar. Married to Esmé Stuart, 1st duke of Lennox (c. 1542–1583) (Cust 1891, 95).	Catherine defended Aubigny against the Maréchal la Châtre in 1590–91 (Cust 1891, 95).	Catholic (Cust 1891, 100).
Esmé Stuart, 8th Seigneur d'Aubigny (later 3rd duke of Lennox)(1579–1624) (Paul 1908, V: 358)	French	Brother of Marie Stewart, countess of Mar. Married Katherine Clifton, 2nd Baroness Clifton, duchess of Lennox (Cust 1891, 98).	One of Henri IV's Cent Gentilhommes, brought to Scotland c. 1601–1603 (Cust 1891, 97).	Possibly Catholic
Henrietta Stuart, countess of Huntly (1573–2 September 1642) (Cust 1891, 95)	French	Sister of Marie Stewart, countess of Mar. Married George Gordon, 1st marquess of Huntly, 21 July 1588 (Cust 1891, 95).	Consistently supported her husband, petitioning others for support throughout their lives (e.g., James Hamilton, 2nd marquess of Hamilton and 4th earl of Arran)	Catholic
Lady Gabrielle Stuart (before 1581–after 1630) (Cust 1891, 95)	French	Sister of Marie Stewart, countess of Mar.	Contracted to marry the Earl of Eglinton, however, this fell through. Became a nun at Glatigny, France (Paul 1893, 79).	Catholic

(CoP members' names are underlined)

StEr Informant	Nationality	Key relationships	Key roles (inc. during civil wars)	Confessional faith(s)
Diane de Clére	French	Relative (possibly a cousin) of Marie Stewart, countess of Mar. Daughter of Jacques de Clère and Louise de Balsac. Married in 1599 to Adrien d'Esmalleville, Ecuyer, Seigneur de Panneville, Cailletot, Durescu, and Beuzebosc who was appointed Governor of the town and castle of Caudebec in 1596 (d'Hozier 1738, 217–18).	Unconfirmed	Possibly Catholic
[L] de Balsac	French	Relative (possibly a cousin) of Marie Stewart, countess of Mar. The initial of the given name is uncertain; however, it could signify Louise de Balsac, mother of Diane de Clére.	Unconfirmed	Possibly Catholic
Sir Thomas Hope of Craighall (1573–1646) (Burke 1838, IV:458–9)	Scottish	Father of Sir Alexander Hope, and of Lady Mary Hope of Bandeath who was married to Sir Charles Erskine of Alva, Bandeath and Cambuskenneth (Paul 1893, 82).	Lord Advocate of Scotland 1626–1646; Lord High Commissioner to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland: 1643 (Paul 1893, 74).	Presbyterian (but complicated by Episcopalian political connections) (Paul 1893, 74).
Mary Hope, Lady Bandeath (13 June 1620–?1691) (Sharpe 1815, 15)	Scottish	Married to Charles Erskine. Daughter of Sir Thomas Hope (Paul 1893, 82).	Covenanter	Presbyterian
Sir Alexander Hope (12 March 1611–15 February 1680) (Paul 1893, 83)	Scottish	Married Anna Bill, an English widow in 1642 (Paul 1893, 82).	Cupbearer to Charles I (Burke 1838, IV:458–9).	Unconfirmed
Katherine Clifton, 2nd Baroness Clifton, duchess of Lennox (c.1592–1637) (Smuts 2004)	English	Wife of Esmé Stuart, 3rd duke of Lennox who was Marie Stewart, countess of Mar's brother (Smuts 2004). Correspondent of William Douglas, [6th/7th] earl of Morton.	Wrote to Douglas in 1630 concerning her son.	Catholic
James Stuart, 1st duke of Richmond, 4th duke of Lennox (6 April 1612–30 March 1655) (Cust 1891, 99)	English	Nephew of Marie Stewart, countess of Mar. His parents were Esmé, 3rd duke of Lennox and Katherine Clifton, 2nd Baroness Clifton, duchess of Lennox. (Paul 1908, V:358). Correspondent of William Douglas, [6th/7th] earl of Morton.	Wrote to Douglas in 1631 concerning his command.	Episcopalian (Cust 1878, 76; 79)

(CoP members' names are underlined)

StEr Informant	Nationality	Key relationships	Key roles (inc. during civil wars)	Confessional faith(s)
Marion (Mariota) Douglas, Lady Drum, Kelly, and Cuthlie (1577–1633) (Paul 1905, II:269–70)	Scottish	Aunt of Marie Stewart, countess of Mar's daughter-in-law, Mary Douglas, 6th countess of Buchan (d. 1628) who was married to James Erskine, earl of Buchan. Married to Alexander Irvine of Drum who, in 1592, was charged with assisting the Earl of Marischal to hunt down 'papists' like Marie Stewart's brother-in-law, George Gordon, sixth earl of Huntly (Leslie 1909, 75).	Covenanter. Philanthropist who left financial provision to make a home for poor women: 'Lady Drum's Hospital' built c. 1677 (Aberdeen Digital City Libraries 2025).	Presbyterian
Thomas Erskine, 1st earl of Kellie (1566–12 June 1639) (Paul 1908, V:84–86)	Scottish	Correspondent of James Erskine, earl of Buchan. Cousin of John Erskine, 2nd earl of Mar. Educated and brought up with James VI (Paul 1908, V:84–86).	Gentleman of Bedchamber, Groom of the Stool, Privy Councillor, Captain of the Yeomen of the Guard. (Paul 1908, V:84–86). Deceased before wars.	Presbyterian
John Leslie, 6th earl of Rothes (c.1600–23 August 1641) (Paul 1910, VII:297–98)	Scottish	Married to Anna Erskine, countess of Rothes who was Marie Stewart, countess of Mar's daughter. Also, kin to Alexander Leslie, 1st earl of Leven (Paul 1910, VII:299).	Covenanter. Tasked with implementing the National Covenant and exhorting people to sign it (Bowie 2020, 108).	Presbyterian
John Lyon, 2nd earl of Kinghorn (13 August 1596–12 May 1646) (Paul 1911, VIII:296–98)	Scottish	Married Margaret Erskine, countess of Kinghorn, who was Marie Stewart, countess of Mar's daughter, in 1618 (Paul 1911, VIII:298).	Covenanter, tasked with implementing the National Covenant and exhorting people to sign it (Paul 1911, VIII:296). Assisted with recovery of Katherine Erskine, Lady Binning's jewels.	Presbyterian
Thomas Hamilton, Lord Binning (later 2nd Earl of Haddington) (1600–1640) (Paul 1907, IV:315–16)	Scottish	Married to Katherine Erskine, Lady Binning who was Marie Stewart, countess of Mar's daughter (Paul 1907, IV:315–16).	Covenanter. Wrote to Stewart in 1636 refuting reports concerning his marriage. Also recounted attempts to assist with recovery of his wife's jewels. Killed in the explosion at Dunglass Castle in 1640 (*SSNE* 5044)	Presbyterian
Sir John Murray of the Bedchamber, later 1st earl of Annandale (d. 1640) (MacDonald 2004)	Scottish	First cousin to John Erskine, 2nd earl of Mar and Sir David Murray of Gorthy) on his mother, Annabella Murray's side; married to Elizabeth Schawe (bf. 1600–d. 1640), lady-in-waiting to Anne of Denmark and friend of Marie Stewart, countess of Mar.	Created Earl of Annandale in 1625. Kept out of the civil wars due to his advanced age but was loyal to Charles I. Keeper of the privy purse 1611–25; Gentleman of the bedchamber (MacDonald 2004).	Presbyterian (but complicated by Episcopalian political connections)
Sir David Murray of Gorthy (1567–1629) (Reid-Baxter 2022, 56)	Scottish	First cousin of John Erskine, 2nd earl of Mar and Sir John Murray of the bedchamber) (Reid-Baxter 2022, 56). Spiritual friendships: Marie Stewart, Elizabeth Melville, Lady Culross, and Esther Inglis.	Poet at the Jacobean court in Scotland.	Presbyterian.
William Keith, 6th earl of Marischal (c. 1585–28	Scottish	Married 1609 to Marie Erskine, countess of Marischal (who was Marie Stewart, countess of Mar's daughter (Paul 1909, VI:56).	Member of Scottish Privy Council. Died before wars.	Presbyterian

(CoP members' names are underlined)

StEr Informant	Nationality	Key relationships	Key roles (inc. during civil wars)	Confessional faith(s)
October 1635) (Paul 1909, VI:54)				
William Douglas, [6th/7th] earl of Morton (1562–1648) (Sizer 2004)[12]	Scottish	His grandfather, William Douglas, 6th earl of Morton was first cousin to John Erskine, 2nd earl of Mar's father, John Erskine, 1st earl of Mar (Sizer 2004). Married to Lady Anne Keith (d. 1649) in 1604 (Sizer 2004).	Royalist, Lord High Treasurer of Scotland,1630–1636 (Sizer 2004).	Presbyterian (but complicated by Episcopalian and royal political connections) (Sizer 2004).
Elizabeth Stuart, Queen of Bohemia (1596–1662) (Akkerman 2015: 1, 1)	Scottish	Daughter of James VI and Anne of Denmark. Corresponded with John Erskine, 2nd earl of Mar, Marie Stewart, countess of Mar and John Erskine, 3rd earl of mar.	Queen	Protestant
ATTENDANTS				
John Schawe	Unconfirmed	Correspondent of John Erskine, 2nd earl of Mar. Chaperon and tutor to Alexander and Henry Erskine during their educational tour of Europe.	Wrote to Erskine providing updates on the boy's travel arrangements, financial requirements, health, and education.	Likely Presbyterian
John Rollock	Likely Scottish	Tutor (legal representative) to Marie Stewart, countess of Mar.	Commissioner for Dunblane.	Likely Presbyterian
John Wallace	Unconfirmed	Servant and correspondent of Marie Stewart, countess of Mar.	Assisted Stewart in her efforts to recover her daughter, Catherine Erskine, Lady Binning's jewels which had been wrongfully taken and pawned after her death in 1635.	Likely Presbyterian
Henry Dow	Unconfirmed	Servant and correspondent of Marie Stewart, countess of Mar and her husband, John Erskine, 2nd earl of Mar.	Wrote in 1634 concerning a business contract.	Likely Presbyterian
George Baird & Ewan Dunmure	Likely Scottish	Servants to Marie Stewart, countess of Mar.	Wrote to Stewart in 1632 from the Auchterhouse estate concerning debts owed and an inventory of plenishings.	Likely Presbyterian
George Norvell	Likely Scottish	Servant to Sir Thomas Hope. Correspondent of Sir Charles Erskine.	Wrote to Hope in 1643 concerning estate and legal business.	Likely Presbyterian
Daniel Andersone	Scottish	Servant and correspondent of Marie Stewart, countess of Mar.	Assisted Stewart in her legal dispute with her son-in-law.	Likely Presbyterian
G. Johnston	Likely Scottish	Correspondent of Sir Charles Erskine. 'Servant to Lady Binning' (Katherine Erskine, countess of Haddington, who was Marie Stewart, countess of Mar's daughter) (NLS MS fols. 47–48).	Wrote to Sir Charles Erskine in 1643 concerning family and war business.	Likely Presbyterian

[12] Some sources refer to William Douglas (1562–1648) as the sixth and some as the seventh earl. Following Sizer (2004), he is referred to in the remainder of the thesis as the seventh earl of Morton (Sizer 2004).

(CoP members' names are underlined)

StEr Informant	Nationality	Key relationships	Key roles (inc. during civil wars)	Confessional faith(s)
WORKING FOLK				
John Allisone	Scottish	Petitioned Marie Stewart, countess of Mar.	Tenant farmer on Mar estates.	Unconfirmed
John Forbes	Scottish	Petitioned Marie Stewart, countess of Mar.	Petitioned for repayment of debts owed to him by Mar family.	Unconfirmed
J. Lantie	Unconfirmed	Correspondent of Marie Stewart, countess of Mar: offered advice on land sales.	Possibly a land agent for the Mar family.	Unconfirmed
OTHER NOBLES and GENTRYFOLK				
Anna Livingstone, countess of Eglinton (?1594–12 November 1632) (Paul 1906, III:446)	Scottish	Correspondent of Henrietta Stuart, countess of Huntly. Married 22 June 1612 to Alexander Montgomerie, 6th Earl of Eglinton; Anna's brother, Alexander was married to Elizabeth Gordon: daughter of Henrietta Stuart, countess of Huntly (Paul 1908, V:446–47).	Scottish courtier and lady-in-waiting to Anne of Denmark and Princess Elizabeth, went to London with them in 1603 (Great Britain. RCHM 1885, 32).	Presbyterian
Robert Ker, earl of Ancram (1578–1654) (Stevenson 2004c)	Scottish	Correspondent of Marie Stewart, countess of Mar.	Royalist. Gentleman of the bedchamber to Charles I; keeper of the privy purse (Brown 2011, 188). Created earl of Ancram in 1633; died exiled and in debt (Stevenson 2004c).	Episcopalian
Margaret Feilding, duchess of Hamilton (1612/13?–1638) (Scally 2004)	English	Correspondent of Marie Stewart, countess of Mar. Married to the Scottish nobleman James Hamilton, 1st duke of Hamilton (later 3rd Marquess of Hamilton) (1606–1649) and niece of George Villiers, 1st duke of Buckingham (Scally 2004). His daughter, Margaret Feilding's cousin, Mary Van Villiers, duchess of Richmond and Lennox (1622–1685) married James Stuart, 4th duke of Lennox, Marie Stewart's grandson.	Lady of Bedchamber to Queen Henrietta Maria (Scally 2004).	Episcopalian. Suspected of Catholicism (see her letter to Marie Stewart, NLS MS 5070 fols. 30–31). Husband was a royalist who had Episcopalian leanings.
James Hamilton, 2nd marquess of Hamilton and 4th earl of Arran (1589–1625) (Stevenson 2004b)	Scottish	Petitioned by Henrietta Stuart, countess of Huntly. He was related to her husband, George Gordon, 2nd marquess of Huntly. He was also the father-in-law of Mary (Margaret) Feilding, duchess of Hamilton. His wife, Anne Cunningham served as a colonel in the Army of the Covenant in the civil wars (Stevenson 2004b).	Died before civil wars. Gentleman of the bedchamber to James VI; appointed Lord Stewart 1624 (Stevenson 2004b).	Presbyterian
Alexander Leslie, 1st earl of Leven (c. 1580–1661)	Scottish	Correspondent of Marie Stewart, countess of Mar.	Covenanter. Calvinist and supporter of Scottish kirk actively opposed Charles I's attempts to impose Anglican liturgical practices on the Scottish church. 1638 led Covenanting troops in Bishop's Wars.	Presbyterian

(CoP members' names are underlined)

StEr Informant	Nationality	Key relationships	Key roles (inc. during civil wars)	Confessional faith(s)
Sir George Stirling of Keir and Cawder (?1615–1667) (Fraser 1858, 48)[13]	Scottish	Correspondent of John Wallace.	Soldier/commander. Wrote in 1640 concerning Sir Charles Erskine's war contribution.	Likely Presbyterian
Sir Louis Stuart [Lewis Stewart] of Kirkhill (1586–1655) (Sanderson 1984, 49)	Scottish	Correspondent of Marie Stewart, countess of Mar. Signature is 'L Stuart', and his name is recorded in the StEr family inventories as 'Sir Louis Stuart', hence this thesis uses the spelling 'Stuart'. However, he is more commonly referred to as Sir Lewis Stewart of Kirkhill (1586–1655) (Sanderson 1984, 49).	Royalist. Advocate. Loyal to Charles I (Sanderson 1984, 50). Assisted Stewart in her legal dispute with her son-in-law.	Unconfirmed, likely Episcopalian given he was a royalist.
James Graham, 1st marquess of Montrose	Scottish	Friend of the Stewart Erskine family who corresponded with one of the Mar sons (likely Henry Erskine).	Poet/soldier/commander. Defected from the Covenanting to the Royalist army (Stevenson 2004a; Stewart 2016, 200).	Presbyterian
OTHERS				
Alexander Henderson (1583–1646) (Coffey 2004)	Scottish	Correspondent of Marie Stewart, countess of Mar.	Minister. Rector of Edinburgh University (1640–1646) Co-author of National Covenant. Planned protests along with Sir Thomas Hope, and others, as well as a group of 'godly Edinburgh matrons' which culminated in the prayer book riot on 23 July 1637 (Coffey 2004).	Presbyterian (Converted from Episcopalian in 1615) (Coffey 2004)
Kinloch	Scottish	Correspondent of Sir Charles Erskine.	Officer in Scottish army.	Presbyterian
I. Reade	Unconfirmed	Correspondent of Marie Stewart, countess of Mar. Son of another male referred to in his StEr letter who was connected to Marie Stewart.	Wrote to Stewart concerning a debt owed to her by his father.	Likely Presbyterian
C.S.	Unknown	Unknown informant. Correspondent of Marie Stewart, countess of Mar. Signature gives only initials.	Wrote in 1644 giving Stewart war news.	Likely Presbyterian

[13] The author identifies the sender of the StEr letter (NLS MS 5155, fols. 24–25; 27 June 1640) as Sir George Stirling of Keir and Cawder by correlating the date with his tenure as Laird of Keir and by comparing the signature on the StEr manuscript with the facsimile signatures reproduced in Fraser (1858, 48; 164).

As a whole, the StEr corpus offers rare insight into both private and public concerns during a period of major historical change, including the Wars of the Three Kingdoms and the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) (Stewart and Nugent 2020, 2).[14] Several letters record financial contributions to military campaigns (e.g., NLS MS 5155 fols. 32–33, 23 November 1640), while others contain reports of war news (e.g., NLS MS 5155 fols. 53–54, 1 January 1644; 3.3). Stewart's correspondence with Alexander Henderson demonstrates her interventions in kirk appointments for Protestant ministers (e.g., NLS MS 5155 fols. 5–6, 26 June 1631; NLS MS 5070 fol. 10, 16 June 1632), as does one of her letters to Charles (NLS MS 5070 fols. 67-68, 27 June 1640; 3.2; 5.6). A further fifty-five letters document the European travels of her sons Alexander and Henry with their chaperon John Schawe, allowing comparisons between the perspectives of a household employee and two noble sons.[15]

Finally, the corpus provides a richly textured view of kinship, care, and social obligation in early modern Scotland, encompassing grief, condolence, sympathy, financial advocacy, moral rebuke, affectionate concern, and congratulations. This diversity of content also highlights the need to consider questions of authorship and collaborative writing practices within the corpus, since many letters reflect input from multiple hands or intermediaries. Such considerations naturally lead to an examination of how the StEr letters were composed, and by whom.

1.3.4 Authorship

While the aim here is not to provide a comprehensive authorship analysis of the StEr letters, this thesis can offer some observations regarding their composition. The conventional distinction within epistolary studies between holograph (or autograph) and scribal letters (whether written

[14] At least eight letters directly concern the events of the Wars of the Three Kingdoms. (These are Marie Stewart, countess of Mar to Sir Charles Erskine, NLS MS 5070 fols 67–68, 27 June 1640; Sir George Stirling of Keir and Cawder to John Rollock, NLS MS 5155 fols 24–25, 27 June 1640; Various members of the Commitee of Estates of Scottish Parliament (Wigton, Dunfermline, Balmerino, Forbes of Leslie, Burleigh, SMurray) to Marie Stewart, countess of Mar, NLS MS 5070 fols 75–76, 27 July 1640; Sir Thomas Hope, 1st Baronet Hope of Craighall to Sir Charles Erskine, NLS MS 5070 fols 81–82, 1 September 1640; John Rollock to Sir Charles Erskine, NLS MS 5155 fols 28–29, 17 September 1640; John Rollock to Sir Charles Erskine, NLS MS 5155 fols 38–39, 28 December 1640; G. Johnston to Sir Charles Erskine, NLS MS 5155 fols 47–48, 21–23 October 1643 and C.S. (Initials only) to Marie Stewart, countess of Mar, NLS MS 5155 fols 53–54, 1 January 1644.) Many others contain indirect references to the ongoing conflicts and a trio of letters, sent by different correspondents to Sir Charles Erskine from France, also discuss the Thirty Years War. These were sent to Charles by Sir Thomas Hope (NLS MS 5070 fols 96–97, 9 October 1643), by G. Johnston (MS 5155 fols 47–48, 21–23 October 1643) and by Kinloch (MS 5155 fol. 49, 19 December 1643).

[15] See StErCor2_README file where these letters begin with the shelfmark NRS GD124/15.

directly by the sender or by an amanuensis) does not adequately capture the full range of collaborative input (Wiggins 2017, xv). As early modern letters, the StEr manuscripts exemplify such collaborative practices, and this is particularly visible in four StEr letters addressed to Stewart that contain multiple signatures. Three joint letters bear two signatures: one from her employees George Baird and Ewan Dunmure (NLS MS 5070 fol. 11, 9 August 1632); one from her son-in-law John Leslie, 6th earl of Rothes (c.1600–23 August 1641) (Paul 1910, VII:297–98) with his wife (and Stewart's daughter) Anna Erskine, countess of Rothes (1 January 1597–2 May 1640) (Paul 1910, VII:299) (NLS MS 5070, fols. 32–33, 14 February 1636); and one from another son-in-law, John Lyon, 2nd earl of Kinghorn (13 August 1596–12 May 1646) (Paul 1911, VIII:296–98), alongside Leslie (NLS MS 5070, fols. 71–72, 27 June 1640). A fourth is the group letter signed by members of the Committee of Estates of the Scottish Parliament (NLS MS 5070 fols. 75-76, 27 July 1640).

Yet even when such letters display clear evidence of collaboration, it remains difficult to determine the degree of involvement of each contributor. For all four examples, it is hard to establish who physically penned the letter and almost impossible to determine the extent to which each of the signatories was engaged in its composition. The same problem persists in single-authored letters: even when written in one hand, it cannot be assumed that the visible writer was the sole or even principal composer. We know of contemporary letters that appear to be holograph, both composed and penned by the sender, but which may in fact have been copied from a scribal draft (Wiggins 2017, 53; Newsome 2018, 229). Conversely, a sender might have had substantial involvement in a letter that appears entirely scribal (Wiggins 2017, 31).

Accordingly, this thesis does not adopt a simple binary categorisation between holograph and scribal letters. Instead, the StEr letters are classified according to the degree of certainty with which the main body of text can be attributed to a holograph or scribal hand. Where the handwriting can be identified with confidence as that of the sender or senders, it is designated *holograph*; where the identification is probable but less certain, it is designated *likely holograph*. Similarly, letters written by an amanuensis or amanuenses are designated *scribal*, and those for which this attribution is probable are designated *likely scribal*.[16] Letters whose handwriting cannot be determined are classified as *unconfirmed*.[17] These categories refer exclusively to handwriting and apply only to the main text of each letter; they do not encompass the document as a whole.

[16] This approach is slightly different to Elder's (2022, 28) in which the terms holograph and scribal were used to define the entire letter.

[17] The file StErCor2_Workbook.xlsx records each letter's classification.

Other hands may appear within the same document in postscripts, marginalia, signatures, endorsements, and other annotations.

Determining handwriting in the StEr corpus proved challenging, particularly for lesser-known correspondents or where few comparative samples survive, and definitive attributions are consequently rare. Nevertheless, while modern forensic standards demand rigorous proof of authenticity, in historical contexts 'it is reasonable to cautiously accept a scholarly identification of handwriting that depends on a balance of probability' (LIMA 2005). Following groundwork by Elder (2022, 27–43), this thesis seeks to establish the hand of composition with reasonable confidence by examining internal references to writing, consulting previous attributions by archivists and scholars, conducting palaeographic analysis, and assessing relevant extralinguistic evidence.

Such evidence includes the register of the correspondence: intimate letters were more likely to be holograph (Daybell 2015, 509; Evans 2020, 49–50), whereas business correspondence was more often scribal (Daybell 2006a, 106; Wiggins 2017, 54; Evans 2020, 60). Material features can also be indicative, such as letterlocking mechanisms and the type of script employed. Of the 180 StEr letters surviving in original manuscript form, 109 are written in italic script, sixty-six in secretary, and five in a mixed hand.[18] By the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, italic script was increasingly favoured in both Scots and English correspondence among the educated and well-born, reflecting social status (Simpson 2009, 27; Wolfe 2009, 31; Daybell 2012, 86).

Between 1550 and 1650 non-cursive italic was the recommended script for elite royal and noble women. Regarded as 'easier to learn than secretary, it was fashionable, modern and beautiful, signifying a humanist and refined background' (Wolfe 2009, 31–32). By contrast, secretary script was typically associated with business writing (Starza Smith 2013). Sealing practices could also signal holography: for instance, the use of a personal seal secured with embroidery floss often indicated that the sender had written the letter personally (Stewart and Wolfe 2004, 36).

Other extralinguistic factors influencing authorship include the sender's social status and geographical location, both of which could affect access to an amanuensis, and the nature of the relationship between correspondents. For example, letters from children to parents were

[18] Secretary script is used here as a broad term, with no differentiation between Scots and English forms, which Simpson (2009, 15) noted show identifiable differences, although the lack of close analysis of a large number of examples means no definitive definitions can yet be established. 'Mixed' refers to scripts that combine secretary and italic letterforms, a type that became increasingly common during the seventeenth century as secretary was influenced and gradually supplanted by italic script (Simpson 2009, 27).

generally expected to be holograph as a sign of respect (Daybell 2006a, 108; 2015, 509), whereas a noble would be unlikely to pen a letter personally to a tenant farmer.

Within StErCor2, the letters are categorised as follows: fifty-six are holograph, sixty-nine are likely holograph, nine are scribal and four are likely scribal. Forty-one remain unconfirmed. Four additional letters survive only as later copies: one from John Erskine to Elizabeth of Bohemia, likely produced for filing purposes (NRS GD124/15/65, 4 May 1626); another from Henry Dow, probably copied shortly after receipt (p. 198); and two others produced as nineteenth-century transcriptions (p. 44).[19]

Collectively, these distributions highlight the material and contextual diversity of the StErCor2 letters, which is further reflected in the ways they have been preserved and organised within modern archival collections.

1.3.5 Archival Format

In the NLS, 108 of the total 183 StEr letters are found in five bound volumes: MSS 80, 5070, 5155, 5087 and 5088. Two further letters are preserved in Adv.MS 33.1.1 [v], the fifth volume of state papers compiled by Sir James Balfour of Denmilne. By contrast, in the NRS archive, only one letter: Marie Stewart's to Sir Robert Ker, 1st earl of Ancram (NRS GD40/2/13/34, 21 January 1624), is bound into a volume. The remaining seventy-two StEr letters held there are stored individually, in plastic or cardboard document folders rather than in large books. This arrangement (unbound) allows closer examination of the letters as physical artefacts, in a form closer to their original circulation, although some now bear archival stamps or later annotations. Figure 1-2 shows Henry Erskine's letter to his father, demonstrating how it is possible for one to handle the letter as a single object.

[19] Further details are provided in Section 6.2 and in the MS Excel file of accompanying metadata, StErCor2_Workbook.xlsx in the worksheet, 'Material Features'.

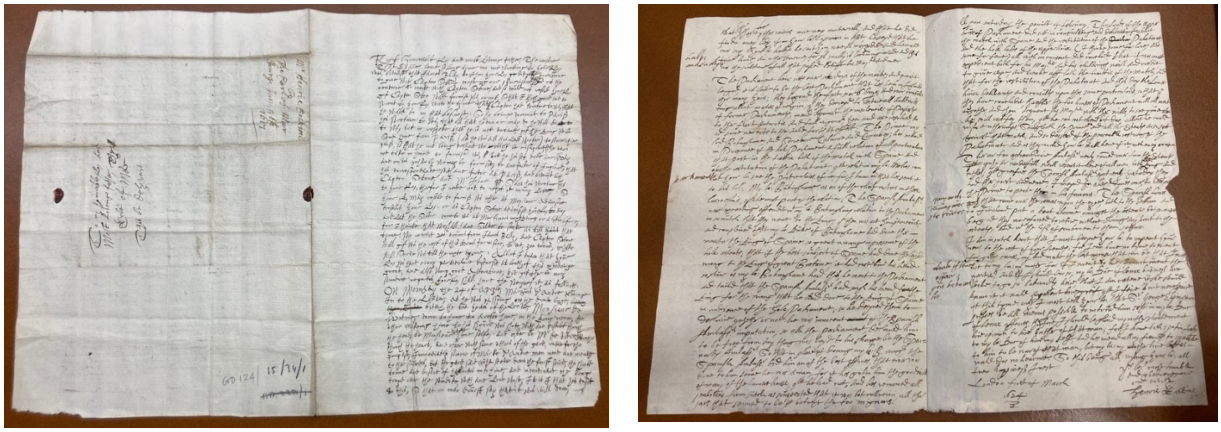


Figure 1-2: Preservation technique (Sir Henry Erskine to John Erskine, 2nd earl of Mar, NRS GD124/15/58, 1 March 1624)

The NLS bindings protect the letters and keep them together, but they can also hinder access to certain material features. In a letter from the Scots poet David Murray of Gorthy to Marie Stewart (MS 5070 fol. 1, 20 October 1604), for example, the red wax seal and green silk floss are partly obscured by the binding strip, immediately to the left of the superscription 'A Madame La Comtess de Marre' [To Madame The Countess of Mar] as shown in Figure 1-3:

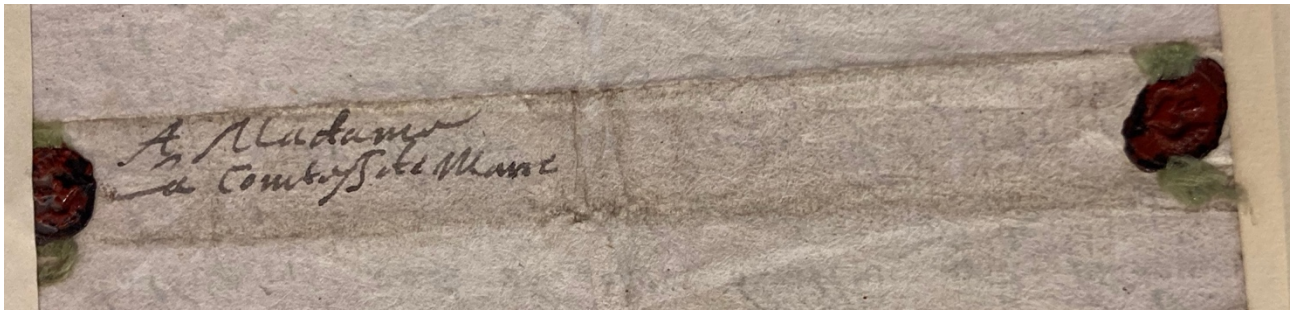


Figure 1-3: Detail of wax and silk floss (Sir David Murray of Gorthy to Marie Stewart, countess of Mar, NLS MS 5070 fol. 1v, 20 October 1604)

In the NLS volume MS 80, some letters have been glued directly onto binding pages, making it difficult to establish whether any verso material survives. In a few cases, conservators cut apertures in the pages to reveal superscriptions, though these interventions are not always successful. Figure 1-4 illustrates one such example:

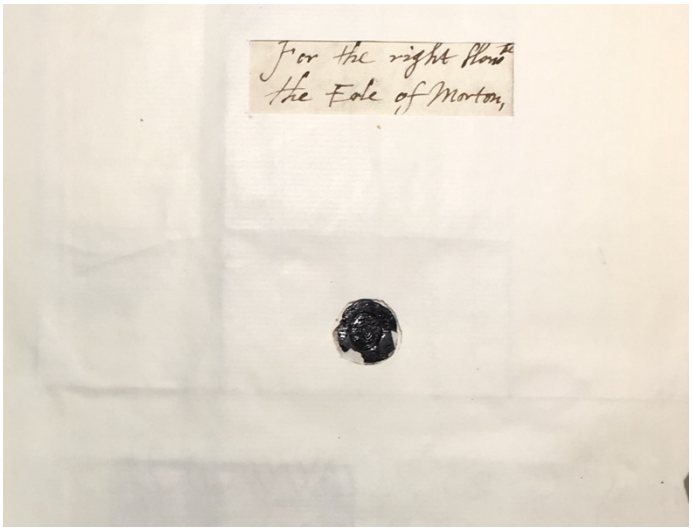


Image i: Superscription detail (fermesses obscured)

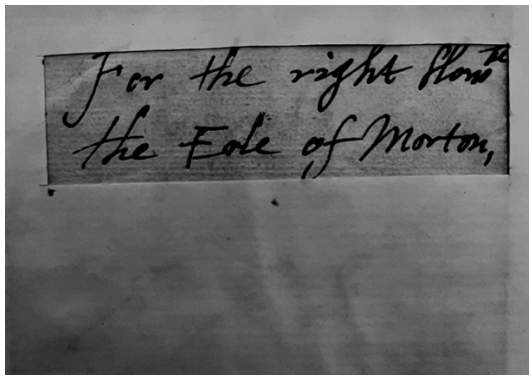


Image ii: Superscription detail, enhanced (fermesses faintly visible)

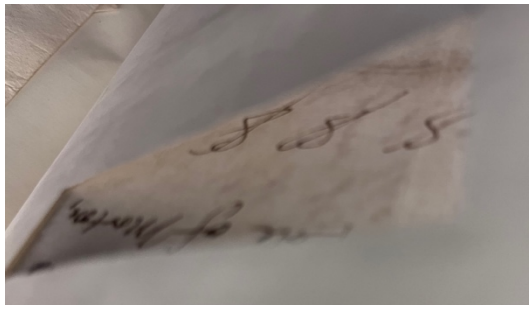


Image iii: Superscription detail (fermesses visible through aperture)

Figure 1-4: Aperture in binding obscuring superscription fermesses (Marie Stewart, countess of Mar to William Douglas, 7th earl of Morton, NLS MS 80 fol. 55v, [1604])

Figure 1-4: Image i shows the superscription naming 'the Erle of Morton' with a black wax seal beneath. However, because the mount covers the lower section of the superscription, the three symbols (fermesses) inscribed there are almost impossible to discern (Image ii). They can be viewed clearly only by carefully lifting the mount and observing them through the aperture (Image iii). Their obscuration may suggest that they were not regarded as meaningful; however, as Chapter 7 will argue, this is not the case.

Despite these relatively minor obstructions, the StEr manuscripts are generally well preserved, with comparatively little damage. In around forty letters, parts of the text are obscured by paper tears, water damage or fading. In fifteen of these cases, the text can be confidently reconstructed; in the remainder only a very small proportion is illegible (Section 4.1.3; 4.3.8). A small number of items have been repaired: for instance, Elizabeth of Bohemia's letter to Stewart (NRS GD1/44/8, 30 November 1625) has been mounted onto a new bifolium, while John Wallace's letter (NLS MS 5155 fol. 9, 15 December 1635) has been reinforced with tape, however, such interventions are rare.

Most of the letters appear to be originals, as indicated by material evidence of letterlocking and delivery: creases from folding sheets into packets, addresses on the resulting exterior, and

remnants of wax seals still adhering to the paper. Six letters addressed to Marie Stewart also retain silk floss (Sections 2.2.3; 7.1). David Murray's letter, already noted, is one such example (Figure 1-3); another is Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia's (NLS MS 5087 fol. 104v, 2 August 1625) illustrated in Figure 1-5:



Figure 1-5: Detail of superscription, wax, and floss (Queen Elizabeth of Bohemia to Marie Stewart, countess of Mar, NLS MS 5087 fol. 104v, 2 August 1625)

Of the three of the letters which survive as copies, one, from Henry Dow to John Erskine (Mar elder) (NLS MS 5070 fols. 13–14, June 1634) appears to have been made close to its original composition (Section 6.2). The other two, sent to Marie Stewart by her mother, Catherine de Balsac (NRS GD124/15/42/9, [c.1620]) and her relative, [L] de Balsac (NRS GD124/15/42/7, 3 March [1620]), survive as nineteenth century transcriptions with accompanying translations.[20]

These manuscripts have survived despite obstacles of age, fragility, perceived irrelevance (Daybell 2016, 31), and gender bias (Wiggins 2017, 23–24).[21] That their survival is uneven, shaped by a combination of historical circumstance and archival happenstance, is well illustrated by Stewart's extant correspondence. Twenty-five of her letters document her legal action against her stepson, John Erskine, 3rd earl of Mar (c. 1585–1653), following her husband's death in 1634, and were likely retained as legal records. The same explanation may apply to a further five letters concerning her efforts to redeem jewels belonging to her daughter Katherine Erskine, which had

[20] The transcription in EModF, NRS GD124/15/42/9 is endorsed thus, 'From original in the custody of A. Erskine Murray Esq'. NRS GD124/15/42/10 provides an English translation. These documents are stored together with another transcription and translation (in a different hand) of [L] de Balsac's letter: NRS GD124/15/42/nos.7–8 which is dated January 1873 and is marked 'from original in possession of A. Erskine Murray Esq. Glasgow'.

[21] The poet Elizabeth Melville, Lady Culross (c.1578–), author of *Ane Godlie Dreame* (first published 1603) is an example of an early modern Scottish woman for whom very little correspondence is preserved. Described by Reid-Baxter (2015, 206) as 'the most significant religious poet of Renaissance Scotland', although evidence suggests she was a prolific correspondent, only nine of her letters are currently known to survive (Reid-Baxter 2015, 205).

been pawned after Katherine's death in 1635 (Section 3.3). As noted in Section 1.3.2, the majority of Stewart's extant letters (19 of 28) were addressed to her son Charles. Eleven concern the legal dispute, while the remaining eight focus largely on estate business, both types of correspondence especially likely to be preserved during this period (as identified by Daybell 2012, 222). Charles' prominence as a political and military figure also increased the likelihood that his papers would be collected; indeed, they were documented and transcribed in the nineteenth century (Paul 1893, 80–82). Some of Stewart's letters preserved in the Papers of the Family of Erskine of Alva alongside Charles' may therefore have survived incidentally rather than by design. One such example, which may not have been retained outside this context, is her letter to Charles' wife, Mary Hope (NLS MS 5070 fols. 63-64, 20 June 1640; Section 3.3; Figure 4-3).

Gender appears to have influenced preservation in other areas of the corpus. Stewart's husband, John Erskine has thirty-three extant letters from their sons Alexander and Henry, and their chaperon John Schawe, written during their European travels. None of these sons' letters to their mother survive, though Schawe's letters contain indirect references to her correspondence. For example, in 1618 Schawe wrote to the earl:

> (1) your lordships sonnis ar still in uerie good helth, thay haue spent thair tym diligintlie, as at large I haue declared in my ladis lettre
>
> [your Lordship's sons are still in very good health, they have spent their time diligently, as at large I have declared in my Lady's letter] (NRS GD124/15/32/10, 3rd May 1618).

The reference to 'my ladis lettre' indicates that Schawe wrote not only to the Earl but also to the Countess. Although the letters may have travelled in the same packet, Stewart's was not preserved. The same is true of their daughters: while sixty letters survive between Stewart, her husband, and their sons, only one complete letter from a daughter is extant, a note from Marie Erskine, countess of Marischal (1597–March 1664) (Paul 1908, V:622), regarding the purchase of fabric (NLS MS 5155, fol. 11, 24 July 1635), along with a short postscript added by Anna Erskine (Rothes) to a letter otherwise written by her husband John Leslie (Rothes) (NLS MS 5070 fols. 32–33, 14 February 1636). It remains possible that further correspondence between Stewart and her children survives elsewhere, but the extant corpus reflects a broader gendered pattern in the survival of early modern letters.

Social status also influenced the likelihood of survival, with letters exchanged by individuals of higher status more likely to be archived (Elspaß 2012, 159). Nevertheless, alongside gentry, noble, and royal correspondence, the StEr collections also contain examples of letters sent by

commoners to higher-status individuals. The corpus contains forty-eight such instances, as well as three letters received by these lower-status individuals. Additionally, the thesis identifies one surviving exchange between two middling-status correspondents: John Schawe and Henry Dow (NRS GD124/15/33/1, 5 June 1617). Section 4.7 explains these *rank* and *relative status* categories in further detail.

Mobility also increased vulnerability. Henry Erskine's letters confirm that he received correspondence from his father while voyaging in Europe, yet none of these survive. Travellers may have been less likely to preserve such papers, or they may have been more susceptible to loss in transit across land and sea. Some sensitive or personal letters may have been deliberately destroyed, as in G. Johnston's instruction to Charles Erskine (Alva-Bandeath) to 'read and burne' his letter, though its survival indicates Charles disobeyed (NLS MS 5155 fol. 47, 24 October 1643).[22] Others may have perished in larger archival losses, such as the Scottish records removed to London by Cromwell and subsequently lost at sea in 1661 (Scott 2024, lvii).

By the nineteenth century, some of the StEr letters were circulating among antiquarian collectors such as Sharpe, who mentioned Stewart's correspondence with 'the Queen of Bohemia, Lady Gabrielle Stewart the Nun, and […] many of the prime Covenanters' (Allardyce 1888, II:406). These now form part of NLS MSS 5070 and 5155. Yet Sharpe remarked in his correspondence that his aunt, 'Lady Alva assured me, [Lord Buchan] stole two pocketfulls of letters' (Allardyce 1888, II:406). The alleged thief was David Erskine, Lord Buchan, another antiquarian descendant of Stewart's, who had included a biographical note on her in *Annals and Antiquities of Dryburgh, and Other Places on the Tweed* (1836). Sharpe's remark illustrates how this type of removal or displacements of papers could lead to their loss from public sight.[23]

These examples suggest that the StEr correspondents who experienced marginalisation in life were also subject to marginalisation in preservation, with extant papers representing only a fraction of the original correspondence. This thesis, therefore, remains attentive to the boundaries of the surviving corpus, heeding Daybell's reminder that letters are 'snapshots in time,' and should not be taken to represent static relationships or circumstances (2015, 521). David Erskine described Charles as his mother Marie Stewart's 'great favourite' (Erskine 1836, 134). Yet the

[22] According to a contemporary endorsement on the letter Johnston was 'servant to Lady Binning' (NLS MS 5155 fol. 47, 24 October 1643). If this information is correct the lady in question was Charles' sister Katherine Erskine who was married to Thomas Hamilton, Lord Binning, later 2nd Earl of Haddington. However, Katherine had died in 1635, five years prior to the letter's composition (Paul 1907, IV: 315–316).

[23] Sharpe also referred to the possibility of missing papers in his introduction to the Countess' household account book: 'of her papers, various depredations have greatly curtailed the number' (1815, 19).

accuracy of this assessment is questionable and may simply reflect the fact that, of all her children, Stewart's relationship with Charles is the most fully represented in her surviving letters. Absences in the archival record do not equate to absences in lived experience, just as extant letters cannot capture it fully. Accordingly, this thesis avoids broad assumptions about the materials, instead adopting a narrow, empirically grounded approach to analysing the textual and material evidence that survives.

This chapter has introduced Marie Stewart, the StEr epistolary CoP, and the corpus, StErCor2, while setting out the thesis' overarching aims and research questions. A fuller historical and biographical context is provided in Chapter 3. First, however, Chapter 2 outlines the theoretical and practical frameworks underpinning this thesis' analysis, demonstrating the particular value of early modern correspondence, situating the StEr letters within the CoP framework, and introducing key methodological tools.

Chapter 2 Scholarly Context

The research undertaken in this thesis spans the disciplinary fields of historical pragmatics, sociolinguistics, corpus linguistics, and manuscript studies which have used pragmatic-based methods to analyse early modern letters. This chapter begins by presenting the rationale for using correspondence as a means of investigating language change in the past (Section 2.1), then focuses on the CoP theoretical framework (Section 2.2), and discusses historical pragmatics approaches including how these have been integrated with methods from corpus linguistics (Section 2.3). Lastly, the chapter discusses the concept of formulaic language, provides a working definition for this thesis, and briefly explains the rationale for focusing on the three types of formulaic language examined here (Section 2.4).

2.1 Early Modern Correspondence

For early modern women, literary production was socially constrained to correspondence, translation, poetry (devotional and secular), and life writing (Evans 2016, 5; Mathis and Potter 2024, 2). However, women also contributed to written forms beyond the literary sphere, including medical receipts, recipes, musical notation, and household accounts, such as the book produced by Marie Stewart (Mathis and Potter 2024, 2). All of these texts are valuable for examining women's communicative practices in this period; however, this thesis focuses on the epistolary genre.

The insights that letters provide into the language and culture of past societies have been consistently demonstrated, as attested by both sustained scholarly interest and wider public fascination with the epistolary form.[24] Research communities centred on epistolary studies are flourishing, underscoring the vitality of letter-based research.[25] The appeal is further reflected in

[24] The enduring appeal of historic correspondence is reflected in the reception of two letters with Scottish connections. Mary, Queen of Scots' final letter, displayed at the National Library of Scotland in February 2017, had its viewing period extended from six to nine hours due to public demand (BBC News 2017). In a striking parallel, her son James VI's first letter, written at the age of seven to his foster mother, Lady Minny (later the mother-in-law of Marie Stewart, countess of Mar), was exhibited in the critically acclaimed World of King James VI & I exhibition at the National Galleries Scotland in Edinburgh (BBC News 2025).

[25] Including In Their Own Write's Pauper Letters Research Group (2018), the Corpus of Early English Correspondence Project (2020), Women's Early Modern Letters Online (2023), Centre for Editing Lives and Letters (2025), the Cultures of Knowledge Project (2025), the Mapping the Republic of Letters Project (n.d.), and the Epistolary Culture in Early Modern Scotland Research Network (n.d.).

the emergence of new scholarly editions, many of which foreground the voices of individuals previously marginalised, including women, enslaved people, and those living in poverty.[26]

Publications of early Scottish correspondence such Jane Dawson's *Breadalbane Letters* (2015), Helen Newsome-Chandler's *The Holograph Letters of Margaret Tudor, Queen of Scots* (1489–1541) (2025), and Jade Scott's forthcoming edition of the correspondence of Annas Keith, countess of Moray and Argyll, suggests that the time is right to refocus scholarly attention on Scottish correspondence. To date, this material has received comparatively limited treatment within in epistolary studies, with seventeenth-century Scottish letters remaining particularly underexamined. By providing an open-access corpus of the StEr letters this project ensures public impact by supporting future research.[27]

Scholars have long argued that certain types of correspondence, particularly informal or personal letters, represent some of the most speech-like written records available (Biber 1988, 132; Görlach 1999, 149–50; Dossena and Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2008, 8; Culpeper and Kytö 2010; Williams 2013b, 4; Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 2016, 26). As personal Scots writings transcribed directly from original manuscripts rather than mediated through later editions, the StEr letters may reveal features of EModS speech (Meurman-Solin 1999, 305; 2005, 440) including the ongoing process of anglicisation (Meurman-Solin 2005, 427), to which modern researchers would otherwise have no direct auditory access.

Nonetheless, even in informal correspondence it cannot be assumed that writers wrote exactly as they spoke (Magnusson 1999, 62; Williams 2016, 1). Writers might borrow phrasing from other texts or consciously imitate the speech of others (Macafee and Aitken 2002). Since early modern letters were typically constructed communally and strategically, they do not necessarily represent an individual, spontaneous form (Daybell 2006a, 46). This thesis therefore

[26] Including the recent notable printed editions: *The Letters of Lady Anne Bacon* (Allen 2014); *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: Language, Materiality, and Early Modern Epistolary Culture* (Wiggins 2017); *The Correspondence of Elizabeth Stuart, Queen of Bohemia* (Akkerman 2011–); and *The Holograph Letters of Margaret Tudor, Queen of Scots (1489–1541)* (Newsome-Chandler 2025). Examples of digital corpora that have recovered women's voices include Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550–1608 (Wiggins, Bryson, Starza Smith, Timmermanre, and Williams 2013); The Bluestocking Corpus: Private Correspondence of Elizabeth Montagu, 1730s–1780s (Sairio and Marttila 2017); and Electronic Enlightenment's Corresponding Women Project (2008–2022). Projects that amplify the voices of other marginalised groups include In Their Own Write: The Lives and Letters of the Poor, 1834–c.1900 (In Their Own Write 2018) which focuses on those living in poverty, and Slave Letters (Duke University n.d.) which records the letters of enslaved people. Another notable project is The Corpus of Patient Documents Project, CoPaDocs (Shiegg 2017–2022) which foregrounds letters written by patients in German psychiatric hospitals during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

[27] StErCor2 is currently available for educational use to individuals who make application to the author. It will be published open-access in 2039 (see Copyright Statement, p. 13).

maintains a clear analytical distinction: while recognising that letters provide the closest available approximation to spoken interaction, it examines writing rather than speech.[28]

Given this focus on interpersonal written exchanges among seventeenth-century Scottish, English, and French individuals, letters nevertheless constitute particularly suitable materials. They are uniquely positioned to preserve both linguistic detail and social context, capturing how language functioned within specific relationships and communities (Elspaß 2012, 165). Crucially, a letter is not a monologue but part of an ongoing dialogue, composed with the expectation of a reply. Following Evans (2020) and Magnusson (1999), this thesis adopts Bakhtin's (1981) dialogic theory, which holds that language is shaped by prior interaction and oriented toward future response. Language does not exist in a vacuum; individuals bring their subjective experiences into each communicative encounter, influencing one another's linguistic choices, and thereby contributing to processes of change (Kopaczyk and Jucker 2013, 4).

At the same time, early modern letter-writers operated within social constraints and adjusted their language according to implicit expectations of propriety. Such constraints often surfaced most clearly in formulaic sequences (van Eyndhoven 2023, 65). Formulaic language, therefore, provides a particularly productive lens through which to analyse relational dynamics between correspondents. This perspective aligns with Bakhtin's (1981) view of language as inherently repetitive and with his argument that language users draw on 'routinized verbal behaviours appropriate to particular situations and relations' (quoted in Magnusson 1999, 10). Within a CoP, members engage in ongoing interaction, sharing and reusing linguistic materials (Eckert 2006, 684–5; Meyerhoff and Strycharz 2013, 430; Bergs 2021, 3; Kopaczyk-McPherson and Jucker 2025, 751). Examining recurring formulaic patterns thus allows us to observe how members of such communities learn from and adapt to one another.

However, scholars have increasingly emphasised that the meanings of early modern letters are not conveyed by language alone. Writers with high levels of 'epistolary literacy' (Whyman 2009, 76) also demonstrated skill in tailoring the material aspects of their letters to the recipient. Jonathan Gibson's (1997) seminal article introduced the concept of 'significant space', establishing a correlation between spacial layout and communicative intent. Building on this, Stewart and Wolfe's (2004) catalogue for the Folger Shakespeare Library's exhibition, Letterwriting in Renaissance England, highlighted the importance of extralinguistic characteristics in shaping the

[28] See Elpasß's 2012 (157–58) discussion of the speech-like qualities of letters where he argues that the immediacy of such ego-documents means they are as close to speech as possible whilst still being in a written form.

contemporary reception experience. Subsequent studies have further advanced our understanding of the material and visual dimensions of correspondence, examining how paper type and size, script, layout, enclosures, methods of letterlocking, and modes of delivery contributed to meaning-making (e.g., Daybell 2012; Meurman-Solin 2013; Daybell and Gordon 2016; Wiggins 2017; Evans 2020; Kaislaniemi 2017, 2022–2025, forthcoming; Dambrogio and Starza Smith 2025).

Of particular relevance are the comprehensive studies of Daybell (2001, 2006a, 2012), Wiggins (2017) and Evans (2020) which analyse the linguistic, material, and visual dimensions of letters in tandem. This thesis adopts Wiggins' conceptualisation of early modern letters as 'a multilayered technology of communication, where the linguistic, material and social intersect' (Wiggins 2017, 4). Both Wiggins (2017, 9–11; 2024, 198) and Evans (2020) stress the importance of paratextual features, with Evans (2020, 11) explicitly calling for their equal analytical weight alongside linguistic content. At the same time, given the fluid and individual nature of handwritten culture, Wiggins (2017, 11) cautions that such features may reflect situational factors or even personal whim. This thesis remains attentive to that caveat, reading the visual and material aspects of the StEr letters with contextual sensitivity and avoiding over-interpretation. Within this framework, Chapter 7 focuses in particular on the visual symbols found in the StEr corpus, arguing that these were used, adapted, and shared in ways comparable to formulaic language, functioning as part of the community's broader formulaic repertoire.

This interplay between interaction, constraint, and variation makes the StEr correspondence an especially rich site for investigating mutual influence, not only in language, but also in the material and visual features employed within a historical group. These letters provide crucial evidence of how collective voices shaped and reflected communicative practices in early modern Scotland. Section 1.1 suggested that the StEr group may be understood as a CoP, a model well suited to tracking such interaction (Eckert 2006, 683; Kopaczyk and Jucker 2013, 4; Meyerhoff and Strycharz 2013, 434; Smith 2020, 32; Kopaczyk-McPherson and Jucker 2025, 751). Before this framework can be applied to their formulaic practices, however, it is necessary to establish whether the StEr correspondents in fact meet the criteria for a CoP. Section 2.2 therefore turns to that question, presenting evidence in support of the claim that the StEr group functioned as a CoP.

2.2 The Community of Practice Framework

The concept of a CoP was first introduced in educational theory to describe how individuals engage in situated learning in modern work environments (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998) and was adapted for sociolinguistics (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1998).[29] To exist as a CoP the community must fulfil Wenger's (1998, 72–85) three defining criteria: mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and a shared repertoire.[30] More recently, the concept has been adopted within theoretical frameworks for historical sociolinguistic research (Kopaczyk-McPherson and Jucker 2025, 751), and the resulting studies have identified and addressed several challenges associated with applying these criteria to historical data (Kopaczyk and Jucker 2013, 7; Meyerhoff and Strycharz 2013, 429–30; Hofman 2019).

One such challenge concerns the criterion of mutual engagement which may be interpreted as requiring immediate and direct interaction between CoP members. For historical contexts, however, Kopaczyk-McPherson and Jucker (2025, 763) argue that engagement may occur indirectly and over time, with members interacting through texts produced as part of the CoP's joint enterprise rather than through face-to-face contact.

However, the criterion of joint enterprise likewise requires adaptation for CoPs that persisted over extended periods. In such communities, shared practices may be transmitted to new members, allowing the joint enterprise to be maintained despite individual departures and even complete generational turnover (Kopaczyk-McPherson and Jucker 2025, 764; Kopaczyk-McPherson forthcoming c, 11). Hofman's (2019) diachronic study of a Scottish CoP of town clerks exemplifies this process: although the records span 150 years (1573–1723), archival and palaeographic evidence demonstrates intergenerational transmission and relative stability of practices through sustained engagement with the CoP's textual outputs (48–49).

Further challenges relating to CoP size and structure can also be addressed. Large or internally complex communities remain analysable by differentiating members according to levels of engagement as proven by Grund (2021, 58–59) who categorises witch trial participants as core, active, peripheral, or outsiders. Moreover, as Kopaczyk-McPherson (forthcoming c, 10–11) argues,

[29] Kopaczyk-McPherson and Jucker (2025, 751) and Jucker and Kopaczyk (2013, 4) also highlight the correlation between CoPs and earlier conceptualisations such as Bloomfield's (1933) 'speech community', Zabrocki's (1963) 'communicative community', Milroy's (1987) 'social network' and Swales' (1990) 'discourse communities'.

[30] Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (2002, 27–32) later modified the criterion of joint enterprise to become 'domain of knowledge'. However, this thesis employs Wenger's criteria as defined in 1998.

even where the original structure or membership of a CoP is not directly recoverable, its existence and functioning can be inferred from the materials it produced.

Taken together, these adaptations demonstrate that the CoP framework can be productively applied to historically situated, text-based communities, provided its defining criteria are interpreted with due methodological flexibility. At the same time Eckert emphasises that the framework is most effective when the chosen CoP is 'particularly salient to the sociolinguistic question being addressed' (2006, 684). This thesis investigates the formulaic language used within a correspondence group in order to analyse how such language reflected the group's sociolinguistic characteristics, as well as how letter-writers shared, adapted, and deployed it to index relationships and influence one another. The StEr correspondence group presents a suitable case to answer the thesis' research questions for two key reasons.[31]

First, this thesis employs methods from sociolinguistic variation analysis, for which the StEr group provides an especially valuable unit of analysis due to its internal diversity. In terms of confessional affiliation, the group encompasses individuals from multiple traditions (Table 1-2; Section 3.1). This diversity allows for an examination of how confessional identity shaped linguistic choices within the CoP. In addition, members of the StEr group vary among other sociocultural dimensions, such as gender, relative status, and relationship type, offering further opportunities for comparative analysis (Section 3.2 outlines the sociocultural background of CoP members).

Second, StEr correspondents made extensive use of the three types of formulaic language examined in this thesis. As personal writings, letters often reflect the sociocultural circumstances of their authors and thus the StEr corpus contains religious language. Seventeenth-century Scotland was a deeply religious society where 'The standard of ethics, personal and social, were biblical […and…] the Bible was a constant book of reference' (Henderson 1937, 13; Sections 2.4.1; 3.1). Research on early modern correspondence has further shown that letter-writers copied text directly from commonplace sources, including the bible (Whyman 2009, 45; Section 5.6). Furthermore, as epistolary documents, the StEr letters predictably employ prescribed formulae (Daybell 2012, 23–13). This analysis focuses on address forms, subscriptions, and superscriptions, which are well-suited to examining how sociolinguistic factors influenced language use (Nevala 2003, 151). A preliminary visual survey of the StEr letters also reveals the frequent use of non-alphanumeric characters. Notably, many of these appear within the most highly formulaic sections

[31] Section 1.2 details the thesis' research questions.

of letters, namely the openings, closings, and superscriptions, further underscoring the relevance of these symbols to the present study.

In sum, if the StEr correspondence group can be shown to function as a CoP, the CoP framework provides a structured lens through which to investigate how members employed formulaic language to achieve their communicative aims in letter-writing.

To assess whether the StEr correspondence group can be considered a CoP, it is first necessary to establish whether it fulfils Wenger's (1998, 72–85) three defining criteria. Following the approach adopted in previous historical sociolinguistic studies (Kopaczyk and Jucker 2013; Cruickshank 2013; Dossena 2013; Conde-Silvestre 2016, 2019; Hofman 2019), this thesis applies Wenger's framework to the StEr correspondents. The remainder of this section therefore evaluates the group in relation to each of Wenger's criteria, beginning with mutual engagement.

2.2.1 Mutual Engagement

Mutual engagement entails sustained, reciprocal interaction among members of the StEr CoP; that is the correspondents must 'act as primary agents in the construction of the message; engage in a direct exchange of information and seek mutual contact' (Kopaczyk and Jucker 2013, 9). However, as noted above, such engagement need not be immediate or face-to-face. Individuals may instead be connected through an intermediary who facilitates interaction, allowing correspondents who are not in direct contact to remain mutually engaged (Kopaczyk-McPherson and Jucker 2025, 763).

Research conducted for this thesis has uncovered substantial evidence of regular communication among the informants, as illustrated in Figure 2-1:

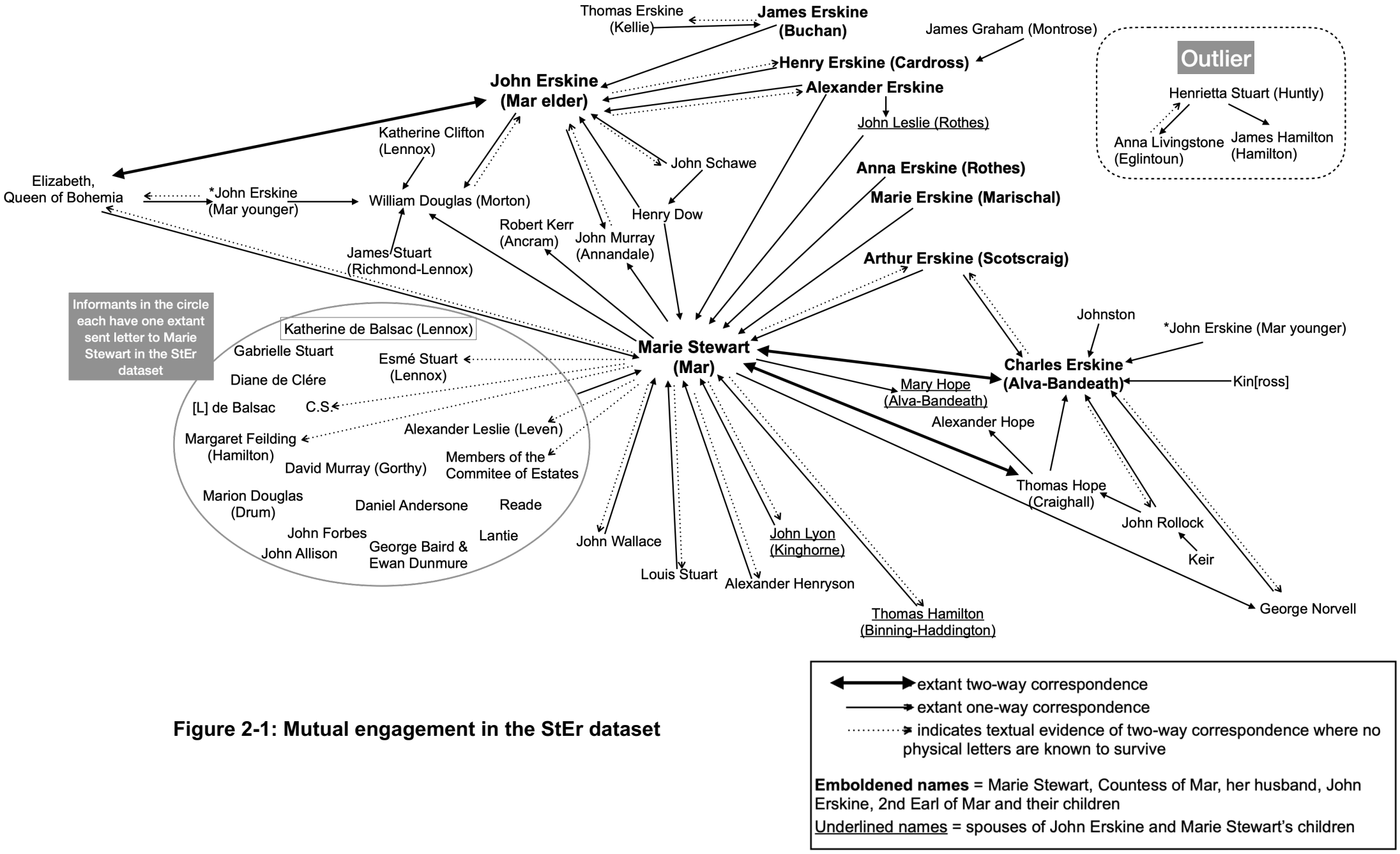


Figure 2-1: Mutual engagement in the StEr dataset

In Figure 2-1 the solid-line arrows represent the physical existence of extant letters, whether originals or copies, preserved in the archive. Double-headed solid-line arrows indicate cases where two-way correspondence has survived, whereas single-headed arrows indicate extant one-way correspondence, pointing from sender to recipient. By contrast, the dotted-line arrows denote letters whose existence is inferred from other StEr correspondence, for which no original or copy is known to survive.

Following these conventions, Figure 2-1 shows, through double-headed solid-line arrows, three pairs of StEr informants for whom two-way correspondence survives in the archive: Marie Stewart (Mar) and Charles Erskine (Alva-Bandeath); Marie Stewart and Thomas Hope (Craighall); and John Erskine (Mar elder) and Elizabeth Stuart, Queen of Bohemia. In addition, fifty-six single-headed solid-line arrows indicate instances where at least one letter survives from a specific sender to a recipient. This substantial body of extant material clearly demonstrates mutual engagement among these StEr informants.

However, this material evidence does not provide proof of engagement for all of the CoP members and the absence of archival materials necessitates the broader interpretive strategies mentioned by Kopaczyk-McPherson and Jucker (2025, 763). The next step is to identify potential mutual engagement among those informants for whom no extant correspondence has been located. As noted in Section 1.3, the surviving StEr manuscripts likely represent only a fraction of what once existed. To address these gaps, the thesis draws on supplementary forms of evidence beyond the surviving artefacts.

The first type of supplementary evidence emerges from the surviving letters themselves. In their writings, many of the StEr informants refer to correspondence received, responses sent, enclosures included, or letters forwarded from third parties. Such references frequently confirm two-way communication, even when only one side of the exchange survives. Examples (2–10) illustrate this point:

(2) ȝour last letter, qŭhilk pŭt ws in great dout hire, quhat we should dou
[your last letter, which put us in great doubt here, what we should do]
(Henry Erskine to John Erskine (Mar elder), NRS GD124/15/34 14 1620)

(3) I haŭe receŭed ȝoŭr letter
[I have received your letter]
(John Erskine (Mar elder) to William Douglas, NLS MS 80 fol. 41 1627)

(4) I ressauit youris of last of Februar
[I received yours of the last of Februrary]
(Thomas Hope to Marie Stewart, NLS MS 5070 fol. 17 1625)

(5) According to your Ladyships desire, soo did I answere your Ladyships lettere
[According to your Ladyship's desire so did I answer your Ladyship's letter]
(John Wallace to Marie Stewart, NLS MS 5155 fol. 9 1635)

(6) I haŭe reseŭed your Ladyships letter from frances
[I have received your Ladyship's letter from France]
(Arthur Erskine to Marie Stewart, NLS MS 5155 fol. 34 1640)

(7) I am sorie to understand be your letter off your wyfis sicknes
[I am sorry to understand by your letter of your wife's sickness]
(Marie Stewart to Sir Charles Erskine, NLS MS 5070 fol. 67 1640)

(8) I resŭed yoŭr Ladyships letter this day from Thomas elder
[I received your Ladyship's letter this day from Thomas Elder]
(Alexander Henryson to Marie Stewart, NLS MS 5155 fol. 44 1643)

(9) I rander you manie thanks for your kynd letter and acknawleges my falt in being so long in answering it
[I render you many thanks for your kind letter and acknowledge my fault in being so long in answering it]
(Arthur Erskine to Charles Erskine NLS MS 5155 fol. 42 1642)

(10) wpon the i5 of this mwnthe I had the honowr and hapines to receawe yowrs of the i6 nowember
[upon the 15 of the month I had the honour and happiness to receive yours of the 16 November]
(Margaret Feilding to Marie Stewart, NLS MS 5070 1636)

Marie Stewart's reference to 'your letter' (ex. 7) helps to fill a conspicuous gap in the archive. Although only one letter sent from Charles to her survives, there are nineteen extant letters sent from her to him. This evidence supports the hypothesis that their correspondence is incomplete, suggesting that many more letters from Charles have been lost.

In addition to confirming mutual engagement, these extracts also reveal the correspondents' concern that their letters had been successfully received. Before the establishment of a public postal service in Scotland (1603) and in England (1635), letters were typically conveyed by unofficial bearers, a practice that often persisted beyond those dates (Brayshay 2016, 48), although such arrangements were not always feasible for correspondence sent across countries or continents. Many of the StEr letters indicate they were hand-carried by trusted intermediaries, an arrangement consistent with the elite status of many members of the CoP (Daybell 2006a, 128). Several letters explicitly identify the bearer, either as a relative: 'this berar my soone' [this bearer, my son] (NLS MS 80 fol. 51, 12 January 1634), a dependable third party: 'This berar […] qŭha I knaŭ

is aene honest man.' (NLS MS 80 fol. 45, 9 October 1627), or a named servant: 'this Berar my servand thomas somervell' [this bearer my servant Thomas Sommerville] (NLS MS 80 fol. 53, 3 February 1604).[32] Others make clear that the bearer was expected to return with a reply, as in Arthur Erskine's request that his mother, Marie Stewart, respond 'with this berar' (NLS MS 5155 fols. 22–23, 15 October 1639).

Alongside such personal arrangements, other systems of conveyance were available. For royal correspondence such as the letters Elizabeth of Bohemia sent to Marie Stewart and John Erskine, Crown messengers may have acted as carriers.[33] Governmental letters, such as that sent to Stewart by the Scottish Committee of Estates, were conveyed either by personal servants or accredited state messengers (Brayshay 2016, 49; 53). Local posts, often staffed by men familiar with the area, also operated, as did common carriers offering more formal, sometimes licensed services (Brayshay 2016, 50; 52). John Erskine (Mar elder) records adapting to such circumstances when writing to William Douglas: 'fynding this berar goinge post, I teŭk pŭrposs to send itt by him' [finding this bearer going to the post, I resolved to send it by him] (NLS MS 80 fol. 40, 10 October 1608).[34]

For international correspondence between Britain, France, and the Low Countries, relevant to Stewart's family networks and her sons' travels, licensed couriers could be employed (Brayshay 2016, 54). However, StEr letters also document more ad hoc arrangements. Writing from Padua, Henry referred to 'this berer, quha is the secretere his sone' [this bearer, who is the secretary's son] (NRS GD124/15/34/12, 24 Jun 1619), and Alexander Erskine relied on individuals travelling to Scotland from both Arnhem and the Hague to deliver letters directly into his father's hands.[35]

---

[32] The letters also show that bearers were entrusted with imparting additional oral information, as in the following examples: 'I remitt all further to […] the berar whoe is sufficeint of him self' [I remit all further to […] the bearer who is sufficient in himself' (NLS MS 5155 fol. 9, 15 December 1635); 'the berar him self will Informit ȝour Lordship suffitiently' [the bearer himself will inform your Lordship fully] (NLS MS 80 fol. 53, 3 February 1604); 'I haŭe […] att lenth conferred vith this berar' [I have […] at length, conferred with this bearer] (NLS MS 80 fol. 41, 25 January 1627). Bearers were also charged with carrying documents as in: 'please yoŭr Ladyship send bak thir papers with this bearer' [please your Ladyship, send back these papers with this bearer] (NLS MS 5070 fols. 32–33, 14 February 1636); 'send ye commodities conteanit in ye inclosit note with ye bearar' [send the commodities contained in the enclosed note with the bearer] (NLS MS 5155 fols. 32–33, 23 November 1640). Some letters were written specifically to accompany men seeking patronage or military service. One, from John Erskine, 2nd earl of Mar to William Douglas, 7th earl of Morton, introduced 'this gentillman berar heirof alexander barklay being very desyrŭss to folloŭ the vars vnder ȝoŭr commandementt' [this gentleman bearer hereof, Alexander Barclay, is very keen to follow the wars under your command] (NLS MS 80 fol. 44, 5 September 1627).

[33] When writing to the queen himself, Erskine entrusted his letter to the Scottish soldier, Sir William Balfour: 'I vvill most hoŭmblie intrett ȝoŭr maiestie to heir and trŭst this berar Sir villiam ballfoŭr' [I will most humbly entreat your Majesty to hear and trust this bearer, Sir William Balfour] (NRS GD124/15/65, 4 May 1626).

[34] 'I teŭk pŭrposs': 'to tak to purpos, to resolve, determine.' (*DSL* 4.0 'Purpos n.' sense 1(5) and 1c.).

[35] These arrangements are made apparent in Alexander's remarks, writing from Arnhem: 'this berer vil and kan inform your lordship far moir particularly, then I am able to dou be my letters' [this bearer will and can

Likewise, writing from London, Henry Erskine indicated that the bearer would carry the letter from England to Scotland and deliver it in person to his father: 'this berer can informe ȝoŭr lordship of them be tongŭe better nor I can wreat' [this bearer can inform your Lordship of them [the news] by tongue better than I can write] (NRS GD124/15/34/15, 12 Apr 1620).

Despite such efforts to ensure safe delivery, the paths taken by the StEr letters, like early modern correspondence more generally, were not always straightforward. As Wiggins observes, letters' deliveries were often complicated by them being 'lost, intercepted, stolen, shipwrecked, forgotten, returned, forwarded, displaced, forged, never sent […] or any combination of these scenarios' (2024, 201). Indeed, several letters from Henry Erskine to his father, written during his travels in Europe, express concern that expected replies may have gone astray:

> (11) desyring to heire from ȝowr Lordship for sence oŭr being heir we haue not hard no letters.
> [desiring to hear from your Lordship for since our being here we have not had any letters] (NRS GD124/15/34/10, 28 December 1618)

> (12) ever hoping to haue receved some directions be ȝoŭr Lordships letters
> [ever hoping to have received some directions by Lordship's letters] (NRS GD124/15/34/11, 28 Mar 1619)

> (13) fering that our letters wos lost
> [fearing that our letters were lost] (NRS GD124/15/34/13, 7 Oct 1619)

Additionally, his letters demonstrate the possibility for mishaps to befall appointed bearers:

> (14) sence oŭr bakcomming to France, I haŭe receved tŭa of ȝoŭr Lordships letters; in the qŭhilkes ȝoŭr Lordship directit ws to cast oŭr selfs in Scotland, in Merche; the qŭhilke is impossible, in respeak that ȝoŭr Lordships letters did not comme to oŭr hands, till the .24. of Ianŭer, be raison of the danger qŭhilke Ieonnes Lyon rane be sea
>
> [since our coming back to France, I have received two of your Lordship's letters, in which your Lordship directed us to return to Scotland in March; the which is impossible, in respect that your Lordship's letters did not come [in] to our hands til the 24th of January, by reason of the danger John Lyon encountered while he was at sea] (GD124/15/34/14, 11 Feb 1620)

Given the potential for delivery failures, his comments confirm that it was both courteous and practical to inform correspondents of a letter's safe arrival.

---

inform your Lordship far more particularly, than I am able to do by my letters] (NRS GD124/15/35/13, 4 Sep 1623), and also from The Hague, 'this berer Capten Irouing kan inform your lordship better' [this bearer, Captain Irving, can inform your Lordship better] (NRS GD124/15/35/16, 6 Nov 1623).

The second type of supplementary evidence for the existence of letters beyond those preserved in the archive can be inferred from the familial, legal, and social ties connecting members of the StEr CoP Table 1-2; Chapter 3. The content of the extant StEr letters describes interactions that would have required ongoing exchanges among certain informants, even where no physical or textual traces remain. For instance, as noted above, the eleven extant letters sent by Stewart to her son Charles concerning the legal action she pursued against her stepson, John Erskine (Mar younger) indicate that Charles acted on her behalf and was closely involved in the proceedings. Several additional surviving letters addressed to Stewart also pertain to this action. The senders include Charles' father-in-law, Thomas Hope who was Lord Advocate of Scotland during the period and appointed Lord High Commissioner to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1643 (Paul 1893, 74); his brothers, Alexander, and Arthur Erskine; Sir Louis Stuart of Kirkhill (1586–1655), another legal practitioner, also referred to as Sir Lewis Stewart (Sanderson 1984, 49); Daniel Andersone, a servant of the family; and his brothers-in-law, John Leslie (Rothes), and John Lyon (Kinghorn).[36] The sole known surviving letter sent by Charles to his mother does not directly address this matter, nor do any of the other extant correspondence between Charles and other CoP members. Nevertheless, his documented role in the case makes it highly probable that such correspondence once existed. Their circulation would likely have paralleled the surviving exchanges between Stewart and these figures, and well as between Stewart and her son.

A similar rationale applies to Henrietta Stuart, countess of Huntly (highlighted by the dotted oblong in Figure 2-1) who appears as an outlier in the StEr group. She is the only informant for whom no surviving correspondence with other StEr members is known. As noted above, levels of participation within a CoP can vary with members ranging from central to marginal (Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder 2002, 55–58; Grund 2021, 58–59). While Henrietta appears peripheral in the surviving record, this likely reflects the absence of letters rather than her actual role; she may well have been a core participant. Surviving letters from her mother Catherine, and siblings Gabrielle and Esmé (Lennox younger) to their sister Marie Stewart suggest that they may also have written to Henrietta. With Catherine and Gabrielle residing in France and Henrietta in Scotland, letter-writing would have been the primary means of maintaining contact, as it was for Stewart. Moreover, as Section 3.1 demonstrates, the five Stuart/Stewart siblings remained closely connected throughout their lives. For these reasons, Henrietta has been included in the StEr CoP.

[36] Sir George Stirling of Keir and Cawder was identified as the sender of the StEr letter NLS MS 5155, fols. 24–25; 27 June 1640 by correlating the date with his tenure as Laird of Keir and by comparing the signature on the StEr manuscript with the facsimile signatures reproduced in Fraser (1858, 48; 164).

Additional support for the existence of further lost correspondence for the CoP comes from contemporary references to letters in other writings. In her later years, Marie Stewart resided in Thomas Hope's house in the Cowgate, Edinburgh. Several of Hope's diary entries dating from 1635 to 1641 record the receipt, transmission, or carriage of letters between himself, Stewart, and other members of the CoP as Examples (15–19) reproduced from Thomson (1843 25, 57, 124, 129, 134), demonstrate:

> (15) quhairin a letter to the Lord Duik from the Countess of Mar, and from me to Erl Ancrum
> [wherein a letter to the Lord Duke from the Countess of Mar, and from me to Earl Ancram]
>
> (16) letters to the Lord Duik from the Countess of Mar in my favors, and my awin letter to the Lord Marques of Hamiltoun
> [letters to the Lord Duke from the Countess of Mar in my favours, and my own letter to the Lord Marquess of Hamilton]
>
> (17) This day a pacquet […] to the Erl Rothes, and within it the Countes of Mar hir packet, and my letter to the Erll conveying it. […] Item, letters […] within one from the Countes of Merschell
> [This day a packet […] to the Earl of Rothes, and within it, the Countess of Mar her packet, and my letter to the earl conveying it. […] Item, letters […] within, one from the Countess of Marischall]
>
> (18) letter to my sone Mr. Alexander, and within it one to him from Cambuskynneth; and a pacquet from the Countes of Marr to Erl Rothes, or hir sone Scottiscraig, quhilk I haif appointit my sone Mr. Alexander to delyver. Item, twa letters to the Erl of Annandaill
> [a letter to my son Mr. . Alexander, and within it one to him from Cambuskenneth; and a packet from the Countess of Mar to Earl Rothes, or her son Scotscraig, which I have appointed my son Mr. Alexander to deliver. Item, two letters to the Earl of Annandale]
>
> (19) Resavit […] letters […] and within them to Countes of Merschell, Erl Kinghorne
> [Received […] letters […] and within them to the Countess of Marischall, [and] the Earl of Kinghorn]

Hope's notes demonstrate that he dispatched letters to several CoP members, although the physical manuscripts could not be identified for inclusion in the corpus. The recipients include Robert Ker, 'Erl Ancrum' (ex. 15); James Hamilton (Hamilton younger), 'Lord Marques of Hamiltoun' (ex. 16); John Leslie, 'Erl Rothes' (17); and John Murray, 'Erl of Annandaill' (ex. 18). The diary further records epistolary exchanges not represented in the surviving correspondence. For instance, Marie Stewart sent letters to 'the Lord Duik' (exs. 15–16), possibly James Stuart, 4th duke of Lennox, 1st duke of Richmond (1612–1655) (Cust 1891, 99); to John Leslie, 'Erl Rothes' (ex.

18); and to her son Arthur Erskine, 'Scottiscraig' (ex. 18). Hope also recorded the receipt of a letter from Marie Stewart's daughter, Marie Erskine, 'Countes of Merschell' (17), as well as a letter received on her behalf (ex. 19) and on behalf of Stewart's son-in-law, John Lyon, 'Erl Kinghorne' (ex. 19). Finally, the diary mentions a letter sent to Hope's son Alexander from Stewart's son, Charles Erskine ('Cambuskynneth') (ex. 18).

Considered as a whole, the evidence of familial and social connections among CoP members, the inferred reasons for correspondence beyond extant letters, and the textual evidence from surviving manuscripts make it possible to reconstruct a wider network of now-lost correspondence. Collectively, this body of evidence strongly supports the conclusion that the StEr informants were mutually engaged in regular and sustained epistolary interaction.

2.2.2 Joint Enterprise

The second requirement of a CoP is that its members pursue a joint enterprise: an endeavour sustained through mutual engagement. In the early modern period, letters provided a reliable means of communication in the absence of face-to-face interaction. Beyond this core function, letters served a wide range of communicative purposes, encompassing formal and informal, public, and domestic matters, often within a single text (Maurice 2002, 6; Del Lungo Camiciotti 2014, 28).

To identify the joint enterprises (communicative purposes) of the StEr CoP, this thesis categorises letters according to their communicative purpose and rhetorical form. Such categorisation was also characteristic of early modern letter-writing guides. There were no Scots manuals, but several influential guides existed in other languages, including, in Latin, Erasmus' *De Conscribendis Epistolis* (1522); in English, William Fulwood's *The Enemie of Idlenesse* (1568), itself a translation of the French *Le Stile et Manière de Composer, Dicter, et Escrire Toute Sorte d'Epistres* (1553, attributed to Jean de la Moyne and based on *Le Prothocolle des Secretaires* of 1550); Angel Day's hugely successful *The English Secretorie* (1568) and Nicholas Breton's *A Poste with a Madde Packet of Letters* (1602).[37] Also influential were Jacques du Bosque's *The Secretary of Ladies* (1638) and Jean-Puget de la Serre's (1640) *The Secretary in Fashion,* both translated from French, the latter by Massinger. In French, Étienne du Tronchet's Lettres *Missives et Familières*

[37] Although there are no records of early modern Scottish epistolary manuals, one Scots writing master, David Brown, published two books on handwriting: *The New Invention Intituled Calligraphia, or the Art of Faire Writing* in 1622, and *The Introduction to the True Understanding of the Whole Arte of Expedition in Teaching to Write* in 1638 (Simpson 2009, 29).

(1569) was another key publication (Green 2003, 263–265; Tanskanen 2003, 174; Daybell 2006b, 5–6; Eurich 2011, 4).

The extent to which individual members of the StEr CoP had direct access to such manuals is uncertain; Section 3.2 considers the linguistic competencies that would have enabled engagement with them. Elite, gentry, and middling correspondents may have consulted widely available works such as Day's handbook (1568), which addressed both established and aspiring writers, offering insight into the verbal interactions of both the powerful and those aspiring to power (Magnusson 1999, 62). For less privileged CoP members, access to printed guides may have been limited. Instead, epistolary conventions were often learned through manuscript miscellanies, commonplace books, and the circulation and copying of letters themselves (Daybell 2006b, 5–6).

This thesis aims to analyse the StEr correspondence in a way that reflects the functional complexity of early modern letters and the specific nature of the materials. Since individual letters often serve multiple purposes (as noted by Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 1995, 548), the analytical framework must be flexible enough to capture overlap while still enabling systematic comparison. To meet this need, the thesis employs descriptive, non-exclusive labels tailored to the content of the letters, allowing for nuanced quantitative analysis that accounts for the extra-linguistic dimensions of the StEr CoP.[38]

This categorisation draws on both classical epistolary models (Erasmus 1522; Day 1568) and modern scholarship (Magnusson 1999; Daybell 2001, 2015; Nevalainen 2001; Fitzmaurice 2002; Dossena and Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2008; Dossena 2013; Harris 2016; Wiggins 2017; Pallister 2018; Evans 2020).[39] In particular, it is informed by Wiggins' (2017, 31–32) four 'epistolary styles' in the correspondence of Bess of Hardwick which demonstrate that, despite overlap, categorical distinctions support both broad and detailed analysis of letter-writing practices (2017, 31–32).

The first label, BUSINESS, is a general classification widely used by scholars (Magnusson 1999, 13; Daybell 2001, 4; Nevalainen 2001, 212; Dossena and Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2008, 8; Dossena 2013, 48; Pallister 2018, 82). The most frequent StEr category, it reflects the centrality of household and estate management to early modern correspondence (Magnusson 1999, 92). Approximately seventy-seven StEr letters align with Wiggins' categories of 'letters of household

[38] A synopsis of each letter's content is provided in the MS Excel file of metadata provided for this thesis, StErCor2_Workbook.xlsx (see Accompanying Material, p. 10).

[39] In *De Conscribendis Epistolis*, Erasmus (1522) grouped persuasive, demonstrative, judicial letters together and put familiar letters into a separate category (quoted in Nevalainen 2001, 211). Over half a century later, following Erasmus, in *The English Secretorie*, Day used the divisions of demonstrative, deliberative, judicial, and also familiar (1568, 41).

and estate management' or 'letters in curial prose concerned with business and legal matters' (2017, 31–32). Almost fifty of Marie Stewart's seventy-five extant letters fall into this category, documenting her legal dispute with her son-in-law as well as exchanges with her stewards, local landowners, and prominent Covenanters, thus portraying her as an astute and attentive businesswoman (Elder 2022, 21; 32; 72; 2024). Several letters also deal with attempts to reclaim precious items of jewellery which had belonged to her daughter Katherine, misappropriated in the aftermath of her death (Sections 1.3.5; 3.3).[40]

In this respect, the StEr CoP mirrors other epistolary CoPs analysed through corpus linguistic methods. Dossena (2013, 48) identifies 250 business letters in a nineteenth-century Scottish corpus, while Cruickshank (2013, 21) tracks anglicisation in letters on agricultural land management. Further comparisons may be drawn with English corpora, including Conde-Silvestre's (2016, 2019) studies of the fifteenth-century Stonor family and Evans' (2011, 2020) work on formalised business writing in Elizabeth I's secretariat.

Other relevant studies do not explicitly adopt the CoP framework yet still conceptualise their letter-writing groups as communities. Meurman-Solin (1999, 319) and Wood (2009, 188) described their correspondents as speech communities. Related concepts also appear, such as 'discourse communities' (Kopaczyk and Jucker 2013, 5) and 'social networks', used by Bergs (2021, 7) to describe the Paston correspondents. As Kopaczyk and Jucker note, however, while these models share affinities, they are 'built around different defining features' tailored to specific research projects (2013, 5).

Within the StEr corpus, the BUSINESS label sub-divides into HOUSEHOLD/ESTATE (domestic and estate matters relating to the family such as farming (e.g., John Rollock to Sir Charles Erskine, NLS MS 5155 fols. 51–52, 17 July 1644), horse stabling (e.g., John Rollock to Sir Charles Erskine, NLS MS 5155 fols. 40-41, 17 January 1641), or land sales (e.g., J. Lantie to Marie Stewart, countess of Mar, NLS MS 5070 fols. 4–5, 10 March 1623); FINANCIAL (monetary transactions and discussions of finance, often relating to the payment of annualrents or crop duties); LEGAL (letters pertaining to Stewart's action against John Erskine (Mar younger) (Section 3.3); and WAR (for instance, correspondence concerning voluntary contributions of silver to the war effort (e.g., John Rollock to Sir Charles Erskine, NLS MS 5155 fols. 38-39, 28 December 1640) (Section 3.1); military

[40] The letters concerning the recovery of the jewels were addressed to Marie Stewart, countess of Mar by Thomas Hamilton, Lord Binning (later 2nd earl of Haddington) (NLS MS 5070 fols. 34–35, 5 May 1636; fols. 36–37, 13 May 1636), and by John Wallace (NLS MS 5070 fols. 23–24, 2 October 1635; fols 27–28, 7 December 1635, and NLS MS 5155 fol. 9, 15 December 1635.)

arrangements (e.g., John Rollock to Sir Charles Erskine, NLS MS 5155 fols. 24-25, 27 June 1640) and updates on military developments (e.g., C.S. to Marie Stewart, countess of Mar, NLS MS 5155 fols. 53–54, 1 January 1644).[41]

The second category, PETITIONS, corresponds to Magnusson's (2004, 51) 'suitor's letters', in which senders sought or dispensed patronage or preferment. Such 'letters of petition' (Daybell 2015, 517; Harris 2016, 26) were a widely recognised means of requesting assistance across social strata. Petitionary language appears across genders and letter types, from intimate family exchanges to formal supplications (Daybell 2015, 517), or congregational appeals to ministers (Dossena 2013, 56–57). Within the StEr dataset, ten letters make explicit use of such requestive strategies: two formal supplications addressed to the Countess; two petitions by Stewart herself to William Douglas and Robert Ker; one from her sister Henrietta to James Hamilton, 2nd marquess of Hamilton and 4th earl of Arran (1589–1625) (hence Hamilton [elder]) (Stevenson 2004b; Section 3.1); two from Thomas Erskine, 1st earl of Kellie (1566–12 June 1639) (Paul 1908, V:84–86) to James Erskine, 6th earl of Buchan (c. 1595–c. 1640) (Paul 1905, II:271); and three from Stewart's son Alexander, two to his mother and one to his brother-in-law John Leslie.[42] These are categorised as PETITIONS, though requestive strategies appear more broadly in the corpus. They are analysed in Section 5.4.

The third category, FAMILIAR, corresponds to Nevalainen's (2001, 211), and Dossena's (2013, 50) typologies, and to what Fitzmaurice (2002, 5) calls 'letters of love and friendship'. Such letters often conveyed social courtesies or acted as gifts (Daybell 2006a, 152; 157; 165; 166). Examples include a pair of letters enclosed in the same packet to John Murray (Annandale): one, a thank you note from Stewart (NLS Adv.MS 33.1.1 v fol. 118, undated, [10 October 1614]); the other a request from her husband, John Erskine for a hunting hawk (NLS Adv.MS 33.1.1 v fol. 119, 10 October 1614; Sections 5.3; 6.5.2).

---

[41] Annualrents are frequently discussed in the StEr letters exchanged between Marie Stewart, her attendants and other correspondents, and the word itself appears at least twenty-seven times across the corpus. Before the Reformation lending money at interest was illegal. To avoid this prohibition, lenders could instead charge a yearly rent on land. The profit was termed 'annualrent', a word that came to be synonymous with 'interest' (*DSL* 4.0 'Annualrent n.').

[42] The ten StEr petitions are Thomas Erskine, 1st earl of Kellie, to James Erskine, Lord Buchan, NLS MS 5070, fols. 6–7 (24 Apr. 1625) and 8–9 (1 May 1627); Colonel Alexander Erskine to Marie Stewart, countess of Mar, NLS MS 5155, fols. 14–15 (24 July 1638) and 18 (16 Aug. 1638); the same to John Leslie, 6th earl of Rothes, NLS MS 5155, fols. 16–17 (24 July 1638); Marie Stewart, countess of Mar, to William Douglas, 7th earl of Morton, NLS MS 80, fol. 53 (3 Feb. 1604), and to Robert Ker, earl of Ancram, NRS GD40/2/13/34 (21 Jan. 1624); John Forbes to Marie Stewart, countess of Mar, NRS GD124/15/95 (2 Jan. 1633); John Allisone to Marie Stewart, countess of Mar, NRS GD124/17/629 (1633); and Henrietta Stuart, countess of Huntly, to James Hamilton, 2nd marquess of Hamilton and 4th earl of Arran, NRS GD406/1/9597 (undated, before 1636).

Other examples include a playful bilingual note to an unknown 'Knight', signed 'Montrose'. Penned by James Graham, marquis of Montrose, it requested that the recipient ask his mother to extend his sister's (described therein 'Ms Katherine, their nymphe') visit with friends in Glasgow (NLS MS 5155 fol. 3, 10 October [aft. 1625]; Section 6.6).[43] Queen Elizabeth of Bohemia also wrote several FAMILIAR letters to the Countess and Earl of Mar, two of which urged them to allow their son Alexander to marry her gentlewoman, Margaret Croft (NRS GD124/15/57/5, 20 November 1625; NRS GD1/44/8, 30 November 1625).

Familiar correspondence could also convey emotion (Daybell 2006a, 166) as demonstrated in many of the StEr letters. For instance, two of the French FAMILIAR letters contain explicit expressions of gratitude. In a letter from her relative Diane de Cléré, Stewart was thanked for a present:

> (20) le beau presant que iay resu de vous qui ne sera iamais separer de moy que par la fin de ma uie
>
> [the beautiful gift I have received from you, which shall never be separated from me except by the end of my life] (NLS MS 5087 fol. 87, undated)

Her sister Gabrielle similarly expressed thanks for a gift:

> (21) La belle petite Montre que vous maues enuoiee don't ie vous remercie comme Ma bonne sœur que iayme plus que Moymesme, ie la tiens fort chere et la garderay bien curieusement comme ung chef dœuure
>
> [the beautiful little watch that you sent me, for which I thank you as my good sister, whom I love more than myself. I hold it very dear and will treasure it as a masterpiece] (NLS MS 5070 fol. 3, 28 January 1617)

[43] I am grateful to Dr Jamie Reid-Baxter and Dr Andrew Lind for assistance in identifying Montrose's handwriting and signature. The letter is dated 10 October, but no year is given, and several features complicate the attribution of recipient and date. An archivist's note places it before 1622, assuming that the reference to 'our nymphe Katharine' refers to Katherine Erskine, daughter of Marie Stewart, countess of Mar, who was contracted to Thomas Hamilton, Lord Binning (later earl of Haddington), on 27 February 1622. On this basis, the note suggests that 'Katharine' was unmarried and the letter predates the contract. However, this dating is improbable: James Graham did not succeed to the title 'Montrose' until 1626, and, as Dr Lind confirms, the handwriting cannot be his father's, who was terminally ill after 1619. Graham would also have been only ten in 1622, whereas the style and tone suggest a more mature author. Michael Pearce (2020) has suggested Sir Henry Erskine, Master of Cardross as the recipient, but the letter bears neither superscription text nor addressee's name, leaving the identification uncertain. Given the EModE tendency during this period to refer to in-laws as *brother* or *sister* (in Scots this is prefaced with *guid*, for example, 'guid-brither' [*DSL* 4.0 'Gud n.')]), it is also possible that Montrose's letter was addressed to Katherine's brother-in-law, rather than her brother. I would like to add further thanks to Dr Reid-Baxter for this suggestion. This tendency is confirmed within the StEr corpus. For example, in his letter to his mother-in-law, Marie Stewart, Binning referred to himself as 'your Ladyship's unfortunate sonne' (NLS MS 5070 fols. 36–37, 13 May 1636), and Thomas Hope consistently addressed his son-in-law, Charles as 'sone' (e.g., NLS MS 5070 fols. 81–82, 1 September 1640).

These two letters are analysed in further detail in Section 3.1 and Chapters 5–7.

FAMILIAR letters could also contain autobiographical reflection, marked by first-person pronouns such as 'I', 'my' , 'mine' and 'my self' (Daybell 2006a, 166). This type of self-reflective content is evident in Stewart's letters to her son Charles. In one, she lamented: 'my mind is so opprest with manie griues that I am not nott mester of my selfe' [my mind is oppressed with so much grief that I am not master of my self] (NLS MS 5088 fols. 76–77, 31 December 1639). In another, she reflected:

> experience hath teached me werie deir leassons, that so long as I liue I will find itt and that to my great grife and harme, so ye must excuse me to take sum time, for my pairt I shall euer be rewled be reason, and I think no more shuld be craued of me'
>
> [experience has taught me very dear lessons, that so long as I live I will find it and that to my great grief and harm, so you must excuse me to take some time, for my part I shall ever be ruled by reason, and I think no more should be craved of me]
>
> (NLS MS 5070 fol. 58, 13 January 1640).

Daybell cautions that such autobiographical identities were often constructed from a range of 'social or cultural scripts' rather than transparent expressions of the writer's inner thought (2006a, 166–169). Lyall (1996, 132) expressed a similar scepticism, observing that,

> the selves we are shown by sixteenth-century writers are always, I think, a function of a specific rhetorical purpose; and they are modulated through a complex system of genres whose limits and possibilities were well understood by author and audience alike. (1996, 132)

Nevertheless, reading Stewart's words it is difficult to imagine they did not represent her true feelings, a notion which is analysed in detail in Section 5.3.

Although this thesis designates such letters FAMILIAR, as noted above, it acknowledges overlaps with other functions: around one hundred combine FAMILIAR and BUSINESS elements, forty-four are solely FAMILIAR, and thirty-five solely BUSINESS. To refine this category, two sub-labels are used. DEFENCE marks two letters to Stewart from Margaret Feilding (Section 5.5), and John Lyon, who defended themselves against gossip. KIRK DEALINGS designates two letters from Alexander Henderson responding to Stewart's attempts to secure his transfer to a new parish (Section 5.6).

A final thematic category is TRAVEL/NEWS. Like many wealthy young men, Henry and Alexander Erskine undertook a 'Grand Tour' of Europe, typically including study at French or Italian universities (Tucker 2002, 116; van Heijnsbergen and Royan 2002, xiv). Their correspondence with

their father, John Erskine, and their attendant, John Schawe, reflects this experience.[44] Unlike the prescriptive epistolary genre of travel writing or travelogues, which gained popularity in the late early modern period and blended public narrative with personal memoir (Camiciotti 2014, 25), these letters are less formal, covering practical, personal, and public matters. They include requests for money, reports on movements, health, and academic progress; and accounts of European news (these letters are discussed in 1.3.5 and 2.2.2). In aligning their letters with paternal expectations across distance, they also reinforce the CoP.

On balance, this evidence supports the conclusion that the StEr informants fulfilled the second defining feature of a CoP: the pursuit of a joint enterprise. While the discussion above emphasised explicit communicative aims, mutual engagement served a broader, implicit joint enterprise: the cultivation and reinforcement of social bonds through ongoing communication (Meyerhoff and Strycharz 2013, 430). In maintaining these relationships, the correspondents actively shaped one another's practices, contributing to the development of a shared repertoire, the final CoP criterion. The following section provides preliminary evidence for this repertoire.

2.2.3 Shared Repertoire

Wenger's (1998, 72–73) final criterion for identifying a CoP is the development of a shared repertoire, understood as resources that emerge from sustained mutual engagement and joint enterprise. To meet this criterion requires demonstrable evidence of members actively developing shared 'lexical and structural resources' (Kopaczyk and Jucker 2013, 9). Linguistic studies indicate that such repertoires are often reflected in consistent language use: for instance, stable agricultural and legal lexis appears in correspondence between Lord Fife and his stewards (Cruickshank 2013, 21); spelling uniformity is evident in the Stonor letters (Conde-Silvestre 2019, 26); and conventionalised expressions feature in religious and epistolary formulaic language (Dossena 2013, 50–55; Rutten and van der Wal 2012, 177; 2013, 51–56; Pfeiffer and Schiegg 2020, 271–72). In line with this scholarship, the present thesis examines two types of shared linguistic resource in the StEr letters: namely religious and epistolary formulaic language.

[44] The StEr dataset contains sixteen travel letters sent by Alexander to his father between 1617 and 1623 (NRS GD124/15/35/1–16) and a further sixteen sent by Henry between 1617 and 1624 (NRS GD124/15/34/1–15 and NRS GD124/15/58). Additionally, their companion, John Schawe who handled the logistics of their travel, accommodation, finances, personal care and education, sent 22 to the earl, John Erskine, between 1616 and 1620 whilst travelling with the boys (NRS GD124/15/32/1–22) and one to Henry Dow (a colleague and friend of Schawe who may also have acted as an attendant to John Erskine in Scotland) in 1617 (NRS GD124/15/33/1).

The findings show that members of the StEr CoP employed religious and epistolary formulaic language in ways consistent with wider early modern practice. Religious formulae served multiple pragmatic functions, including structuring letters, maintaining social bonds, and supporting persuasion, allowing correspondents to express shared faith while also framing actions and advice as morally justified (Chapter 5). Epistolary formulae were similarly conventional, with address forms and closings calibrated to the relationship between correspondents and typically conveying routine affection rather than heightened emotional intimacy. As in other early modern corpora, however, occasional departures from convention signal more sincere or marked affect, aligning with patterns observed in previous scholarship (Chapter 6).

Although linguistic features often form the analytical core of CoP studies, Wenger (1998, 83) also emphasised that a shared repertoire may also include non-linguistic resources, such as layout conventions and symbolic markers. Building on this insight, Timofeeva (2013, 203–204; 2022, 24) examined shared practices within monastic communities. As noted by Kopaczyk-McPherson and Jucker, the CoP framework can be applied to study the wide range of 'multimodal features' found in manuscripts and other texts (2025, 766).

Extending this approach to early modern correspondence, this thesis argues that letter-writers shared material and visual practices, including layout, folding techniques, and symbolic marks, which likewise formed part of a shared repertoire. The StEr correspondents demonstrably employed such conventions and, alongside widely circulating practices, developed distinctive in-group usages, most notably in their deployment of the fermesse symbol (Chapter 7). Our understanding of how early modern letter-writers used the fermesse, and what personal meanings it held, remains limited, and its use in Scotland has been almost entirely overlooked. By analysing examples from the StEr letters, this thesis extends scholarship on the visual dimensions of early modern Scottish epistolary culture while also contributing evidence to studies of French-language correspondence.

As well as this, previous scholarship on early modern letters has not explicitly applied the CoP framework, yet studies by Daybell (2012), Daybell and Gordon (2016), Wiggins (2017), Evans (2020), and Kaislaniemi (2017, 2022–2025, forthcoming) foreground the role of shared epistolary practices in shaping group identity and interaction, aligning closely with the concept of a shared repertoire. To offer evidence for the StEr CoP's shared repertoire, this section briefly examines

one representative linguistic feature: epistolary formulaic language in openings and closings, and one material practice: layout and folding.[45]

Turning first to openings and closings, preliminary analysis reveals a striking degree of consistency in address and subscription formulaic language. Forty-two correspondents used a variation of *Madame*, and the same number employed a variant of *My Lord*. An equal number opted for either the Scots form *Richt honorabill* or the EModE *Right honourable*, with some orthographic variation. These groups of correspondents also overlap, with six individuals employing two of the formulae mentioned in their letters.[46] The majority of the closings also exhibit close similarities with approximately fifty letters containing a variation of the formula *your Ladyship's (or Lordship's) servant (serviteur)*. While spellings vary, ranging from Scots forms like 'ȝour', to anglicised variants like 'your', the structural patterns are consistent. These closings are often augmented by modifiers such as 'maist', adjectives like 'humble', 'obedient', 'faithful', and by conventional phrases such as 'at pouer' or 'to be commandit'. Despite minor orthographic differences, the high degree of structural uniformity across these epistolary features offers compelling evidence of a shared linguistic repertoire.

Turning now to material features, the layout of the majority of the StEr letters adheres closely to the early modern letter-writing conventions described by Daybell, thus:

> [The] main parts [on] the inside of a letter [were the] opening and closing modes of address; the salutation, subscription, and signature; the dating formulae and postscript. The outside of a letter contained the superscription, the address [...] seals and signs of sealing (Daybell 2012, 12–13).[47]

Moreover, beyond layout, certain letters demonstrate a shared awareness of socially meaningful epistolary techniques. While most of the letters in the corpus were folded into the commonplace 'tuck-and-seal' dispatch packet (Wolfe 2012, 169), six examples employed a more elaborate 'accordion' folding style, producing a tiny packet bound shut with coloured silk floss: a mechanism sometimes associated with intimate or affectionate correspondence (Wolfe 2013; Dambrogio and

[45] While this section provides a preliminary analysis, a more detailed examination of these formulaic features is presented in Chapters 5–7.

[46] Only one correspondent, Alexander Erskine, used all three types of formula. Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia used both *My Lord* and *Madame*. Two correspondents, Sir Louis Stuart and John Wallace, used both a version of *Madame* and a formula beginning *Richt honorabill* or *Right honourable*. Lastly, three correspondents, Katherine Clifton, Thomas Erskine, and Henry Erskine, used both *My Lord* and a version of the *Richt honorabill* or *Right honourable* formula.

[47] Section 6.2 discusses the layout of the StEr letters in further detail.

Starza Smith 2025, 124).[48] This selective use of intricate letterlocking suggests that these six senders, all of whom were writing to Marie Stewart, not only adhered to shared conventions but also strategically deployed them to convey social meaning.

All of the letters using this folding method can be classed as FAMILIAR letters. Five were sent by family members: her siblings, Gabrielle and Esmé, and her relatives, Diane de Cléré and Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia. The remaining example was from the poet David Murray of Gorthy who, along with John Murray (Annandale), was first cousin to Stewart's husband John Erskine (MacDonald 2004; Reid-Baxter 2022, 72).[49] These letters are marked by a tone of intimacy that aligns with the personal nature typically associated with the accordion fold, suggesting that the material and linguistic design worked in tandem to affirm familial and friendship bonds (Sections 5.6; 7.1).

Taken together, these linguistic and material consistencies provide robust evidence that the StEr correspondents developed a shared repertoire in both language and epistolary form. Their consistent practices functioned as social markers to reinforce group identity and cohesion. When considered alongside the previous sections on mutual engagement (Section 2.2.1) and joint enterprise (Section 2.2.2), these findings strongly support the classification of the StEr correspondents as a CoP. The next section examines how this model integrates with scholarly frameworks for analysing formulaic language in early modern correspondence.

2.3 Historical Pragmatics, Sociolinguistics, and Corpus Linguistics

This thesis draws on the combined frameworks of historical pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and corpus linguistics to examine the StEr correspondence. Grounded in the uniformitarian principle, it aligns with the assertion that contemporary sociolinguistic insights can be applied to historical language (Romaine 1982, 122–23). As Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (2016, 22) argue, 'human languages have always been used in speech communities and consequently have been socially conditioned throughout their histories'. Similarly, Smith observes that 'natural language is—and always has been—a shared social tool, continually negotiated between its users over

[48] Section 6.2 describes the tuck-and-seal folding pattern in further detail (Figure 6-4), while Section 7.1 discusses the accordion pattern (Figure 7-1).

[49] The shelfmarks of the six StEr letters, all of which were sent to Marie Stewart, countess of Mar and follow the accordion folding style pattern, are as follows: from Sir David Murray of Gorthy (NLS MS 5070 fol. 1, 20 October 1604); from Esmé Stuart, 8th Seigneur d'Aubigny (later 3rd duke of Lennox)(NLS MS 5070 fol. 2, 16 May 1605); from Lady Gabrielle Stuart (NLS MS 5070 fol. 3, 28 January 1617); from Diane de Cléré (NLS MS 5087 fol. 87, undated); and from Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia (NLS MS 5087 fols. 103–104, 2 August 1625; NRS GD1/44/8, 30 November 1625).

space and time' (2020, 24). This theoretical grounding supports the use of historical pragmatics in the present analysis for four key reasons.

2.3.1 Understanding Correspondence in its Historical Context

The first reason lies in the fact that historical pragmatics provides the tools needed for context-sensitive readings that uncover the sociolinguistic motivations behind language choices in early modern letters (Jucker and Taavitsainen 2013, xi; Williams 2013b, 10). Interpreting historical language requires insight into the broader society and the social distinctions that shaped communication (Magnusson 1999, 1; 2004, 52; Wood 2009; 188; Jucker and Taavitsainen 2013, 42–43; McColl Millar 2012, 41; Kopaczyk 2013b, 1; Williams 2013b, 2; Wiggins 2017, 4; Smith 2020, 9; Meyerhoff and Strycharz 2013, 440). For this reason, the texts under examination must be situated within their historical, social, and cultural contexts.

While historical pragmatics comprises both diachronic approaches, which track change in data over time, and pragmaphilological approaches, which are typically synchronic, context-focused (Jacobs and Jucker 1995, 10–13), this thesis primarily adopts the latter. Smith (2020, 29) aptly describes pragmaphilology as a 'reimagined philology,' attentive to textual nuance and embedded in its sociocultural circumstances. Formulaic language, too, is embedded in communicative, social, and cultural traditions, and its analysis requires a framework that reflects this complexity (Filatkina 2024, 72). Sociolinguistic information is crystallised in the formulaic expressions used, developed, and shared among members of a CoP (Dossena 2013, 47; Kopaczyk-McPherson forthcoming a, 4). Given the emphasis here on contextual interpretation, the pragmaphilological approach is the most appropriate.

Furthermore, the thesis also takes an interdisciplinary stance, recognising that letters are both acts of communication and material artefacts (Daybell and Gordon 2016, 12–13; Wiggins 2017, 3). The same principles that apply to epistolary language apply equally to letters as physical objects preserved in the archive. As Wiggins notes, 'Every written textual object has at least two stories: the story told by the informational content of the words on the page, and the story about where, when, how, and by whom it was produced and received' (2024, 197). To maintain this sensitivity, the analysis combines qualitative pragmatic methods with approaches from social history, palaeography, manuscript studies, archival enquiry, material culture, and corpus linguistics, bridging macro-level patterns with micro-level insights.

2.3.2 Analysing Epistolary Exchanges through Linguistic Features

The second rationale for using historical pragmatics is because the framework allows for the investigation of how early modern correspondents expressed social positioning, power, and identity through their language using tried-and-tested methods which generate reproducible findings grounded in empirical evidence. Guided by Lynne Magnusson's *Shakespeare and Social Dialogue* (1999, 1–16) which outlines foundational methods for historical pragmatics, this thesis incorporates methods from discourse analysis to examine features such as speech-act verbs, pronouns, and forms of address.

Likewise, it draws on Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory which distinguishes between negative politeness (where deferential language signals distance or power imbalance) and positive politeness (where familiar or intimate language signals equality or social proximity), a model which has been applied in historical contexts (Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 1995; Nevala 2004; Williams 2013b; Wiggins 2017; and Bengough-Smith 2023).

The thesis also draws on Magnusson's (2004, 58) model of linguistic scripts to analyse petitionary letters, using Angel Day's (1568) categories of 'humility and entreaty' and 'supposal and assurance'. Although the uniformitarian principle suggests that linguistic processes observed today operated similarly in the past, caution is needed to prevent anachronism (Bergs 2012, 139). Early modern correspondents sought to follow conventions set down in published guides, manuscript miscellanies, commonplace books, or demonstrated through letters they received or copied from others (Daybell 2006b, 5–6). Referring to contemporary letter-writing handbooks acknowledges the necessity to avoid projecting modern linguistic patterns onto historical texts. As noted in Section 2.2.2, Day's handbook was designed to be accessible to users of different skill levels and may have been consulted by StEr CoP members across diverse educational levels and varying levels of letter-writing proficiency. Considering such guides highlights the potential influence of prescribed scripts on the StEr CoP's shared repertoire.

The first script, 'humility and entreaty' which Magnusson describes as 'trouble-making' for the recipient, is characterised by apologetic, self-effacing language (2004, 58–59). Senders portray their letters as clumsy or dull, seek to elicit sympathy and use self-deprecating verbs such as *beseech*, *entreat*, or *crave*. They make promises to the addressee, appeal for trust and employ flattery and expressions of gratitude, such as acknowledging past favours. Low-modality statements are used to signal uncertainty and deference, and senders may even offer excuses in case the request is not fulfilled (Magnusson 2004, 58–59).

In contrast, the second script, 'supposal and assurance', described by Magnusson as 'trouble-taking', is marked by confident, directive language and a tone of self-assurance (2004, 59). Senders employ verbs such as *recommend* or *assure*, issue instructions, and advocate a particular course of action. They also adopt high-modality language to convey positive expectations that the recipient will comply with their request. Finally, their assumption of personal agency is expressed through frequent use of I-phrases, clearly mapping the transformation of thought into action (Magnusson 2004, 59–60).

Daybell (2006, 2015) and Wiggins (2017) apply this model to highlight how linguistic strategies encoded power imbalances in elite Elizabethan correspondence. Fitzmaurice (2002) and Evans (2020) also used related pragmatic techniques to analyse English epistolary discourse. The current thesis builds on their findings to assess how script choices in the StEr letters signal social hierarchy, religious allegiance, and gendered expression in early modern Scottish correspondence.

2.3.3 Collaborative and Mediated Authorship

The third reason for employing historical pragmatics is that the framework is particularly effective in revealing the collaborative nature of early modern correspondence which is exemplified in the StEr letters (Section 1.3.4). Although letters often project a vivid persona, we must be cautious not to conflate that persona with a single, unified voice (Wiseman 2010, 121). As Wiggins emphasises: 'letters do not themselves constitute the sender's language; they are always representations of the sender's language, whether scribal or autograph.' (2017, 31). As discussed in Section 2.1, this thesis is grounded in dialogic theory, which suggests the epistolary voice is a composite construct that merely gives the illusion of unity (Bakhtin 1981; Magnusson 1999, 10; 2004, 53; Lempert and Perrino 2007; Evans 2020, 11–12). In the early modern context, letters were more often than not collaboratively constructed, reflecting the fluid nature of authorship in such texts (Elspaß 2012, 158; Marcus 2018, 39–43).

This insight: that pragmatic features, such as politeness markers, hedges, and mitigations (Elsweiler 2022, 59); honorific address forms (Fitzmaurice 2002, 43) and for EModS texts, degrees of anglicisation (Meurman-Solin 2005, 430; Elder 2022, 101; 106; Newsome 2023, 349–350), may reflect collaborative authorship or shared repertoires rather than individual intent, is central to understanding the social nature of early modern correspondence. Pragmatic analysis thus reveals how shared communicative practices reinforced group identity and alignment (Dossena 2013,

2020). More broadly, it enables interpretation of letters as social actions where language was used as a tool to forge alliances, express dissent, and perform social roles.

2.3.4 Suitability of Pragmaphilology to Corpus Linguistics

Finally, a further strength of historical pragmatics lies in its compatibility with corpus linguistics. Studies by Wood (2009) Williams (2013b, 2016), Newsome (2018), Evans (2020), Elder (2022), and Bengough-Smith (2023) demonstrate the effectiveness of this dual approach in analysing early modern letters. This thesis builds on the paradigmatic digital editions of correspondence that recover marginalised voices, using corpora of transcribed texts encoded in TEI-XML.[50]

Corpus-based techniques allow researchers to identify broad linguistic patterns (Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 1995, 2016; van Eyndhoven 2023) while qualitative analyses enable nuanced interpretation of specific formulaic and pragmatic features. The StEr manuscripts, composed between 1600 and 1644, fall within a relatively narrow timeframe, making the dataset largely synchronic and well-suited to the pragmaphilological approach, which privileges stable communicative contexts and close textual reading.

This thesis adopts a combined (or mixed) method, drawing on Evans (2020, 24) and van Eyndhoven (2023, 20), which offers both a 'bird's eye' view of overarching communicative practices and a 'worm's eye' view of detailed linguistic interaction: a metaphor originally coined by Elspaß (2007, 4, cited in van Eyndhoven 2023, 77). First, the thesis identifies macro-level trends across the StEr corpus and applies sociolinguistic variation methods to analyse how the use of formulaic language correlates with social factors. It then undertakes pragmaphilological analyses of selected formulae (Chapters 5–7). This approach necessitates a clearly defined object of analysis; the following section therefore outlines the rationale for focusing on formulaic language.

2.4 Formulaic Language

Research on formulaic language has advanced scholarly understanding of the material, social, and linguistic conditions of text production in the past, as well as of patterns and traditions of text transmission (Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 1995; Nevalainen 2001; Nevala 2003, 2004; Wood 2009; Dossena 2013; Rutten and van der Wal 2012, 2013; Pfeiffer and Schiegg 2020; Bengough-Smith 2023; Kopaczyk -McPherson forthcoming a). This thesis argues that formulaic

[50] Including the digital scholarly editions of correspondence listed on p.49's footnote.

language constitutes a key mechanism of efficient communication in early modern correspondence and concentrates on it for three principal reasons. First, it offers insight into historical processes of knowledge formation, as linguistic conventions can be understood through the conventionalised meanings these expressions accrued over time. Second, the structure and content of formulaic language illuminates the sociolinguistic realities of the StEr correspondents: their experiences, values, and ways of managing private and public communication. Third, drawing on Bakhtin's (1981) theory that language is dialogic and remembered in 'chunks', this thesis posits that analysing formulaic language is a productive method for investigating how the CoP members influenced one another.

Marcus (2018, 289) questioned the scholarly decision to disregard letters because their formulaic character seemingly distances them from speech. Instead, she argues that letters are complex texts situated at the boundary between speech and writing, a hybridity that must be recognised when studying them. This thesis further contends that certain formulaic elements explicitly resemble speech, particularly religious expressions, as discussed in Chapter 5.

Moreover, early modern epistolary language's capacity to encode pragmatic meaning (Section 2.1) is particularly evident in formulaic language. Accordingly, this thesis identifies three salient types of formulaic language in the StEr letters, each carrying specific meanings within the sociocultural context of the CoP and addressed in the second research question: 'How did members of the StEr CoP employ formulaic language in their correspondence to construct and negotiate social relationships, exert mutual influence, and reflect sociolinguistic identities?' (Section 1.2). The categories comprise religious formulaic language, reflecting the centrality of religion in CoP members' lives (Section 2.2; 3.1); epistolary formulaic language, including address forms, subscriptions, and superscriptions, selected for their interactional functions; and symbols, which Chapter 7 argues conveyed meaning beyond their graphic form. These examples of formulaic language are chosen for their capacity to index social, familial, and confessional relations and to sustain bonds within the CoP.

However, to study historical formulaic language one must first identify and capture it and there are persistent challenges of definition, retrieval, and interpretation that continue to limit our understanding of its early development (Filatkina, Stumpf and Pfeiffer 2020, 2).[51] A central

[51] Such issues remain pressing, as evinced by two recent international conferences. Formulaic Language in Historical Research and Data Extraction: An International Conference, held 7–9 February 2024 at the Huygens Institute of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences in Amsterdam, aimed to address the lack of research into historical formulaic language (Huygens Institute 2024). Non-peer-reviewed versions of the presented papers are available Open Access at https://zenodo.org/communities/formulaiclanguage2024. Similarly, Formulaic Language in Historical

difficulty lies in the absence of a universally accepted definition. Most linguistic studies adopt data-driven approaches and treat formulaic language as recurring expressions with relatively fixed structures, though their degree of stability may vary (Filatkina 2024, 72). Broadly, the term encompasses recurring linguistic chunks connected by semantic features, found across spoken, written, and textual discourse. Yet pinpointing specific features such as size, shape, meaning, recurrence, and degree of formulaicity remains challenging.

Despite these uncertainties, linguists have shown that meaningful analysis is possible using inclusive frameworks. Wray's (2002) psycholinguistic model has been particularly influential (Kopaczyk and Jucker 2013; Filatkina 2018, 152; 164). Although Wray's focus was on verbal interactions in contemporary settings, her broad and inclusive definition can be applied across a wide range of historical texts; she defines *Formulaic Sequences* as:

> a sequence, continuous or discontinuous, of words or other elements, which is, or appears to be, prefabricated: that is, stored and retrieved whole from memory at the time of use, rather than being subject to generation or analysis by the language grammar (2002, 9)

In Wray's model, the primary function of formulaic sequences in dialogue is 'the speaker's promotion of self,' encompassing cognitive processing, interactional engagement, and discourse-organisation (2002, 101). Though originally designed for spoken interaction, this three-part system has been fruitfully adapted for historical written language (Elspaß 2005; Rutten and van der Wal 2012; Pfeiffer and Schiegg 2020; Bengough-Smith 2023). Moreover, the speech-like, interactional nature of letters reinforces the model's relevance for the StEr corpus.

Further complicating analysis are the methodological difficulties involved in retrieving such language. Researchers must grapple with how to systematically locate multi-word expressions while accommodating structural and functional variation, as well as genre-specific but low-frequency examples (Filatkina 2018, 128, 131, 160; Kopaczyk-McPherson forthcoming a, 2, 5–6, 7, 10, 12). While corpus linguistic and statistical techniques have helped address some of these issues, the inherent inconsistencies in spelling, grammar, and punctuation in early texts continue to hinder reliable identification (Filatkina 2018, 145–51). Moreover, multilingual repertoires introduce additional complexity. The 165 StEr letters in Scots exemplify such issues because, as is typical of EModS writings, they exhibit varying degrees of anglicisation (Elder 2022, 48), while the

---

Linguistics: Data, Methods, Tools, and Theory, held in Helsinki, 2–3 June 2025, sought 'to discuss the multiple roles formulaicity plays in historical language data, to examine the advances of other fields in the analysis and management of formulaic texts, and to evaluate how these advances can be applied to historical linguistic research settings' (Formulaic Language in Historical Linguistics 2025).

eleven letters in English and the seven in French introduce an additional difficulty that must be resolved to allow direct comparison of formulaic language across the corpus.

However, a solution can be found in the use of a diagnostic schema such as that proposed by Wray and Namba (2003). Acknowledging the limitations of a singular, fixed definition, Wray instead recommends a 'suite of features' for identifying formulaic sequences that can be independently verified (2002, 43). Their 11-point diagnostic schema enables more accurate and systematic identification by accounting for lexical, grammatical, pragmatic, and discoursal variation (Wray 2002, 20–25; Wray and Namba 2003, 29–32; Filatkina 2018, 131).

This framework has been successfully applied to historical correspondence. Relevant examples include Rutten and van der Wal (2012, 2013), who used historical sociolinguistic strategies in their diachronic studies to compare formulaic language in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Dutch letters drawn from the Prize Papers Collection (The National Archives, n.d. b); Pfeiffer and Schiegg (2020), who combined semi-automatic and manual techniques to qualitatively analyse religious formulaic language in 2,000 nineteenth- and twentieth-century letters from German psychiatric hospital patients (CoPaDocs: Shiegg 2017–2022); and Bengough-Smith (2023), who examined linguistic strategies in a corpus of twenty-two sixteenth-century French letters, showing how a single writer, Marie de Nassau, aligned her formulaic language with contemporary letter-writing manuals.

Following their example, this thesis adopts Wray's (2002, 43) flexible definition as a practical working tool suited to investigating historical correspondence. While this section has established a definition for formulaic language, the analytical chapters elaborate on specific applications, including the identification and retrieval of sequences amid non-standard orthography, multilingual forms, and irregular frequencies (Chapters 5–7).

The next three sections (2.4.1–2.4.3) explain in further detail the reasons for selecting the three types of formulaic language analysed here: religious, epistolary, and symbols.

2.4.1 Religious Formulaic Language

In line with the premise that the formulaic language examined here was shaped by its sociohistorical context, it is especially appropriate to foreground religious formulaic language in an analysis of the StEr corpus. Recent scholarship has demonstrated the capacity of religious formulaic language to encode a range of sociolinguistic variables including epistolary literacy, hierarchical positioning, interpersonal dynamics, confessional alignment, kinship structures, pious

expression, or political affiliation (Dossena 2013; Rutten and van der Wal 2012, 2012; Pfeiffer and Shiegg 2020; Bengough-Smith 2023). In particular, Dossena (2013, 47), Pfeiffer and Shiegg (2020, 270), and Bengough-Smith (2023, 148) emphasise the function of religious formulaic language as a marker of shared moral and social identity. The centrality of faith in the lives of seventeenth-century individuals, including the correspondents represented in this corpus, cannot be overstated.

In 1560, over two decades before Marie Stewart's arrival in Scotland, Catholic worship was officially outlawed in the country and Presbyterianism established as the national kirk (Hazlett 2021, 7). A year earlier, England had similarly made the Church of England the state church under the authority of the crown (Hazlett 2021, 7). Although traces of Catholic practice persisted in certain remote areas, particularly in Highland and Island parishes, public observance of Catholic rites had by the late 1560s, been substantially curtailed (Spurlock 2021, 580).

Nonetheless, wealthy Scottish households seeking to maintain Catholic observance were often able to do so discreetly, possessing the resources and autonomy necessary to sustain private chapels for clandestine worship. Some were shielded by royal favour, including Marie Stewart's sister, Henrietta Stuart, countess of Huntly, whom James VI/I referred to her as 'his doughter, and beloved of his blud' (Grant 1999, 100). In contrast, in France, where the third Stewart sister, Gabrielle chose to reside, Catholic worship remained openly practised under the Counter-Reformation. Parish Mass on Sundays and feast days continued to form the core of worship, with confession and communion observed annually at minimum and monthly by more devout practitioners (Bireley 2007, 157).

In Scotland, kirk attendance became compulsory after the reformation. Sunday sermons were strictly enforced, and some towns hosted multiple Sabbath and weekday services (Todd 2002, 30). The Bible functioned not only as the authoritative guide to religion, but also to the moral, social, and political areas of life. Scripture emerged directly from heaven as the 'infallibly true' Word of God (Henderson 1937, 1–2; 12–13). Failure to attend the kirk was not only regarded as sinful but also politically and religiously suspect, potentially signalling separatist or papist sympathies (Todd 2002, 80, 116, 119). The StEr letters were composed and circulated against this background of sustained religious tension in Britain, with Marie Stewart, at the centre of the correspondence network, embodying competing religious ideologies through her conversion from Roman Catholicism to Presbyterianism.

A broad survey of the StEr manuscripts substantiates the importance of religion to the CoP members, revealing consistent references to divine authority and religious observance, as addressed in detail in Chapter 5. The letters thus offer a significant and as-yet underexplored resource for analysing the deployment of religious language in correspondence. This corpus enables a nuanced examination of the ways in which faith was articulated, reinforced, or negotiated, particularly in relation to the broader religious tensions that characterised the seventeenth century.

2.4.2 Epistolary Formulaic language: Address Forms, Subscriptions, and Superscriptions

The second category examined in this thesis, epistolary formulaic language, is identifiable by its high degree of formulaicity. Address forms, subscriptions, and superscriptions are not only pre-patterned but also occur in consistent structural positions, helping to mark a text as a letter. Like religious formulaic language, they offer a productive entry point into the pragmatic choices of letter-writers. Given this thesis' focus on the relational dynamics of the StEr CoP, such formulae are a valuable source for analysis because of their interactional nature (Jacobs and Jucker 1995, 8). Thus, they align closely with the emphasis on the dialogic character of letters and the shared repertoire of the StEr CoP.

Existing scholarship consistently demonstrate that variation in epistolary formulae correlates with social relationships between correspondents. Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg's (1995) macro-level diachronic study of CEEC applied politeness theory to examine address terms in letter openings, while Nevala (2003) extended this approach to CEEC family correspondence by analysing the relationship between internal address terms with subscriptions, and later (2004) between internal address and external superscriptions.[52] Across the early modern period, these studies report a general rise in positive politeness strategies and a movement from formal toward more intimate epistolary formulaic language, a development that paralleled increasing literacy and the expansion of private correspondence (Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 1995, 591; Nevala 2003, 148; 2004, 292). Shifting attention to closings rather than openings, Elsweiler and Ronan

[52] Based on politeness theory, Nevalainen and Ramolin-Brunberg's diachronic survey found that address forms shifted away from formality towards intimacy in parallel with growth in literacy and privacy over time (1995, 591). In her 2004 study, Nevala expanded the hypothesis that the address forms correlated to 'social relation, attitude and consideration for the addressee' and used the CEEC 'social stratification model' to ascertain correspondents' social distance and power relation (278). She then compared the address terms inside the letters, which she argued was private text, with those outside, which were on public display (2004, 278). The CEEC stratification model was outlined by Nevalainen and Ramolin-Brunberg (2016, 136–38).

(2023) investigated variation in leave-taking 'servant' formulae in eighteenth-century Scots and Irish letters, showing that subscriptions in private letters became progressively shorter and simpler over time, a tendency that later extended to public letters (2023, 14).

Overall, these findings underscore the importance of address forms and subscriptions in signalling relational dynamics, with relative social power emerging as the dominant variable influencing selection (Williams 2013b, 174). Some scholars have investigated these formulae as part of a broader constellation of epistolary features, including those within the field of linguistics (Fitzmaurice 2002, 43; Williams 2013b, 175; 202–03; Cruickshank 2017; Wiggins 2017, 71, 82–83; Newsome 2018, 62–68; Bengough-Smith 2023, 76), and others in literary history and manuscript studies (Stewart and Wolfe 2004; Daybell 2006a, 246–50; 2012, 72).[53] Collectively, this work highlights the analytical value of openings and closings for understanding shared practices within groups like the StEr CoP, a concern central to the thesis.

This thesis compares those findings with evidence drawn from the StEr materials. Like earlier studies (Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 1995; Nevala 2003, 2004), it focuses on address forms in letter openings, while integrating these approaches to examine how such formulae operated alongside subscription closings and superscriptions in the performative construction of correspondents' positions within the CoP. For example, it investigates how epistolary formulae in StErCor2 were used to express deference (e.g., the common address forms, *Madame* or *Sir*, as compared to more elaborate ones such as 'My very honorable good Lord'), reinforce familial ties (as in 'Louing Dochter', 'your loueng mother', and 'Your most affectionate niece'), promote social bonds (e.g., 'My noble frend'), and signal hierarchical status (e.g., 'Pleis ȝour Ladyship') (Sections 6.4–6.8).

Finally, this thesis investigates whether different types of formulaic language can overlap and function in multiple areas of a letter. Religious formulaic language, such as blessings (Dossena 2013; Pfeiffer and Shiegg 2020, 272) and invocations of God (Bengough-Smith 2023, 76) has been identified in both opening and closing sections. The thesis therefore examines whether similar patterns are evident within the StEr letters. It further expands its focus to consider the potential interaction between these formulaic linguistic elements and visual features, specifically symbols.

[53] In his study of women writers, Daybell (2006, 6) argued that modes of address reflected the social and gender hierarchies of their sociocultural circumstances. Using a layered model of discourse analysis, Bengough-Smith (2023, 76) found formal address terms were used to inscribe the father-daughter relationship and also noted that writers often switched from first to third-person person references within their subscriptions in order to indicate their withdrawal.

2.4.3 Symbols

Beyond linguistic sequences, visual symbols offer a parallel site for examining how formulaic practices operated within the StEr CoP, revealing patterns of meaning-making that extend across language and materiality. While formulaic language is a recognised feature of CoP interaction, Timofeeva (2013, 203–204; 2022, 24) has shown that shared repertoires also point towards a broader semiotic landscape incorporating multiple modes of meaning-making. Building on this insight, the thesis extends existing approaches to formulaic language by investigating the intersection of linguistic, paralinguistic, and extralinguistic forms of communication. This perspective aligns with discussions at the 2025 conference Formulaic Language in Historical Linguistics: Data, Methods, Tools, and Theory, held in Helsinki, where participants considered whether formulaic language might also encompass paralinguistic phenomena such as gesture or sign language.[54]

Many of the StEr letters contain a variety of non-alphanumeric symbols, three of which held specific meaning during the early modern period: the Christian cross, the six-pointed star or hexagram and the fermesse (Sections 7.3–7.4). While research on formulaic language typically focuses on sequences of words, this thesis broadens the concept by examining whether recurring patterns of symbols operate formulaically. On this basis, it argues that symbols such as the fermesse functioned as community-specific practices and therefore merit greater scholarly attention. In doing so, the thesis contributes to the expanding field of epistolary pragmatics and responds to Wiggins' (2017, 11) call for a 'pragmatics of epistolary materiality'.

Just as formulaic language evolves over time, visual symbols could likewise shift in use and interpretation, gradually becoming conventionalised. Their deployment may even have carried ritualistic dimensions: in the same way that formulaic language, particularly religious expressions, encode ritual, symbols might embody performative or ritualistic meaning. Given their inherently multimodal nature, symbols provide a compelling site for investigating the formulaic potential of visual elements. Treating them as communicative acts rather than mere decoration enhances our understanding of how meaning was constructed and negotiated visually in early modern correspondence. Moreover, because several StEr letters embed symbols within epistolary formulae, the analysis considers how these marks participate in and modify established epistolary conventions (Sections 7.7–7.8).

[54] Indeed, Frog (pers. comm., 2, June 2025) described formulaic language as a 'concept on the move', referring to its capacity to evolve as scholars across disciplinary fields exchange ideas about their meaning.

This approach also builds on the framework developed by Daybell (2016, 56) and extended by Evans (2020, 42), who demonstrated how visual and material features, including scribal status, handwriting, paper, layout and letterlocking mechanisms, could serve pragmatic functions, encoding social information about status, relational positioning, and communicative intent (Evans 2020, 57). This thesis further develops that framework by arguing that symbols could be recognised among these pragmatic resources. Evans (2020, 18) emphasised the existence of a shared 'metapragmatic understanding' between correspondents, incorporating both linguistic and visual expectations tied to specific epistolary registers. The thesis investigates whether the use of symbols in the StEr corpus reflects such shared understandings within the CoP.

Having outlined the theoretical frameworks and analytical assumptions that inform this study, the discussion now turns to the contextual conditions in which these epistolary practices were embedded. An understanding of the historical and social milieu in which the StEr correspondence was produced is essential for interpreting both the pragmatic functions of their formulaic language and the shared metapragmatic expectations that underpin its use. Accordingly, the following chapter situates the StEr CoP and their correspondence within their broader historical context, providing the necessary background for the analyses that follow.

Chapter 3 Sociolinguistic Context

This chapter examines the sociocultural and sociolinguistic circumstances in which the StEr CoP lived and corresponded, providing essential context for interpreting their letters and for analysis of their formulaic language. As Marie Stewart occupies a central position within the CoP, the historical framework is approached primarily through her perspective, while drawing on textual evidence from the StEr letters and biographical details of the other informants as they intersected with her life. Stewart's trajectory, together with that of her immediate family, provides a framework through which sociolinguistic backgrounds of other informants can be situated. The theme of transformation serves as a guiding thread throughout: the discussion highlights shifts in both Stewart's personal circumstances and the broader sociocultural conditions of her time.

The chapter begins with what was arguably Stewart's most significant transformation: her conversion to Protestantism. This confessional shift is considered alongside the religious affiliations of other informants as Scottish society continued to adapt to the changes brought about by the 1560 Reformation (Section 3.1). The chapter then turns to her shift from French to Scots against the backdrop of a multilingual nation in linguistic flux, and to her cultural role as Jacobean courtier and patron before and after the Union of the Crowns in 1603 (Section 3.2). Finally, the chapter addresses her transition from wife to widow and her ensuing conflict with her stepson, set against Scotland's movement from relative peace towards the Wars of the Three Kingdoms. These conflicts illustrate tensions between Royalists and Covenanters and show how Stewart and her CoP navigated their positions in this turbulent period (Section 3.3).

3.1 Religion

This section begins with Stewart herself before moving outward to consider her husband, children, siblings, in-laws, and wider social networks. Rather than offering a comprehensive account of Scottish religious life in this period, it seeks to situate the StEr correspondents within broad confessional categories, while remaining attentive to the fluid and contested nature of religious identity in late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Scotland. The information discussed here is summarised in Table 1-2.

Born into a French-speaking Catholic household and brought to Scotland as a child, Stewart entered a kingdom profoundly shaped by the Calvinist Reformation, with the death of John Knox only fifteen years in the past. Although Catholicism was not formally outlawed until 1600, mounting hostility rendered open adherence increasingly precarious (as noted in Section 2.4.1).

Stewart's early circumstances were further complicated by her parentage. She was the daughter of Catherine de Balsac and Esmé Stuart, the French nobleman and first cousin to Lord Darnley, the husband of Mary, Queen of Scots (Ewan et al. 2018, 34). In 1579, three years after his daughter, Marie Stewart's birth, Esmé travelled to Scotland where he rose rapidly in favour with James VI, acquiring exceptional wealth and influence, reshaping court culture along French lines, and becoming the first recipient of a Scottish dukedom (Marshall 2004). His spectacular ascent was, however, followed by an equally dramatic fall: exiled as a political outcast, he died four years later amid widespread accusations of treason (McLaughlin 2017, 137). Despite these inauspicious beginnings, Stewart, like her father, whom James VI famously likened to a phoenix in an elegiac poem (Sharpe 1815, 6), demonstrated a marked capacity for adaptation.

From the outset, Stewart was accepted into the Scottish court well where her position was stabilised by the continued presence of her siblings and by the enduring legacy of her father's relationship with the king. In accordance with Esmé's dying wish, James VI brought his eldest son and heir, Ludovick Stuart, 2nd duke of Lennox (1574–1624) to Scotland in 1583, when he was nine years old (McLaughlin 2017, 137). Ludovick effectively assumed his father's role, enjoying privileged access to the king, dining regularly at his table, and carrying the crown at parliament openings (Bergeron 2022, 12; McLaughlin 2017, 136, 138).[55] His younger brother, Esmé (c.1579–1624) initially remained in France as Seigneur d'Aubigny but later relocated to Scotland, briefly succeeding as 3rd Duke of Lennox following Ludovick's death in July 1624 (Smuts 2004). Alongside Ludovick, Marie and her elder sister Henrietta were incorporated into the royal household at an early stage, serving as ladies-in-waiting to Anne of Denmark following her arrival in Scotland as queen in 1590. Both women held prominent court positions and Henrietta, in particular, formed a close friendship with Anne (Grant 1999, 70; Bergeron 2022, 21).[56]

The sisters' marital alliances illustrate the religious pressures confronting both their family and Scottish society more broadly. In 1588, Henrietta married the powerful Scottish noble George Gordon, 6th Earl of Huntly (1562–1636), a matched described by Grant as 'an outstanding example

[55] Carrying the crown at parliament openings was a symbolic gesture which showed Ludovick's status as heir to the throne through the Stuart line (McLaughlin 2017, 138). King James also left Ludovick in charge when he was fifteen years old as 'governor of the kingdom' when he went to collect his new wife Anne from Denmark (McLaughlin 2017, 138).

[56] Marie, for example, was among the 'dames of honour' at the table erected for Prince Henry's birth celebrations in 1594 (Juhala 2000, 78–79). Then, in 1596, Queen Anne appointed Henrietta as one of Princess Elizabeth's godmothers (Grant 1999, 101). She also commissioned coordinating orange gowns with green sleeves for herself, Marie Stewart, and another attendant, Margaret Winster, a decision which signified the queen's household's 'group identity' (Pearce 2019, 141). In 1600, Henrietta and Marie also served as Dames of Honour at the christening of Prince Charles where Henrietta carried the infant throughout the ceremony rather than the nurse (Juhala 2000, 219; Grant 2017, 70).

of the power of patronage in sixteenth-century Scotland' (2017, 69). However, although the couple formally subscribed to the Confession of Faith at their wedding and royal favour afforded them a degree of latitude, Gordon's open adherence to Catholicism and his repeated involvement in Catholic plots led to frequent accusations of treason (Bergeron 2022, 27; Grant 2017, 58).[57]

Henrietta proved a loyal spouse, supporting Gordon unwaveringly while demonstrating political acumen to secure his survival (Grant 2017, 69). Her StEr letter to James Hamilton (Hamilton elder) illustrates how she petitioned leading nobles for their assistance as this extract (ex. 22) shows:

> (22) le proche parantage qui est entre vous et monsieur mon mary ma faut estre cy priuee de vous faire ceste requaite esperant quil vous plaira duser vostre bon aduis enuers sa maieste pour lauancemant De vostre nepueu
>
> [The close kinship between you and my husband makes me be so familiar as to make this request of you, hoping it will please you to offer your good advice to his Majesty for the advancement of your nephew (NRS GD406/1 no.9597, 9 September [undated]).[58]

Although James Hamilton (Hamilton elder) was Presbyterian, his family had a complex religious history with some connections to Catholicism, and Henrietta may have known that he would be sympathetic to her cause (Stevenson 2004b).[59] Henrietta used advanced epistolary skills to frame her requests to maximise the likelihood of Hamilton's assent. Within Magnusson's (1999; 2004) framework of linguistic scripts, she combined elements from several types. The request was primarily one of 'humility and entreaty': '[Je] vous suplier humblemant Monsieur de prandre la

---

[57] Grant observes that James VI/I's relationship with George Gordon 6th earl of Huntly was complex: one of genuine trust and friendship but also practicality (Grant 2017, 58). Due to his Catholic connections, George Gordon was able to operate as a European diplomatic negotiator, working to curb England's domination of Scottish politics and the Spanish aspiration for the English throne (Grant 2017, 58).

[58] Dating and identifying the recipient of this letter is challenging. The original is undated, but a note pencilled by an archivist in the upper left margin of the main letter leaf suggests '?1640': a date also recorded in the NRS online catalogue. However, this is incorrect because the letter concerns Henrietta Stuart's husband, George Gordon, therefore, it must have been written before 13 June 1636, the date of his death. An alternative suggestion, 'before 1633,' appears on an English translation preserved with the original. Identifying the recipient is equally uncertain. The superscription, 'A Monsieur Monsieur De Hamiltoun 'provides few clues. The NRS online catalogue records the letter as being addressed to the third Marquess of Hamilton: 'Lady Henrietta Stuart [Stewart] [? daughter of Esme, 1st duke of Lennox], Dunfermline, to the [3rd] marquis of Hamilton pleading that he makes representation to the King on behalf of her husband.' (NRS 2025). However, since Henrietta refers to her husband as Hamilton's nephew, it is more likely that the letter was addressed to James Hamilton, 2nd marquess of Hamilton and 4th earl of Arran (1589–1625). Through George Gordon's mother, Anne Hamilton, he, and the 2nd Marquess were uncle and nephew once removed. For this reason, the recipient is identified here as James Hamilton, 2nd marquess of Hamilton and 4th earl of Arran (1589–1625). This also renders the suggested 'before 1633' date incorrect, as he had died in 1625.

[59] There were rumours after the death of James Hamilton 2nd marquess of Hamilton and 4th earl of Arran that he had died a Roman Catholic, but these were unconfirmed (Stevenson 2004a).

paine dy estre presant' [(I) humbly implore you, Sir, to take the trouble to be present], 'apres vous auoir baise les mains' [after having kissed your hands]. She also drew on the 'supposal and assurance' script, using strong modality to signal confidence that he would attend the king's meeting and advocate for her husband, stating, 'ne doutant qu'il ne vous plaise de vous y trouuer' [not doubting that it will please you to be present]. Further, she adopted the 'pleasures or courtesy' script, promising reciprocal service, both from herself: 'ie desire dauoir locasion de vous seruir en tout' [I desire to have the opportunity to be of service in all I can], and from her partner: 'en ceste esperance que par vostre moye Monsieur mon mary recouurira sa place et aura plus de pouuoir de vous faire seruise' [in the hope that by your means, Sir, my husband will recover his position and will have more power to render you service].

Finally, she stressed kinship, referring to George Gordon as 'vostre nepueu' [your nephew] and to herself as 'vostre affecionee niepie' [your affectionate niece] (NRS GD406/1 no. 9597, 9 September [undated]) (Section 6.5.1.). Henrietta's letter shows her deploying sophisticated rhetorical strategies which aligns with scholarly findings that letter-writing was an important means for women to exert influence, both in English (Daybell 2006b, 3; Harris 2016, 23) and Scottish correspondence (Lyall 1996, 132).

Her sister Marie Stewart likewise combined strategies in a petition to Robert Ker, earl of Ancram. Seeking his intervention in a dispute between the same Hamilton (elder) addressed in Henrietta's letter and her own husband, John Erskine (Mar elder), she opened with the 'humility and entreaty' script, expressing gratitude for past service (Magnusson 2004, 58):

> (23) altho ther hes bein manie chenges this time passed, yett this one thing I haue fond stabell, your loue and kindnes to me and mine: which (of anie eartly thing) I wold most glaidly acknawledge if I could see how, or wherin I might giue full testimone of a greatfull mind, which is all I can offer to yow,
>
> [although there has been many changes this time passed, yet this one thing I have found stable, your love and kindness to me and mine: which (of any earthly thing) I would most gladly acknowledge if I could see how, or wherein I might give full testimony of a greatful mind, which is all I can offer to you] (GD40/2/13/34, 21 January 1621)

By describing his 'loue and kines' as 'stabell' despite 'manie changes', Stewart implied her confidence that Ker would continue to act favourably, thereby drawing on the 'supposal and assurance' linguistic script. Her self-effacing claim, 'which is all I can offer to yow', then shifted the tone to humility, before she adopted a more assured stance in closing:

> (24) I leaue itt to […] yow to doe all the good ye maye in this besines betuix my lord Marquis Hammiltoun and my lordship which from my hairt I wosse war sattled, I doe then recomend it to your cair
>
> [I leave it to […] you to do all the good you may in this business between my lord Marquess Hamilton and my lordship which from my heart I wish were settled, I do then recommend it to your care] (GD40/2/13/34, 21 January 1621)

Here, 'I leave itt to yow' effectively transfers responsibility to Ker, flattering him while assuming compliance by ending 'I doe then recommend it to your cair' (Magnusson 2004, 60). The use of linguistic scripts in petitionary letters is discussed further in Section 5.4, in relation to other petitioning CoP members, some of whom incorporated religious formulaic language.

Alongside PETITIONS, FAMILIAR letters such as Henrietta's to Anna Livingstone, countess of Eglinton (?1594–1632) (Paul 1906, III:446) (NRS GD3/5 no.29, undated), reveal how the sisters used epistolary strategies to strengthen their friendships with other CoP members. Like Henrietta and Marie, Anna Livingstone acted as a lady-in-waiting at the Scottish court, travelling to London within the household of Princess Elizabeth when she relocated there in 1603 (Great Britain. RCHM. 1885, 32). In this letter, Henrietta wrote to Livingstone to offer condolences on the death of her niece:

> (25) ie iouettrois Chere Cousine dauoir quelque bonne occasion De vous voir pour vous temoigner de bouche ma fidelle affection mais puis que cella ne peut estre cy test que ie le desire Ie vous suplie de croire que lapsanse ne motera de la memoire lamitie que ie vous ay vouees ny ausy le desir de vous estre touiours
>
> [I would wish, dear Cousin, to have some good occasion to see you and speak to you face-to-face and tell you of my faithful affection, but what I desire cannot be. I beg you to believe that the absence will not erase from memory the friendship I have vowed to you, nor the desire to always be with you] (NRS GD3/5 no.29, undated)

This expression of enduring loyalty highlights how Henrietta actively maintained personal bonds in her letters, even at a distance. Henrietta also retained close ties with Queen Anne, however, after Anne's death in 1619 and the king's in 1625, her influence declined as she lost these powerful patrons.

By contrast, Henrietta's sisters took different paths. In 1598 Gabrielle was betrothed to Hugh Montgomery, 5th Earl of Eglinton (1584–1612), but the match collapsed for unknown reasons (Paul 1908, V:356). She returned to France, entering a convent at Glatigny near her mother, Catherine de Balsac, where she was visited nearly two decades later by her nephews, as recorded by Henry Erskine in a letter to his father:

> (26) on the .i9. of Iŭine, we toke Iŭrnay to Glatenny, to see our mother sister, that is religiousse, and, out of that to Averry, quhar my gooddame presently remeans,
>
> [on the 19th of June, we took a journey to Glatigny to see our mother's sister, who is a nun, and from there to Avirey, where my grandmother presently remains] (GD124/15/34/2, 17 July 1617).

Gabrielle's only extant letter to her sister Marie Stewart, included in StErCor2, records her delight at this visit:

> (27) Iay repceu une grand ioie ayent este asseuree de uotre bonne sante laquelle ma bien ocmanté lors que iay este asseuree du seiour de Messiers mes nepueus vos anfans enla ville de bourges pour l'esperance que ce mert dauoir tant de contantement de les voir, en uotre absance et eslongnement, ce mest ung contantement incroiable de voir ce qui vous est sy proche, et les voiant sy bien nez auec tant desprit et de vertu, cest une grand consolation atoutte notre race
>
> [I was given great joy in having been assured of your good health, [and] it brought me even more comfort to be assured of this by the eldest of those gentlemen, my nephews, your children, in the city of Bourges. I hope that I deserve the great happiness I gain from seeing them. In your absence and distance, it is a true comfort to see those so close to you; and seeing them so well-born with such spirit and virtue, it is a great consolation to our whole family] (NLS MS 5070 fol. 3, 20 January 1617).

Although her sisters' choices affirmed their Catholic upbringing, Marie Stewart married into the staunchly Presbyterian house of Mar. Her husband, John Erskine, 2nd Earl of Mar (foster-brother to James VI and son of the Regent Mar and Annabella Murray) had been widowed in 1587 after the death of his first wife, Anna Drummond (Goodare 2004). Having fallen from royal favour in the 1580s, Erskine had regained it by the time of this second marriage, resuming command of Stirling Castle and a seat on the privy council (Goodare 2004). His first-born son, John Erskine (Mar younger), would inherit the Mar title; accordingly, James VI marked his approval of his match with Stewart by arranging for the new couple's first-born son to be created Earl of Buchan (Sharpe 1815, 11). They had at least twelve children, eleven of whom survived to adulthood; seven appear in the StEr CoP.[60] The eldest, James, assumed the Buchan title through marriage to its heiress, and the corpus includes two petitionary letters sent to him by his cousin Thomas Erskine, 1st Earl of Kellie (Section 5.4). Although Erskine's mother initially opposed the match on account of Stewart's

[60] As shown in Table 1-2, the seven children represented in the StEr CoP are James, Anna, Marie, Alexander, Arthur, Henry, and Charles. The remaining five are Margaret, Katherine, John, William, and Annabella, who died in infancy.

Catholicism (Bergeron 2022, 28), Stewart converted and was later praised by her minister, Patrick Simson, for her 'humilitie, modestie, Godlinesse, and all other vertues' (1624).[61]

In later life, Stewart's household account book documents her extensive charitable donations in line with Presbyterian ideals, for example: 'To ane poor woman at the Laidy Gelnurquhy's gate, 8d' [To a poor woman at the Lady Glenurquhart's gate, 8d]; 'to ane old blind man as my Lady came from prayers,' [to an old blind man as my Lady came from prayers]; 'To two poore weamen att the pallace gaitt off Dunfermling, as my Laidy went by' [To two poor women at Dunfermline Palace gate as my Lady went by]; and 'To ane beggar who fained himself madde and had his wyfe lighter in the Raploch, 3sh. 4d' [To a beggar who feigned madness and whose wife was delivered of a child in Raploch, 3sh. 4d] (Sharpe 1815, 24, 26, 40, 46).[62] Petitions such as John Allisone's, in which he pleaded, 'for gods cause to len me ane boll of meall' [for God's cause lend me a boll of meal] (a quantity of oatmeal seed) (NRS GD124/17/629, 1633), illustrate Presbyterian expectations of noble charity grounded in religious obligation (Section 5.4).

However, like Henrietta, Stewart enjoyed a wealthy lifestyle and exceptional royal favour, evidenced in both financial gifts and ceremonial honours. The king paid for two costly gowns for her trousseau (Pearce 2019, 148) and in May 1595 presented her with a ring set with eleven diamonds worth £300 Scots, likely following the birth of her son for whom he was godfather (Kerr-Peterson and Pearce 2020, 82). He also commissioned 'maskerie' costumes for her wedding at Holyrood House in December 1592 (Pearce 2019, 149).[63] It was almost certainly during her time at the Jacobean court, that Stewart formed friendships with Sir David Murray of Gorthy and Sir John Murray, as reflected in their correspondence discussed in Sections 5.3 and 5.6.

Despite the king's loyalty to the Stewart siblings, Queen Anne's relationship with Marie Stewart did not endure as it had with Henrietta, owing to a conflict over Prince Henry's care.[64]

---

[61] Contemporary accounts suggest that Marie Stewart was also initially reluctant to accept John Erskine's proposal, as reported by a nineteenth-century Erskine descendant and antiquarian (Elder 2022, 18) However, Sharpe described this account, recorded by James Somerville of Drum, as showing 'little regard for the truth' (1815, 11), and the story almost certainly reflects contemporary gender biases. The reason given for her hesitancy, that John Erskine was a widower whose first-born son would inherit his titles and lands (Erskine 1836, 128–31), potentially disadvantaging any future children, is plausible given her rank as a duke's daughter and indicates prudent consideration of her family's interests.

[62] This represents a fraction of the donations recorded, and Sharpe (1815, 19) observed that he had 'unavoidably omitted' 'very many of her charitable donations,' in his edition, indicating that the total number was considerably greater.

[63] The king had also composed a masque for Henrietta's wedding in 1588 and possibly performed in it (Pearce 2019, 149).

[64] The appointment of Stewart's husband and mother-in-law, Annabella Murray, as guardians to Prince Henry in 1594 created tension with the queen, who wished to oversee the prince's arrangements personally and disapproved of John Erskine (Brown 2011, 184). This conflict culminated in 1603, when Anne attempted

However, she maintained her friendship with Henrietta despite enduring suspicions of papal sympathies, even if she could not always intercede on her behalf. Uncertainty also surrounded the confessional identities of Stewart's brothers', Ludovick and Esmé (Lennox younger). Esmé married the openly Catholic noblewoman, Katherine Clifton, 2nd Baroness Clifton, duchess of Lennox (c.1592–1637) (Smuts 2004). An English-born Scottish peer, she inherited her father's title in her own right after he took his own life (Smuts 2004). Like her husband, she is represented in the StEr CoP, along with their eldest son (Marie Stewart's nephew), James Stuart (Richmond-Lennox) who followed Protestantism (Cust 1878, 76; 79). After Esmé's death, Katherine Clifton married another Catholic noble, James Hamilton, 2nd Earl of Abercorn, in 1627, and was shortly thereafter excommunicated by Scottish kirk (Paul 1904, I:49). Ludovick also provoked controversy by marrying Lilias (Sophie) Ruthven (d. 1592), daughter of the Earl of Gowrie involved in the king's kidnapping in 1583 (McPherson 2004).[65] Yet despite these potentially destabilising alliances, both brothers avoided scandal due to their close personal relationship with James VI/I.[66]

Henrietta's loyalty to her husband and suspected Catholicism, however, strained family relations and in 1596 Ludovick allegedly threatened her over her children's upbringing (Bergeron 2022, 257). The Stewart/Stuart siblings and their spouses were often caught in disputes, sometimes supporting one another and at other times in conflict (Grant 1999, 70; Bergeron 2022, 27–28). These disagreements, however, appear to have been short-lived: even when Ludovick suppressed a Catholic uprising led by Gordon, the conflict was quickly resolved and Gordon returned to court (Goodare 2004; Bergeron 2022, 27–28). Ludovick also showed continued concern for his mother and sister in France, petitioning the English ambassador in 1620 to secure assistance for Gabrielle's abbey and her pension (Bergeron 2022, 207).

Esmé (Lennox younger)'s single StEr letter, addressed to his sister Marie Stewart in 1605, also suggests an affectionate relationship. He adopted a teasing tone, as a younger brother accustomed to his sister's rebukes:

> (28) Madame ma sœur uous mauey accusé par uos derrieres de paresse laquelle Ie ne ueux ny ne puis de denier pour ne uous auoir rendu ce debuoir aussy souuent que Ie debuois, mais sy a toutte les fois q[ue] ie puis trouuer occasion de uous escripre Il sen

to collect Henry from Stirling Castle to accompany her to London following James' accession to the English throne (Stewart 2003, 169). Acting on the king's prohibition, Marie Stewart denied the queen's request, an incident that reportedly caused Anne to collapse (Stewart 2003, 169). Although Anne ultimately secured the prince and brought him to London (Stewart 2003, 172), her relationship with Marie may have been strained by this incident.

[65] Neither Ludovick nor Sophie are represented in the StEr CoP.

[66] The close bond between Ludovick and James VI is illustrated by James' actions in 1624 when Ludovick died and the king took the highly unusual step of postponing parliament due to his grief (Ferris 2010).

> offroit une de uous rendre quelque seruice Ie ne serois pas seulement soigneux de les rechercher mais en ferois naistre a toutte heure de nouuelle pour uous tesmoisgner mon affection […] ne mesurer donc poinde mon affection par le peu de lettres que Ie uous escripi qui ne seroient que parolles mais faisant naistre quelque subiect ou Ie puisse uous faire pavoistre ma fidelité
>
> [Madame my sister You falsely accused me in your last [letters] of laziness, which I neither wish nor am able to deny, for not having rendered you this duty as often as I ought. But if, every time I could find an occasion to write to you, there also arose an opportunity to do you some service, I would not only be eager to seek them out, but would create new ones at every hour, in order to show you my affection. […] do not measure my affection at all by the few letters I write to you, which would be only words, but rather by the occasions I try to create through which I may make my loyalty evident] (NLS MS 5070 fol. 2, 6th May 1605).

Notwithstanding Ludovick and Esmé's ambiguous religious identities and their marriages, their loyalty to James VI/I and proximity to court often outweighed confessional clarity (McLaughlin 2017, 139).[67] Their early deaths, both before James VI/I, meant their religious allegiances were never fully tested. By contrast, Henrietta, and George Gordon, who 'both remained stalwart Catholics' (Brown 2004, 129) lost influence under Charles I: Gordon was imprisoned by the Scottish privy council in 1635 and died the following year (Brown 2011, 222; 225), while Henrietta was exiled to France in 1641 (Ewan et al. 2018, 340).

By contrast, Marie Stewart, apart from her continued support for her mother and siblings, consistently demonstrated her commitment to Protestantism. Having married a Presbyterian and raised her children in that faith, unlike Henrietta, she faced no scrutiny from the kirk over their religion or education. Her correspondence, book-buying habits, and artistic patronage likewise attest to her Protestant identity (Sections 3.2; 5.3; 7.4).

After James VI/I's death in 1625, tensions escalated under Charles I, whose economic and religious reforms, including unpopular Anglican-style liturgical changes, culminated in the National Covenant of February 1638, signed across Scottish society (Bowie 2020, 105–106). Widowed in 1634, Stewart became an ardent supporter of the Covenant, joined by three daughters: Anna, Margaret, and Marie (of whom Anna and Marie are CoP members), who opposed the introduction of the Book of Common Prayer (Wells 1997, 130). Her sons Alexander, Charles, and Arthur (also CoP members) fought against Charles I in the civil wars along with their younger brothers William, and John (*SSNE* 5044). The daughters' marriages further tied the family to the movement: Anna

[67] Even when the court moved to England, Ludovick and Esmé's positions did not deteriorate but they remained in high levels of importance and Ludovick was awarded the order of the garter (McLaughlin 2017, 149).

Erskine married John Leslie, 6th Earl of Rothes, a Covenanting army leader opposed to episcopacy (Bowie 2020, 39; 41; 108) and Margaret Erskine married John Lyon, 2nd Earl of Kinghorn, an ally of James Graham, 1st Marquis of Montrose (another trio of CoP members) (Paul 1911, VIII:297–98). Both John Lyon and James Graham initially opposed episcopacy, though the latter defected to the Royalist cause in 1644 (Stewart 2016, 200), while Kinghorn incurred heavy debts financing the Covenanting army (Paul 1911, VIII:298).[68]

Stewart's daughter Marie married William Keith, 6th Earl of Marischal, who died in 1635 (Paul 1908, V:622). Their son, who succeeded his father to become the 7th earl, initially resisted the Covenant but was persuaded by his mother and minister to subscribe (Wells 1997, 126). Another daughter, Katherine, predeceased the 1638 Prayer Book crisis, but her husband, Thomas Hamilton, 2nd Earl of Haddington (1600–1640) (Paul 1907, IV:315–16), served in the Covenanting army alongside Katherine's brothers Alexander and John (*SSNE* 5504). All three were killed on 30 August 1640 in an explosion at Dunglass Castle in East Lothian (*SSNE* 5044). Thomas Hope conveyed the shock and grief: 'The feirfull accident at dunglas so astonischis me that I can not wryt of it' [The fearful accident at Dunglass so astonishes me that I cannot write of it] (NLS MS 5070 fols. 81–82, 1 September 1640).

Despite these personal tragedies, Stewart and other Covenanting CoP members remained committed to the cause. Three months after Dunglass, she pawned her valuables to fund the Covenanting army, writing pragmatically to her son Charles:

> (29) lett me know concerneing ye silver warke if it be prefred to come in to conzie house, yat I may tak some conese with yat I haue in Edrg [Edinburgh], try what securetie is giuen to others yat I may haue no worse,
>
> [let me know concerning the silver work if it be preferred to come in to the Coins House (the Scottish mint), that I may take some coins with that I have in Edinburgh. Try what security is given to others that I may have no worse.] (NLS MS 5155 fols. 32–33, 23 November 1640; see also Chambers 1859, 118)

Monorgun recorded the same event in her account book: 'Payit for carrying downe ye silver wark to the Counsill house to be weyed and dely^{t}. To the towne Thesaurer of Edin. 10sh.' [Paid for carrying down the silver work to the Council house, to be weighed and delivered to the town-

[68] Margaret Erskine's husband, John Lyon, 2nd Earl of Kinghorn, was a close associate of James Graham, 1st Marquis of Montrose (Paul 1911, VIII:298). Both men were initially Covenanters who opposed episcopacy, but by 1644 Montrose had defected to the Royalist cause, becoming its most prominent commander and illustrating the confessional ambiguities of political allegiance (Stewart 2016, 200). Kinghorn was affected by Montrose's defection and subsequently incurred significant indebtedness through his efforts to finance the Covenanting army (Paul 1911, VIII:298).

treasurer of Edinburgh] (Sharpe 1815, 34).[69] It is difficult to assess how events like Dunglass affected Stewart's relationship with Henrietta. Their brothers had died fifteen years earlier, and in 1636 George Gordon had died following imprisonment. There are no known surviving letters between the sisters. However, that they remained in contact both by letter and in person is confirmed by several entries in Stewart's account book from the year 1639:

> (30) On Sunday the 20 of May. To my Lady Marquise of Huntlie her man, who brought letters, 12sh
>
> [On Sunday the 20 of May. To my Lady Marchioness of Huntly her man, who brought letters, 12sh] (Sharpe 1815, 26)

> (31) Julie 1639. To my Laidy Marques of Huntlie her man who brought letters, 12sh
>
> [July 1639. To my Lady Marchioness of Huntly her man who brought letters, 12sh] (Sharpe 1815, 35)

> (32) 7th of August. To my Lord Marquis of Huntlie his coatchman who met us with the coatch, 4l. 15sh.- to ye footman who cam with hym, 19sh.
>
> [7th of August. To my Lord Marquess of Huntly his coachman who met us with the coach, 4l. 15sh.- to the footman who came with him, 19sh] (Sharpe 1815, 36)

> (33) 16 Septr. Payit for twa torches to lighten on my Laidy to the Court with my Laidy Marquesse of Huntlie, 24sh
>
> [16 Septr. Paid for two torches to light my Lady to the Court with my Lady Marchioness of Huntly, 24sh] (Sharpe 1815, 47-48).

The Marquis of Huntly to whom Monorgun referred in Example (32) was Henrietta's son, George Gordon, 2nd Marquess of Huntly (c. 1590–March 1649) who had succeeded to the earldom (Stevenson 2004a).[70] Such records suggest that despite the religious conflict occurring in Scotland at that time and the fact that the new marquess was a royalist whom Charles I had

[69] Like many Covenanters, Stewart responded to the subscriptional bands which were distributed early in 1640 throughout presbyteries and burghs to solicit voluntary contributions for the war (Bowie 2020, 112).

[70] Henrietta's son, George Gordon, 2nd Marquess of Huntly, remained a royalist, refusing to sign the Covenant and being declared a rebel by Scottish Convention of Estates, then after hostile action in self-defence at Aberdeen in 1644 he was later excommunicated, fled to the highlands and eventually executed in 1649 (Bowie 2020, 166). In a letter to Marie Stewart, C. S. (whose identity remains unconfirmed) reported an incident involving her nephew. George Gordon (Huntly younger) was prevented from crossing Stirling Bridge by Stewart's sons-in-law, the earls of Marischal and Kinghorn, and afterwards 'tane him self and his horsmen throw the hillis […] my lord of argyll and his company is following fast I hoip In god that oŭr company sall caŭs thame go bak withe grett schame as thois that was in the sŭthe' [taken himself and his horsemen through the hills […] my lord of Argyll and his company is following fast, I hope in God that our company shall cause them [to] go back with great shame, like those that were in the south] (NLS 5155 fol. 53, undated, [1644]).

commissioned to gather support against the Covenanters in January 1639 (Stevenson 2004a), the sisters remained on good terms. Nevertheless, Henrietta endured so much persecution from the kirk that she could no longer remain in Scotland, and she died in 1642, a year after her exile to France (Sharpe 1815, 48).

Beyond Stewart's immediate family, the religious identities of the StEr correspondents were shaped by the turbulent political and ecclesiastical landscape of the seventeenth century. Charles I's ill-fated attempt to impose a new prayer book in 1637 provoked deep unrest and marked a decisive point of divergence between the English church and the Scottish kirk (Stewart and Nugent 2020, 32–34). As the countries developed along Episcopalian and Presbyterian lines respectively, these designations came to represent not only contrasting views on church governance but also broader theological, social, and cultural divisions that eventually hardened into antagonistic religious traditions (Stewart and Nugent 2020, 152). The National Covenant in 1638 destabilised earlier allegiances even further, and the shifting dynamics compelled some Scottish Presbyterians to make political compromises which temporarily aligned them with English Episcopalian sympathies.

Examples within the StEr CoP illustrate how these pressures played out at an individual level. Thomas Hope, although a committed Presbyterian, found his religious allegiances tested by royal favour: Charles I had created him Baronet of Nova Scotia in 1628 and he was acted as King's Advocate between 1637 and 1643 (Paul 1893, 74). His son, Alexander Hope, may likewise have faced difficulties during this period of religious tension, particularly given his role as cupbearer to Charles I, a position closely associated with royal and episcopal interests (Burke 1838, IV, 458–59). Other members of the CoP demonstrated even stronger royal sympathies. Robert Ker (Ancram), for instance, was a dedicated supporter of the crown (Stevenson 2004), while William Douglas (Morton) initially refused to sign the Solemn League and Covenant (Stewart 2016, 245–46).

Other individuals linked to the CoP also found themselves at odds with their countrymen. One such example was James Hamilton, 1st duke of Hamilton (later 3rd marquess of Hamilton) (hence Hamilton [younger]), who acted both as husband and son to CoP members Margaret Feilding, Duchess of Hamilton (Scally 2004), and James Hamilton, (Hamilton elder), respectively. As one of Charles I's commissioners, Hamilton (younger) oscillated between opposition and negotiation with the Covenanters, guided more by politics than conviction (Stewart 2016, 84). In her 1636 letter addressed to Marie Stewart, his wife Margaret Feilding lamented that a friend had claimed she had changed her religion, revealing the pervasive anxiety of confessional suspicion (NLS MS 5070 fols. 30–31, 17 January 1636) (Section 5.5). Such fears reflected the real risks of

confessional misidentification in post-reformation Britain as evident in the cases of Henrietta Stuart and George Gordon.

The religious affiliations of other CoP members are more clearly documented. Several correspondents can be identified as Protestant, including Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia; Mary Hope (Alva-Bandeath); Marion Douglas (Drum); John Murray (Annandale); and Alexander Leslie (Leven) (Table 1-2). Especially prominent among the Scottish Protestants within the CoP are the theologian Alexander Henderson, often regarded as the second founder of the Reformed church, and David Murray of Gorthy, the Jacobean court makar. Both men were highly educated and maintained correspondence with Marie Stewart. Henderson played a central role in efforts to preserve and promote Presbyterianism, working closely with elite women to resist the introduction of the new prayer-book (Henderson 1937, 161; Reid-Baxter 2021, 65). Murray's religious commitments are likewise evident in his devotional poetry. Henderson and Murray's correspondence with Stewart is examined in detail in Section 5.6.

Among Marie Stewart's French kin, her mother Catherine de Balsac certainly remained Catholic (Cust 1891, 100) and for Diane de Cléré, and [L] de Balsac, if they remained in France it is probable that they did too. For lower-ranked, lesser-known members of the CoP, including servants and family advisors such as Baird, Dunmure, Dow, Johnston, Schawe, Rollock, Wallace, Reade, and Norvell, as well as working individuals like Allisone and Forbes and others such as Kinloch and Lantie, the record is silent. Nevertheless, in light of the prohibition of Catholicism in Scotland and the enforcement of religious conformity by the Kirk, they were most likely Presbyterian.

In summary, Marie Stewart's successful conversion and subsequent Covenanting zeal stand in contrast to the varied and unstable religious trajectories of several of her kin and associates. The experiences of her sister Henrietta and her brothers Ludovick and Esmé, demonstrate that under James VI/I it was possible to adhere to, or align with, Catholicism discreetly. Under Charles I, however, figures within the StEr CoP such as Margaret Feilding, James Stuart and Katherine Clifton exemplify the confessional ambiguities that frequently accompanied political allegiance. Moreover, even among CoP members whose doctrinal beliefs were aligned, conflict could still arise because of their royalist connections. This thesis argues that members of the StEr CoP sustained relationships through correspondence by using, and sometimes withholding, formulaic language, irrespective of confessional alignment, a theme developed in Chapter 5.

Section 3.1 has sought to demonstrate the central importance and complexity of religion in early modern Scottish society, as the confessional and relational nuances in the StEr CoP make clear. The letters must therefore be read against this sociocultural backdrop. Equally significant was language, and the next section examines how the StEr correspondence reflects the multilingualism of their context, considering how the education, linguistic backgrounds, and cultural experiences of Marie Stewart and other CoP informants shaped their epistolary practices.

3.2 Language and Culture

Until the mid-sixteenth century, Scots was a distinct language moving towards standardisation. It enjoyed high status and was internationally recognised as separate from English, as evidenced by the employment of Scots interpreters in European courts and by letters written in Scots by foreign royals (Horsbroch 1999, 6–12; Williams 2016, 2).[71] This standardisation process was disrupted by external factors, including the Reformation, the rapid expansion of printing, and the 1603 Union of the Crowns (Macafee and Aitken 2002; Meurman-Solin 2005, 1999, 1997, 1989; Smith 2012; Kopaczyk 2013a).

Although Scots remained the language spoken and written language in Scotland at the time of the Reformation, it received little recognition in official religious texts. In the early sixteenth century, the Protestant reformer Murdoch Nisbet secretly translated parts of the Old and New Testaments into Scots (c. 1520), but this work was never published and survived only in manuscript within his family (Smith 2012, 63).[72] Instead, the two most widely circulated religious works of the period, both endorsed by John Knox, the Geneva Bible and *The Book of Common Order*, were in English (Smith 2012, 15).

First produced in 1560 by Protestant reformers exiled from England during the reign of Mary I, the Geneva Bible became highly influential across Reformed communities (Hamlin and Jones 2014, 4; 336). In Scotland, it was used by figures in the Kirk such as Alexander Henderson (a StEr CoP member) in public addresses (Henderson 1937, 3) and by writers such as Esther Inglis, becoming 'the preferred text of Presbyterians and puritans' (Reid-Baxter 2022, 29).

[71] Including Mary I of England, Philip II of Spain, and Elizabeth I of England (Horsbroch 1999, 6–12).

[72] Nisbet produced his translation working from the Latin Vulgate and an underground version of the English Bible created in the fourteenth-century by the Lollards (Smith 2012, 9). The first complete, published translation of the New Testament into Scots, by William Lorimer, was not available until 1983 (Smith 2012, 220).

By contrast, in England, Episcopalians had access to vernacular scripture through the Bishops' Bible, the version authorised for use in churches between 1568 and 1611, when the newly created King James Bible replaced it as the standard text (Hamlin and Jones 2014, 5–6; 336–37). Nevertheless, Hamlin and Jones note that until 1611 the Geneva Bible outsold the Bishops' Bible in England, and remained the version most frequently cited in contemporary literature (2014, 6).

In Scotland, the Geneva Bible was prescribed by the kirk along with *The Book of Common Order*, so ordinary Scots increasingly acquired English literacy even as they continued to speak Scots. The latter text provided prayers and instructions for religious occasions such as marriages and christenings and was regularly used by kirk Readers to lead congregations in worship, thereby becoming familiar to generations of Scottish Presbyterians (Dawson 2019, 18).

In addition to these two, texts printed in English were more widely available than those in Scots, establishing English as the dominant reading language among the literate (Stevenson 2012, 58). The 1603 Union of the Crowns and the removal of the royal court to London further intensified pressure to speak and write in English. Increased contact with English, already closely related and mutually intelligible, triggered rapid linguistic change throughout the seventeenth century. Anglicised forms appeared in both print and manuscript, although spelling remained variable (Macafee and Aitken 2002).

Given that the central figure of the CoP was French and relocated to Scotland, we might expect the CoP correspondence to reflect both languages. This expectation is borne out in the corpus, which contains letters not only in Scots and French, but also in English. As neither Scots nor English was standardised at this time, and French was only beginning to undergo standardisation, this means that, like all early modern handwritten texts, the StEr letters exhibit considerable variation in orthography and grammar across all three languages.

The Scots letters, composed during a period of linguistic transition, show both EModS and EModE features. This blending appears in orthographic differences such as Scots <quh-> versus English <wh-> (e.g., 'quhilk'/'which', 'quherof'/'whereof'), <ui> versus <oo> (e.g., 'guid'/'good', 'bluid'/'blood'), and <aw>/<au> versus <ow>/<ou> (e.g., 'knaw'/'know', 'shaw'/'show', and 'saull'/'soul'). Further contrasts include <ch> versus <gh> (e.g., 'thocht'/'thought', 'brocht'/'brought'), <sch> versus <sh> (e.g., 'sche'/'she', 'ladischipis'/'ladyships'), and <ei> versus <ea> (e.g., 'greit'/'great', 'pleise'/'please', 'mein'/'mean').

In addition to orthographic contrasts, morphological variation is also apparent. The Scots plural ending <-is> (e.g., ‘decreitis’, ‘sonnis’, ‘tennentis’) occurs alongside English <-es>/<-s> (e.g., ‘causes’, ‘years’). Distinct grammatical forms include the indefinite article *ane*; auxiliary verb pairs (e.g., ‘hes’/‘hath’, ‘dois’/‘doth, ‘wes’/‘was’ and modal verb pairs (e.g., ‘micht’/‘might’, ‘sal’/‘shall’, ‘sould’/‘should’). The Northern Subject Rule is exemplified by present-tense <-is> endings (e.g., ‘hopis’, ‘layis’, ‘threttinis’), while Scots preterite inflections appear in <-it>/<-et> (e.g., ‘informit’/‘informed’, ‘resolvet’/‘resolved’).[73]

However, alongside these Scottish versus English distinctions, the manuscripts also preserve features characteristic of Scots alone. For example, they contain symbols still current in Scots but obsolete in English, such as the yogh <ȝ> and the y-thorn (Simpson 2009, 99; Williams 2016, 98; Section 4.2). On rare occasions, the dominant Subject-Verb-Object word order is inverted to Subject-Object-Verb. This EModS syntactic feature typically occurs in subordinate clauses containing additional information (Smith 2012, 50), as in the following example:

(34) to yat which mister george Noruells his extract shawin me yat day
S O V

[to that which Mr George Norvell his extract showed me that day]
(NLS MS 5070 fols. 43–44)

The letters are also rich in Scottish lexis, such as ‘bairnis’ [children], ‘brige’ [bridge], ‘dochter’ [daughter], ‘faschioŭs’ [angry], ‘gar’ [cause], ‘hundreth’ [hundred], ‘oye’ [grandchild], and ‘sic’ [such]. The notation ‘Iaj’, the Scots form for writing the year, also occurs. Originally a corruption of ‘ím’ [1000], it evolved into ‘iaj’ or ‘Jaj’ (Rosie 2022, 8). The correspondence further contains a number of Scots legal terms, such as ‘annuellrentis’, ‘aristment’, ‘innibitions’, ‘intromissione’, ‘poynd’, and ‘repledgit’.[74] These variations are outlined here only in summary and are examined in greater detail for all three languages in Section 4.2.

For most of the StEr CoP members writing in Scots, their place of birth makes this choice unremarkable, however, Marie Stewart’s case is more complex. No evidence survives regarding her early education or the languages she and her siblings acquired before their repatriation from France. Despite their father Esmé living in Scotland for several years there is no indication that he

[73] For a comprehensive overview of Older Scots transmission, grammar, and lexicon see Smith (2012, 18–50).

[74] These are explained, along with many others, in the ‘Glossary’ section of the website Your Scottish Archives (YSA 2025), which explains archaic Scottish legal terminology.

understood the language.[75] In contrast, Ludovick's command of Scots is certain because his early schooling is recorded in James VI's instruction 1583 for his education (NLS MS 5127 fol. 1; Great Britain. RHMC. 1874, xxi).

We can nonetheless hypothesise about the languages Stewart may have known. Even before her removal to Scotland, raised in France as the daughter of a duke with royal connections, she would almost certainly have received a higher level of education than most of her contemporaries, the majority of whom, given the hierarchical nature of society, had little or no access to formal schooling. As a Frenchwoman of her rank and generation, she may have encountered elements of a humanist curriculum, since some Franco-noblewomen were taught Latin and their correspondence reveals familiarity not only with that language but also with Greek, English, Italian, and Spanish (Stevenson 2012, 18; 350). France was particularly advanced in this regard, exemplified by highly educated and politically active figures such as Marguerite de Navarre and her daughter Jeanne d'Albret, whose example may have facilitated greater educational opportunities for young women like Stewart and her sisters (Broomhall 2012, 20; Section 7.4).

Although no direct evidence confirms Stewart had Latin, several indications suggest the possibility. For instance, her holograph letters employ the humanist punctuation practice of brackets (Elder 2022, 75). In addition, Esther Inglis included the Latin motto 'Sapiens mulier aedificat domum' [A wise woman builds her house] in her portrait of Stewart adapted from Georgette Montenay's 1619 drawing of Jeanne d'Albret (Huntington Library Catalogue 2021; Bath 2018, 35–39). Moreover, the image also includes two dedicatory poems to Stewart, one in Latin, and one in French, by Bartholomew Kello (Inglis' husband), alongside another in Latin to Stewart's husband. The drawing depicts Stewart engaged in construction, placing a brick on a partially built wall that supports a range of measuring implements (Bath 2018, 35–39; Section 7.4).

In addition, Stewart's daughter Marie Erskine was the dedicatee of a Latin psalm paraphrase by Arthur Johnson in 1642, suggesting that Stewart may have arranged humanist training for her daughters (Stevenson 2012, 350, 371).[76] Nonetheless, no Latin writings survive by either Stewart or her daughter, and as women were not always expected to fully comprehend such texts (Stevenson 2012, 20), their proficiency remains uncertain. As noted above, Scottish bibles were in

[75] His handwritten receipt for his earldom papers is in French, leading the nineteenth-century Stewart family biographer Lady Elizabeth Cust to remark that this 'was the only language familiar to [Lennox]' (1891, 90). In his relationship with James VI, it is likely that the two conversed in French, as the king was himself a fluent speaker.

[76] Female dedicatees were rare in early modern Scotland and Marie Erskine was one of a select group of nine identified by Stevenson (2012, 349–50).

EModE, and even those individuals like Henrietta Stuart, who secretly adhered to Catholicism, probably read their Bible in translation. For English-speaking Catholics, the Douay-Rheims Bible (1582–1610) provided an approved vernacular text based on the Latin Vulgate, intended to protect readers from Protestant errors (Hamlin and Jones 2014, 82; 337). French-speaking members of the StEr CoP may have had access to other vernacular translations, though it is unclear which ones.

Stewart's husband, by contrast, certainly possessed Latin and Greek, having been schooled alongside James VI by his tutor George Buchanan (Juhala 2000, 93). Their sons, particularly Alexander and Henry, also studied these languages, completing arts degrees at Edinburgh University before embarking on their European tour (Tucker 2002, 116), with Latin serving as the universal language of scholarship throughout this period. In seventeenth-century Scotland, Latin also dominated literary production (Smith 2012, Stevenson 2012, 358), so the Erskine men likely read in that language, unlike their English counterparts, who increasingly accessed classical works in vernacular translation (Stevenson 2012, 357).

Nonetheless, within their correspondence, John Erskine and his sons wrote in EModS with varying degrees of anglicisation. In StErCor2, Alexander's twenty-one letters are almost entirely anglicised, while those of Henry (16), Arthur (4) and Charles (1) show a mix of Scots and English features (Elder 2022, 82–84; 87; 89–94).[77] By contrast, their father's correspondence displays a higher degree of Scots spelling than that of these four sons, although his grammar was noticeably anglicised (Elder 2022, 82–83; 89).

These differences may reflect geography, social context, or educational background. All of the Erskine sons were mobile, spending time both in England and elsewhere. After travelling with Henry in France and Italy from 1617 to 1620, Alexander undertook military and diplomatic missions abroad, including to the Netherlands. Charles and Arthur were also mobile but were primarily landowners and estate managers in Scotland (Elder 2022, 105). John Erskine was likewise mobile, particularly after the 1603 Union of the Crowns, when he made regular trips to England on court business (Brown 1993, 544). His orthographic choices may therefore indicate a conscious

[77] Elder's study of the effects of anglicisation in forty seven StEr letters from the pilot corpus StErCor includes four of Alexander's letters which she found to be almost entirely anglicised (2022, 82–84). The present study confirms the same pattern in Alexander's remaining seventeen letters included in the expanded StErCor2 corpus. All of Arthur's (4) and Charles's (1) letters in StErCor2 were also part of the pilot corpus, while none of Henry's letters were included in Elder's (2022) study. A broader, though less detailed, survey of anglicisation in Henry's letters was therefore conducted for this thesis, which found a similar mix of Scots and English features to that identified by Elder for Arthur's and Charles's correspondence (2022, 82–83; 87; 89–94).

retention of Scots to foster a shared Scottish identity vis-à-vis James VI/I, alongside unconscious grammatical anglicisation arising from frequent contact with English (van Eyndhoven and Clark 2020, 224; Elder 2022, 105). Such interpretations remain hypothetical, however, as individual linguistic preferences may also have influenced these choices (Elder 2022, 106). Letters sent by Stewart and Erskine's daughters, Marie, and Anne, likewise show mixed forms, though the sample is too small for firm conclusions (Elder 2022, 84–85).

Stewart's own holograph letters in Scots demonstrate a high degree of fluency developed over her lifetime (Section 1.3.4; Elder 2022, 28–31), though they show extensive anglicisation in both grammar and spelling, possibly reflecting an early education that did not prioritise Scots. By contrast, her scribal letters exhibit a much stronger Scots profile, which may reflect the degree of independence afforded to her secretaries in the composition process (Elder 2022, 106). Nonetheless, Stewart's personal command of Scots enabled her to participate in legal proceedings conducted in that language, as she is recorded as standing in for her husband at the sheriff court during his absence (Brown 2011, 97).[78]

Stewart also had sustained exposure to English, having accompanied the royal entourage south along with her husband and brothers, Ludovick and Esmé, in 1603 (Goodare 2004). Although the couple were thereafter largely based in Scotland, Stewart may have continued to accompany on visits to England (Brown 1993, 544).[79] The eleven StErCor2 letters written in EModE were sent to Marie Stewart and her husband and include one from I. Reade and ten from Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia, who wrote in English, French, Latin, and Dutch (Akkerman 2011: 2, 1–2). Such examples further suggest the couple's fluency in that language.

Evidence from Stewart's account book, kept by her servant George Monorgun, further confirms her command of English as well as Scots and her active participation in a distinctive culture of reading. She was an energetic book buyer: as van Heijnsbergen and Royan remarked, 'one cannot help but be struck by the number and range of books she purchased or had bound in one year [1638]' (2002, xix). Her acquisitions in that year included Alexander Hume's *Hymnes or Sacred Songs* (dedicated to Elizabeth Melville), a 'David Lyndsay', Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, Dyke's

[78] Rebecca Mason's study of married women and the law in Scotland, 1600–1750, indicates that, although Scots law did not recognise women as independent legal actors, they frequently took an active role within the court system, a pattern reflected in this behaviour (Mason 2019).

[79] For example, in 1616, John Erskine acted as godparent, along with the king, to his nephew Henry Stuart, 8th seigneur d'Aubigny (1616–1632) who was baptised at Whitehall, London (Cust 1891, 100). As the son of her youngest brother Esmé (Lennox younger), it is possible that, given the close famililal connection, Marie Stewart had accompanied her husband to England.

Good Conscience, and several political tracts (Sharpe 1815, 30, 34, 38, 50, cited in Stevenson 2012, 350; van Heijnsbergen and Royan 2002, xix). She also paid '12s' to 'ane little boy for two buikes of the Covenant' [a little boy for two books of the Covenant] (Sharpe 1815, 24; MacKinnon 2016, 46). Monorgun further recorded expenses for bookbinding, such as 'Payit to ye buik binder for binding ane writtan preaching buik, covering and clasping my Laidies byble, and shewing on the covering on the prayer' [Paid to the book binder for binding a written preaching book, covering, and clasping my Lady's bible, and sewing on the prayer covering] (Sharpe 1815, 30).[80]

Such activity reveals a cultural experience quite unlike that of most early modern Scotswomen, who generally had little or no access to written literature (Stevenson 2012, 358). The limited availability of printed works in Scots further restricted readers' choices: whereas in England, embroidery and cookery manuals aimed at women, were widely available, these were absent in Scotland (Stevenson 2012, 351). Stewart's literacy in English and French therefore gave her access to a much wider range of material. Yet the books recorded between 1638 and 1643, when the account book was being actively maintained, fall almost exclusively within the religious and political genres. This concentration suggests that her principal interests during this politically turbulent period lay in these fields. Still, as van Heijnsbergen and Royan emphasise, book ownership tells only part of the story: texts were also borrowed from the royal library, circulated among friends, or gifted, making it likely that Stewart and her family had access to far more works than they personally possessed (2002, xvii).

Stewart's cultural role, however, extended beyond reading to include the patronage of literature and the arts, a practice conventional for wealthy elites (Broomhall 2012, 20). Her brothers were also active patrons: Ludovick supported John Burel and Alexander Montgomery (McLaughlin 2017, 136), while Esmé patronised Ben Jonson, who resided in his household for several years and featured him in his masques (Smuts 2004). Stewart herself both commissioned and received dedications. Such women, as van Heijnsbergen and Royan stress, were not passive

[80] Along with reading materials, other purchases in the account book offer a fascinating insight into the life of an early modern noblewoman. She bought 'Ane quair paiper, 5sh' [a quire of paper], possibly for letter-writing (Sharpe 1815, 25); fruit: 'Ane douzain peares to my Lady, 1sh. 8d' [A dozen pears to my Lady, 1sh. 8d] (28); 'ane pound of raisins to my Laidy agayne ye fasting Sunday' [a pound of raisins to my Lady for the Sunday fasting] (33) and tobacco: 'Payit for tobako to my Laidies use, 1sh' [Paid for tobacco for my Lady's use] (42). It also details the musical entertainers she hired: 'twa hieland singing-wemen at my Ladies command' [at my Lady's command, two Highland singing women] (29), a 'blind singer callit Keller' [a blind singer called Keller] (38), 'ane woman clarshocher who usit the house in my Lord his tyme' [a woman harpist who visited the house in my Lord's time] (53), 'ane blind singer who sang the time of disner' [a blind singer who sang the time of dinner] (25); and 'Blind Wat the piper' [Blind Wat the piper] (40). It also reveals she kept a pet parakeet, paying '4sh' 'to ane man who brought ye parokitt her cage' [to a man who brought the parakeet her cage] (Sharpe 1815, 40).

figures but actively shaped the production of these works, serving as a crucial 'conduit for cultural energy' (2002, xix). Among Stewart's dedications were the religious texts by Patrick Simson, *A Short Compend of the Historie of the First Ten Persecutions* (1613–16) and James Caldwell, *The Countess of Marres Arcadia, or Sanctuarie Containing Morning, and Evening Meditations, for the Whole Week* (1625) (van Heijnsbergen and Royan 2002, xviii; Stevenson 2012, 349).[81]

Stewart's integration into a wider Presbyterian artistic and literary circle is further evidenced by Inglis' portrait of her and by her friendship with her husband's first cousin, the poet David Murray of Gorthy, attested to in his letter to her (NLS MS 5070 fol. 1, 20 October 1604; Section 5.6). Inglis and Murray were themselves connected: in 1612 Inglis dedicated her miniature copy of the *Psalmes of David* to Murray (Reid-Baxter 2022, 56). Stewart was also closely associated with the poet Elizabeth Melville, another woman integral to this cultural network. Both were linked to Alexander Hume, who left them his Christian affection and blessing in his 1609 testament and placed them within his circle of 'godly and elect ladies in this our age' as referred to in the dedication of *Hymnes* (1599) that he addressed to Melville, a text which Stewart owned (as noted above) (Bawcutt 2009, 37–38). Stewart's daughter Anna also reportedly met Melville at a conventicle (Wodrow 1842, 19).[82]

These connections demonstrate Stewart's active promotion not only of male writers such as Hume and Murray, but also of female artists and writers including Inglis and Melville, a choice Broomhall argues illustrates a progressive approach (2012, 20). These literary circles also overlapped with religious networks (Reid-Baxter 2022, 72), as evidenced by the correspondence of Stewart and Melville with Protestant ministers, as well as their financial support of them (Elder 2022, 71). The letters further reveal the women's active involvement in the minsters' lives and careers. As Reid-Baxter observes in relation to Melville's letters to Reverend John Livingstone, they show her 'lecturing Livingstone, counselling him, scolding him, and even suggesting subject matter for sermons' (2015, 219).[83] Although such forthright exchanges might be construed as

---

[81] James Caldwell's *The Countess of Marres Arcadia, or Sanctuarie Containing Morning, and Evening Meditations, for the Whole Week* (1625) was published about decade after his death by Stewart's physician, Patrick Anderson, and was based on Philip Sidney's *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* (1590) (van Heijnsbergen, 2010, 195). van Heijnsbergen argues that as a minister, Caldwell's Arcadia was a 'deliberate spiritualisation' of the original, which was for 'the body' whereas Stewart's version was intended 'for the soul' (van Heijnsbergen 2010, 195).

[82] In the latter half of the seventeenth century, the term conventicle became associated with large, illegal outdoor field preachings. Earlier in the century, however, it was also used to describe smaller gatherings in which participants read and discussed religious texts or joined together in prayer (Stewart 2013, 94).

[83] Given that Livingstone visited Stewart's daughter Katherine at her home in the 1630s (Wells 1997, 107) and corresponded with other distinguished female Covenanters in Scotland (Reid-Baxter 2015, 219), it is possible that, like Melville, Stewart may have met and corresponded with the minister.

interference, Reid-Baxter notes that Livingstone, like many ministers of the period, faced financial hardship and was grateful for the support and patronage of elite women such as Melville (2015, 219).

Stewart's active engagement with ministers is apparent in her interactions with Alexander Henderson as shown in his StEr letters responding to her suggestions regarding his career choices.[84] In a letter to her son Charles, Stewart urged him to intercede with Henderson on behalf of another minister: 'If ye find my Lord off Rothes and mister Alexander hendersonne togither speake a good word for Mister Robert Key his preferment to ye vaiking kirk off Inuerkething' [If you find my Lord Rothes and Mr Alexander Henderson together, speak a good word for Mr Robert Key, his preferment to the vacant kirk of Inverkeithing] (NLS MS 5070 fols. 67–68, 27 June 1640). This mutual involvement between StEr CoP members provides further evidence of Stewart using letters to instruct male agents in advancing her aims. Section 5.6 examines her correspondence with Henderson in greater detail, focusing on the religious formulaic language employed there to examine whether their exchanges not only served to sustain influence and activity but also to maintain the interpersonal bonds within the CoP to which they belonged.

Section 3.2 has outlined the linguistic and cultural context of the StEr CoP. Their letters reveal Scots in transition, marked by anglicisation yet retaining distinctive forms, while also accommodating French and English. Within this setting, as a Franco-Scottish noblewoman, Marie Stewart occupied an unusual position: the fluency she developed in Scots, the educational opportunities available to her, and the skills acquired in a multilingual society undergoing change enabled her to access a wide range of reading materials, represent her husband at the sheriff court, and cultivate epistolary literacy to advance her own aims. Her letters, account book, and patronage activities place her and other CoP members at the centre of a Presbyterian cultural network that sustained epistolary, artistic, and ministerial relationships, extending the CoP's influence into wider religious and political life. Still, in later life, the deaths of both her husband and the king removed some of this protection, exposing her to the vulnerabilities of widowhood amid a period of political and religious instability. The following section examines how Stewart, alongside other StEr CoP members, navigated these challenges via their correspondence, adapting their strategies to safeguard their interests and maintain their influence.

[84] Henderson's letters to Marie Stewart are NLS MS 5155 fols. 5–6, 26 June 1631, and NLS MS 5070 fol. 10, 16 June 1632.

3.3 Widowhood and War

The death of her husband in 1634 left Marie Stewart in a vulnerable position. Although his will granted Stewart one-third of his estate and personally requested that his eldest son provide for his stepmother and siblings, the new earl ignored these provisions (Elder 2024). As a widow, under Scots law Stewart did not require a male guardian to act on her behalf or to initiate legal proceedings (Mason 2019, 801), and she accordingly commenced an action to secure her lawful share. Twenty-six letters in the StEr corpus concern this dispute, revealing both her close attention to financial and estate matters and her determination to secure her rightful share as the case extended to more than six years.[85]

Fifteen surviving letters from 1635–1640 document the advice and practical support she received from members of the StEr CoP. For example, she sought help from the eminent Scottish advocate, Sir Louis Stuart of Kirkhill, and in his response he urged her not to despair, but to trust in the justice of her cause:

> (35) thesse ar humblie to Intreitt ȝoŭr Ladyship not to grete and do yoŭr selff evill, since ye may be assurit, in end to attaine to quhatsumeivir in Iustice can be demandit
>
> [these are humbly to entreat your Ladyship not to weep and do your self evil, since you may be assured, in [the] end to attain to whatsoever in justice can be demanded] (NLS MS 5070 fols. 21–22, 9 March 1635)

Although Stewart did not legally require male agents, her status likely led her to make use of them, reflecting a broader pattern among elite early modern women, for whom male intermediaries enabled the exercise of authority and the management of legal and financial affairs (Wiggins 2017, 126, 132; Newsome-Chandler 2025, 27).[86] Yet Stewart expected exceptional diligence. Daniel Andersone, for instance, gave her a meticulous account of the stages and setbacks in delivering one of her letters alongside her son Arthur (NLS MS 5070, fols. 19–20). Her sons-in-law also proved loyal, their letters testifying to their efforts to assist her:

---

[85] Twenty four letters directly refer to the dispute and two indirectly. Their shelfmarks are as follows: NLS MS 80 fol. 57; NLS MSS 5070 fols. 17–18; fols. 19–20; fols. 21–22; fols. 25–26; fols. 32–33; fols. 34–35; fols. 38–39; fols. 40–41; fol. 42; fols. 43-44; fols. 47-48; fols. 49-50; fol. 51; fols. 54-55; fols. 59-60; fols. 71-72; fols. 73-74; fol. 83; NLS MSS 5088 fol. 79; and NLS MSS 5155 fols. 12–13; fols. 14-15; fol. 19; fols. 20-21; fols. 22-23; fols. 32-33. Another letter sent by John Erskine, 3rd earl of Mar to Charles Erskine (NLS MS 5088 fols. 41–41, undated [after 1634]) may also concern the dispute although it is difficult to be certain from the content.

[86] One notable example is Bess of Hardwick directing her son William to negotiate at Court on her behalf, drawing on his legal and political expertise to do so (Wiggins 2017, 132).

> (36) I haŭ wryten earnestly to the earl off mar to giŭ yow the haill coŭmpts with the noat of my lords debts & the natŭr off them
>
> [I have earnestly written to the Earl of Mar to give you the whole accounts with the note of my Lord's debts and the nature of them] (John Leslie [Rothes], NLS MS 5070 fols. 32–33, 14 February 1636).

> (37) I haiŭe earnestly and scharplie rememberit my Lord Mar to performe all he sould to zour Ladyship and that with expeditione oyerwayis we will boith think and mentean that zour Ladyship sŭffers wrong
>
> [I have earnestly and sharply remembered my Lord Mar to perform all he should to your Ladyship, and that with expedition, otherwise we will both think and maintain that your Ladyship suffers wrong] (John Lyon [Kinghorn], NLS MS 5070 fols. 38–39, 17 May 1636).

> (38) my aduice to your Ladyship is that if yow can haue any aduantage by letting my lord of Mar haue that grate Iewele which he desyres, to let him haue it becaus yow are much mistakin in the worth of it for there is not a man in England will giue aboue 200lb sterling for it, and my lord of Mar esteams it to be worth – i000lb
>
> [my advice to your Ladyship is that if you can have any advantage by letting my Lord of Mar have that great jewel which he desires, to let him have it because you are much mistaken in the worth of it, for there is not a man in England will give above £200 sterling for it, and my Lord of Mar esteems it to be worth £1000] (Thomas Hamilton [Binning] NLS MS 5070 fols. 34–35, 5 May 1636).

These letters illuminate Stewart's strategic use of her CoP to resist dishonour and disregard for law. In many cases only replies to Stewart survive, but they demonstrate that she had actively solicited assistance via her correspondence, paralleling her sister Henrietta, who petitioned Hamilton (elder) on her husband's behalf (Section 3.1).

The fifteen letters sent by Stewart herself that address the legal action likewise underscore her determination. Charles, her son, was by this time colonel in the Covenanting Army (*RPS*, 1649/5/35), Justice of the Peace, and elder at the Westminster Assembly (van Dixhoorn, Bower, and Breeden 2025), making him a powerful ally.[87] Stewart's letters on the subject date from 1639–40 and show her continuing to reject proposals contrary to her interests and instructing Charles to secure her rights:

> (39) I receaved your lettre with ye copie off two extractis off Counsill, ye last quheroff being altogither dissonant from ye Counsills mynd and decriet and yerfor I directlie

[87] Convened in 1643 to advise on English church reform and promote confessional unity across the three kingdoms, the Westminster Assembly of Divines produced the *Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms*, and the *Directory for the Public Worship of God* (Stewart 2016, 23; van Dixhoorn, Bower, and Breeden 2025).

> refuse to accept off it […] ȝe yat ar my children yer ȝe must urge ye bissines and solist my lord Commissionar and ye rest off ye lordis off Counsill especialie ye earles off Argyle and Southesk […] desyre my lordes off Rothes kingorne marshall and hadingtonne yer assistance and be so instant yat in yis I gett no disgrace nor affront which the earle off mar preases in yis meanes to rube on me
>
> [I received your letter with the copy of two extracts of Council, the last whereof being altogether dissonant from the Council's mind and decree and therefore I directly refuse to accept it […] you that are my children there, you must urge the business and solicit my Lord Commmisioner and the rest of the lords of Council, especially the earls of Argyle and Southesk […] desire my lords of Rothes, Kinghorn, Marischall and Haddington their assistance and be so instant that in this I get no disgrace nor affront, which the earl of Mar presses in these means to impinge on me] (NLS MS 5070 fols. 43–44, 17 October 1639).[88]

Here, rather than requesting, she insisted: 'ȝe must urge ye bissines and solist' [you must urge the business and solicit] and 'desyre my lordes off Rothes kingorne marshall and hadingtonne y[er] assistance' [desire my lords […] their assistance]. The imperative verbal constructions, 'must urge' and 'desire', illustrate her authority and align with Magnusson's (2004, 59–60) 'supposal and assurance' script, as do her I-phrases: 'I directlie refuse to accept off it' [I directly refuse to accept of it]; 'if it be conform to yat I am content to accept off it, otherwayes not' [if it conforms to that I am content to accept of it, otherwise not]; 'I knowe iff my lo[rd] advocat shuld employe hym self' [I know if my Lord Advocate should employ himself]. Such formulations show Stewart exercising agency in this legal context.

In other situations, Stewart's sons addressed their mother with requests, as in Arthur's letter asking his mother to speak with his brother Charles, who was in France. As Example (40) shows, Arthur hoped that his nephew might join Charles in the wars, since the boy was becoming difficult to manage at home:

> (40) Madam I haŭe taken the occasion to wreitt to your Ladyship Againe and the Anent my Nephey Alexander Ersken To sie if yoŭr Ladyship will be content that he waitt vpon my brother ȝir Charles to france wher he may haŭe occasion to plaise place him with him with a Scotish Captaine ther, for I haŭe vsed all the meins I can tray for sŭme Captaine heer and can find none, the laide becaumes so insalent that it is impossoble for me to keep him, therfar I intreitt your Ladyship to spoick to my brother for it is best for him that he goe to the warrs.
>
> [Madame I have taken the occasion to write to your Ladyship again about my nephew, Alexander Erskine, to see if your Ladyship would be content for him to wait upon my brother, Sir Charles, to France, where he may have occasion to please place him with a Scottish captain there. For I have used all the means I can to try for some captain here

[88] Rube: To impinge on; to affect or influence, freq. in a disadvantageous manner (*DSL* 4.0 'Rub v.').

> and can find none. The lad has become so insolent that it is impossible for me to keep him. Therefore, I entreat your Ladyship to speak to my brother [about it], for it is best for him that he go to the wars.] (NLS MS 5155 fols. 44–45, 19 May 1643)

Stewart also sought assistance in recovering her late daughter Katherine's jewels as shown in five further letters (p.64). A detailed report from her son-in-law, Thomas Hamilton (Binning), again reflects the precision she expected from her agent (NLS MS 5070 fols. 34–35, 5 May 1636). Other letters show Stewart appealed to Thomas Hope, Charles' father-in-law, who was well placed to assist given his roles as Lord Advocate and privy councillor (Paul 1893, 73). Hope reassured her and advised that witness statements should be taken:

> (41) And if ȝour ladyship wer als neirlie clerit in ye Iowellis trewlie I wald think ȝour ladyship at greit ease in ye controversies with the Erl of Mar, & thairfoir forȝett not to try the witnessis ȝour ladyship, and send me a nott of thair depositiounis
>
> [And if your Ladyship were as nearly cleared in the jewels, truly I would think your Ladyship at great ease in the controversies with the Earl of Mar; and therefore, forget not to examine the witnesses, your Ladyship, and send me a note of their depositions] (NLS MS 5070 fol. 42, 10 May 1639).

Beyond internal family disputes, the StEr letters also reflect the broader instability of the late 1630s and 1640s. By 1638, Scotland had established the Tables, an alternative government to that of England, placing both countries on the path to war (Stewart 2016, 156; 237). As noted in Section 3.1, families were expected to contribute financially and materially to military efforts. This requirement is exemplified in a letter sent to Stewart by members of the Committee of Estates concerning the requisitioning ('outreik') of horses from her tenants by Sir George Stirling, Laird of Keir (?1615–1667) (Fraser 1858, 48):[89]

> (42) the necessities of the present outreik of horssis is so great that the same can not suffer no delay. […] if your Ladyship can put furth all the horssis impositye vpone yow presentlie […] the remanent of these horses or pryces yerof takin vp be keir shalbe restoirit This, Madame is all can be done for the present vnles we should frustrat the present expeditioun
>
> [the neccessities of the present requisitioning of horses is so great that the same cannot suffer delay. […] If your Ladyship can put forth all the horses imposed upon you presently […] the remaining horses or the prices thereof taken up by [Laird] Keir shall

[89] The letter contains the following signatures: 'Wigton', 'Dunfermline', 'Balmerino', 'Forbes of Leslie', 'Burleigh', 'Smurray' (NLS MS 5070 fols. 75-76, 27 July 1640).

> be restored. This, Madame is all can be done for the present unless we should frustrate the present expedition] (NLS MS 5070 fols. 75-76, 27 July 1640).[90]

Stewart's letters from 1640, as the second Bishop's war escalated, also convey wartime anxieties. Edinburgh Castle, seized by the Covenanters during the first Bishops' War, had been returned to royalist control in the peace negotiations of June 1639 (Stewart 2016, 44–45; 238). As renewed conflict loomed, concerns were raised for local safety (Stewart 2016, 44–45; 238) and she urged Charles to relocate his wife Mary Hope:

> (43) we heare of manie feudes heir and that the castell of Edenbroch to be taken be the Cuntrie. I intreat yow to bring your wife heir in time for I consider what feare she will be in
>
> [we hear of many feuds here and that the castle of Edinburgh will be taken by the Country. I entreat you to bring your wife here in time for I consider what fear she will be in] (NLS MS 5070 fol. 58, 13 January 1640).

When fighting resumed in June 1640 the royalist garrison fired upon the town killing 'dozens, possibly hundreds' (Stewart 2016, 238). Stewart encouraged Mary Hope to remain calm as there was hope for a swift peace:

> (44) ye must take courage now for there is good apirences that all will goe right and that there shall be pace presently, we hard word heir yesternight that itt was concluded be the King and the comisioners, bott I dar nott beliue till I heare itt confermed againe
>
> [you must take courage now for there is good appearances that all will go right and that there shall be peace presently, we heard word here yesternight that it was concluded by the King and the Commissioners, but I dare not believe it until I hear it confirmed again] (NLS MS 5070 fols. 63-64, 17 June 1640).

Peace was indeed restored to the castle, although only after a three-month siege, in September 1640 (Stewart 2016, 44–45; 238). Other letters from this time illustrate how the StEr CoP exchanged news once the war had ended, as in this one to Stewart from her son Arthur:

> (45) the parlament goes wiell on, and the commons with sume of the Nobellmen of Ingland hes giŭen in ane supplication to the Lower house for roottingoŭt the office of Bishopes out of the chŭrch of Ingland, the dubill of quhilk supplication your Ladyship shall reseŭe hier inclosed all the papist of the kings armie are to be cassyted, the nobellmen of Ingland hes barrowed 50000 punds sterling for paying our bygin armie the last 2 months.[91]

[90] Outreik: Finding and equipping (troops, also their mounts); also, fitting out (troops and others) for military service (*DSL* 4.0 'Outreke n.').

[91] Cassyted: To make void (*DSL* 4.0 'Cassate v.').

> [The Parliament goes well on, and the Commons, with some of the noblemen of England, have given in a supplication to the Lower House for rooting out the office of bishops out of the Church of England, the copy of which supplication your Ladyship shall receive here enclosed. All the papists of the king's army are to be quashed [made void], and the noblemen of England have borrowed 50,000 pounds sterling for paying our bygone army the last two months.] (NLS MS 5155 fols. 34-35, 8 December 1640)

In the last four years of Stewart's life, the CoP members lived amid ongoing conflict, both between Scots and English and among Scots themselves. The second Bishop's War ended on 26 October 1640 with a truce, but the Irish Rebellion in 1641 and Scotland's involvement in the English Civil War from 1642, as well as the ongoing Thirty Years War, brought further military service for several StEr CoP male members (Stewart and Nugent 2020, 18; 29), including Stewart's surviving son, Charles, and Alexander Leslie (Leven), the overall commander of the Covenanting army. Correspondence from G. Johnston documents the circulation of continental intelligence to Charles while he was in France:

> (46) as for newes: from france, your sent gentilman, hes grantid all was demandit by the Earle of Lothian: secondlie dois desir that nather for rellagion nor any other reason we do enter England with ane armie, thrielie, dois desyring the rescinding of some acts of the general assemblie (as I doe tak it) for subscrybing of this new covenant. The 4 is for delywering owt of pryson the Earle of Antrŭme wnder his Worships promeise that he shall not meddle any more in these trwblis, but if need, be, he shall live in france
>
> as for news: from France, your sent gentleman, has granted all [that] was demanded by the Earl of Lothian: secondly, does desire that neither for religion nor any other reason we do enter England with an army, thirdly, does desiring the rescinding of some acts of the General Assembly (as I do take it) for subscribing of this new Covenant. The 4[th] is for delivering out of prison the earl of Antrim under his Worship's promise that he shall not meddle any more in these troubles, but if need be, he shall live in France (NLS MS 5155 fols. 47–48, 21–23 October 1643).

Such communications underscore the CoP's broader role in maintaining information networks across Scotland and beyond. In contrast to Stewart's son, another CoP member, James Graham (Montrose) had switched allegiance in around 1641 to fight for the royalist army instead, and he was later joined by Henrietta's son, George Gordon, 2nd Marquess of Huntly (a non-CoP member) (Stevenson 2004a).

At the Battle of Marston Moor in July 1644, the Covenanters helped defeat the Royalists, though Stewart did not live to see their success. At the age of sixty eight, she died of a 'deidlie

brasche' [deadly flu] (Thomson 1843, 205) on 11 May 1644 at Thomas Hope's house in the Cowgate, Edinburgh where she had moved after previously staying in Niddry's Wynd (Elder 2024). Her last sent letter was to her son Charles on 17 October 1643. Her last received, dated 1 January 1644, shows she was still following military movements closely. As the unidentified correspondent, C.S., noted in a light-hearted reference remark:

> (47) I grantt I am aŭchtane yowr ladyship ane poynt of wyne qŭhich I vilbe villing to pay for giff the northe armie and the sŭthe armie haid mett att ye brige of stirling
>
> [I grant I owe your Ladyship a pint of wine which I will be willing to pay, if the north army and the south army had met at Stirling Bridge] (NLS MS 5155 fols. 53–54, 1 January 1644).

After Stewart's death, the Parliamentarian victory and English occupation brought further upheaval. The Covenanting movement effectively ended with the Restoration in 1660, when followers faced severe persecution during the 'Killing Time,' as episcopacy was restored and earlier Presbyterian reforms overturned (Henderson 1937, 181). Followers of Catholicism also continued to experience persecution and discrimination, which was not alleviated until Catholic emancipation in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

This chapter has situated Marie Stewart and the members of the StEr CoP within the profound religious, political, and military upheavals of the mid-seventeenth century, from the accession of Charles I and the death of John Erskine, 2nd earl of Mar, to Stewart's own death in 1644. It has demonstrated the centrality of religion in shaping individual identities, family relationships, and social networks, while also highlighting the elite milieu in which the StEr family operated. Royal favour, education, multilingualism, travel, and sustained engagement with books, art, and culture positioned Stewart and her kin at the heart of Scottish political and intellectual life. At the same time, the chapter has shown how the accession of Charles I marked a decisive shift: the relative stability maintained under James VI fractured, loyalties were tested, and individuals were forced to navigate an increasingly polarised landscape in which adherence to Presbyterianism could come into direct conflict with long-standing loyalty to the crown.

These sociohistorical complexities form the essential backdrop for the linguistic analysis that follows. The tensions, negotiations, and competing allegiances outlined here are not only historical circumstances but also social conditions that shape epistolary practice. Chapter 4 therefore turns to methodology, detailing how the letters are transcribed, digitised, and assembled into a corpus suitable for systematic analysis. It explains how formulaic language is defined, identified, and extracted for quantitative investigation, before being examined qualitatively using pragmatic

tools. Crucially, it also shows how the rich contextual detail explored in this chapter is encoded as corpus metadata, allowing sociolinguistic variation to be analysed in a rigorous and replicable way.

Chapter 4 Corpus Compilation and Methodology

When compiling a digital corpus, editors must adopt a rigorous approach, clearly mapping out the trajectory of their editorial process (Lass 2004, 21–26; Meurman-Solin 2004, 173–74). This project drew inspiration from the detailed methodological accounts provided for the CEEC-400 suite of corpora by Nevalainen, Raumolin-Brunberg, Kaislaniemi, Keränen, Mikko Laitinen, Nevala, Nurmi, Palander-Collin, Säily, and Sairio (2020) and for the POLITECTS corpus by van Eyndhoven (2023).

Following their example, each phase of the corpus compilation is outlined in this chapter: preliminary stages, editorial approach, transcription policy, tagging, compilation on AntConc, plain-text transcription generation, and sociolinguistic metadata (Sections 4.1–4.7). In this context, *data* refers to the main text of a letter, including any contemporary additions such as marginalia or endorsements. In contrast, *metadata* denotes supplementary information about a letter, such as its archival shelfmark or the language in which it was composed.

4.1 Preliminary Stages

The processes of selection, transcription, and annotation in corpus creation inevitably determine the kinds of linguistic analysis that are possible. At the construction stage, researchers must therefore define their objectives with care: the corpus should be tailored to address the materials under investigation while retaining sufficient flexibility to support future enquiries (Meurman-Solin 2004, 173). The corpus compilation process must also adhere to current best practices to guarantee academic rigour, relevance, and consistency. To this end, this thesis evaluated the approaches of other compilers to identify the most appropriate components for its own design.

4.1.1 Formatting, encoding, and software

To prioritise accessibility and reproducibility, the software, file formats, markup language, and corpus analysis toolkit were selected for being free-to-use, widely available, and well supported. Following the model of major corpora of early modern and modern correspondence such as ScotsCorr (Meurman-Solin 2007), 19CSC (Dossena 2004; 2013; forthcoming), Bess of Harwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550–1608 (Wiggins, Bryson, Starza Smith,

Timmermann, and Williams 2013), the Thynne letters corpus (Williams 2013b), Curious Travellers Digital Editions (Constantine, Leask, Jones, Edwards, Deans, and Williams 2019), CEEC-400 (Nevalainen, Raumolin-Brunberg, Kaislaniemi, Keränen, Mikko Laitinen, Nevala, Nurmi, Palander-Collin, Säily, and Sairio 2020) and CoPaDocs (Schiegg 2017–2020), and The Newton Project (Iliffe and Mandelbrote 2025), StErCor2 is comprised of multiple XML formatted files.

Table 4-1 presents the number of letters and tokens in StErCor2 by primary language of composition. The token count refers to the total number of individual words or symbols, as defined in the corpus Token Definition Settings (Section 4.5), and excludes all XML tags.

Table 4-1: StErCor2 total letters and tokens

Language	No. of letters	Token count
Scots	165	57268
English	11	1992
French	7	1524
TOTALS	**183**	**60784**

As an open standard, XML is widely supported and ensures long-term functionality. XML's clear structure, human- and machine-readability, and compatibility with the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI) make it an ideal choice for digital humanities projects. TEI, an XML-based language used to transcribe source texts such as the StEr letters and to capture their metadata, is a mature standard supported by extensive tools, documentation, and training (Desenclos 2016). Since its tags are customisable, TEI files can be marked up according to the aims of different projects. In line with this project's open-access principles, TEI was therefore selected as the most appropriate markup language for StErCor2, ensuring future usability. Each of StErCor2's 183 XML files contains an individual letter, marked up in accordance with the 2025 *TEI: Guidelines for Electronic Text Encoding and Interchange* (TEI Consortium).

The XML files were created using the Oxygen XML Editor, chosen for its high level of compatibility with TEI. Free to download, versatile, and supported by extensive online resources, Oxygen also offers useful tools, such as a validation error locator to enable accurate tagging procedures.[92] A corpus analysis toolkit was also required. This thesis adopted AntConc (Anthony

[92] Although Oxygen requires a paid subscription for commercial usage, free extended trials are offered for non-profit open-source projects and students.

2025), a robust freeware program that is regularly updated, reasonably user-friendly, and widely employed by corpus linguists (e.g., Newsome 2018; Evans 2020; van Eyndhoven and Clark 2020; Elder 2022; Bengough-Smith 2023).

4.1.2 StErCor2 Structure

The design of StErCor2, in which each text is contained within a single XML file, allows files to be manipulated, analysed, or shared either individually or in aggregate as part of a larger corpus. Each filename is unique and consists of six or seven hyphen-separated elements: a three-character code identifying the archive (NLS or NRS); the volume or catalogue reference; the number of the first folio of the manuscript; the year of sending; and the sender's (or senders') informant name(s), written without spaces or brackets. For example, NLS-MS-5070-f73-1640-MarieStewartMar.xml identifies a transcription of the letter preserved in NLS volume MS 5070, beginning on folio 73, dated 1640, and sent by Marie Stewart, countess of Mar.

Letters with uncertain sending dates are represented by square brackets (e.g., NLS-MS-5070-f13-[1634]-HenryDow.xml). For male senders with titles, the title number is also included (e.g., 2Mar, 3Mar, 6Buchan). Another example, this time from the NRS archive, is catalogue reference GD124/15/65: a letter sent by John Erskine (Mar elder) in 1626. Its filename, NRS-GD124-15-65-1626-JohnErskine2Mar, illustrates how the forward slash in catalogue references, which is prohibited in filenames, was replaced with a hyphen.

4.1.3 StErCor2 Transcription process

The process began with a preliminary transcription of each letter created by typing the text directly into a plain text file using Oxygen software. One potential method for reading historical documents is the AI software Transkribus, which van Eyndhoven (2023) successfully used to create POLITECS. However, Transkribus requires a minimum of 10,000 words written by a single hand to train its model for reading other texts by the same writer.[93] Given rapid advancements in AI, it is likely that automatic transcription of handwritten texts will soon be possible with much smaller sample sizes. However, none of the StEr correspondents produced 10,000 words in a single hand, making Transkribus unsuitable for this thesis. Accordingly, following the approach of Evans (2011), Williams (2013b, 2016), Cruickshank (2013, 2017), Newsome (2018), Elder (2022), and Bengough-

[93] I am grateful to Sarah van Eyndhoven for her advice regarding her experience of using Transkribus.

Smith (2023), each of whom created custom corpora for their analyses, this thesis employed manual transcription.[94]

Transcriptions were created through direct examination of the manuscripts in the archive or from digital photographs taken by the author. Digital images allowed the magnification of fine details and facilitated comparison of text sections via cut-and-paste, enabling side-by-side arrangement in a new document. Some manuscripts are more challenging to transcribe due to cramped handwriting. For example, some sections of David Murray's letter to Marie Stewart, are almost incomprehensible, particularly the final, densely written lines illustrated at the bottom of Figure 4-1.[95]

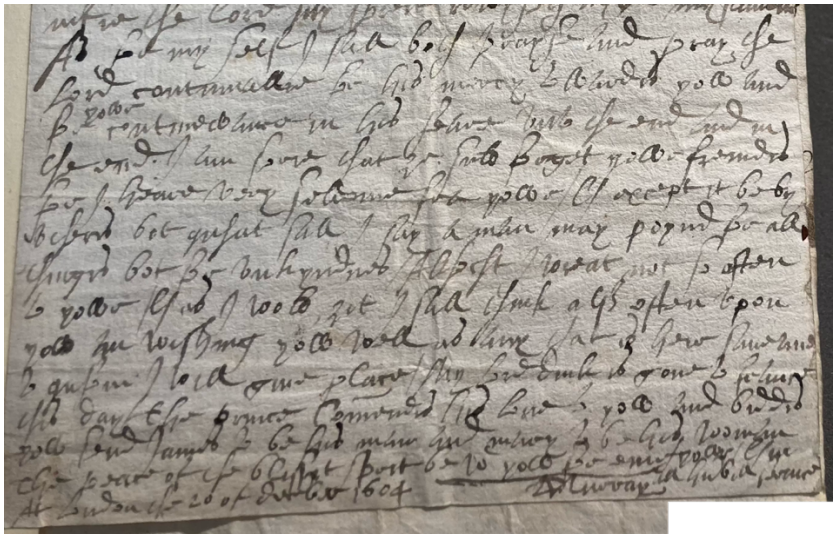


Figure 4-1: Detail of secretary script handwriting (Sir David Murray of Gorthy to Marie Stewart, countess of Mar, NLS MS 5070 fol. 1, 20 October 1604)

By contrast, well-spaced handwriting such as James Stuart (Richmond-Lennox), exemplified in Figure 4-2, is comparatively legible.

[94] The name, language, number of letters and token count (if available) for each of their corpora were as follows: Evans (2011), QEISC: Queen Elizabeth I's autograph letters, EModE, 55 letters, 22.5k tokens. Williams (2013b), Thynne letters, EModE, 52 letters, 18k tokens. Williams (2016), Margaret Tudor mini-corpus, EModE and EModS, 35 letters. Cruickshank (2013, 2017), Fife-Rose Corpus, PDE and SSE c.600 letters, 225k tokens. Newsome (2018), The Margaret Tudor corpus, EModE and EModS, c.230 letters. Elder (2022), StErCor: Stewart-Erskine correspondence, EModS, 47 letters, 12k tokens. Bengough-Smith (2023), Marie de Nassau letters, EModF translated into PDE, 22 letters, 16k tokens.

[95] Indeed, I am very grateful to Dr Jamie Reid-Baxter for his generous assistance with this transcription.

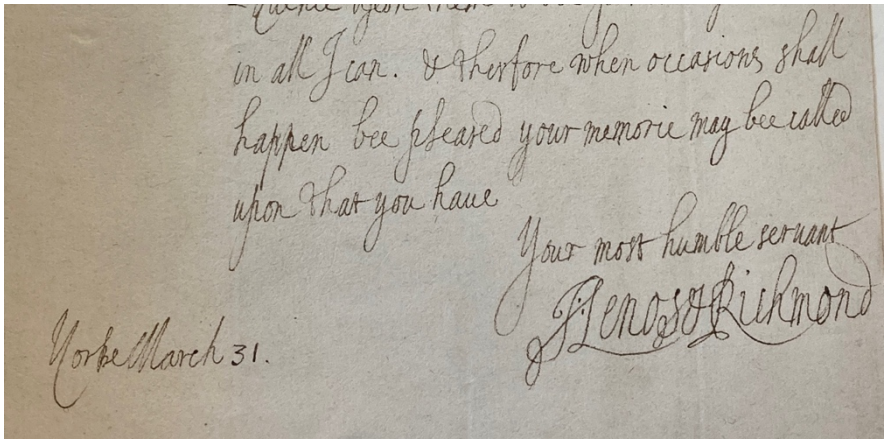

in all I can. & therfore when occasions shall
happen bee pleased your memorie may bee called
upon that you have
Your most humble servant
Lenox & Richmond
Yorke March 31.

Figure 4-2: Detail of italic script handwriting (James Stuart, 1st duke of Richmond, 4th duke of Lennox to William Douglas, 7th earl of Morton, NLS MS 80 fol. 20, 1 March 1631)

Moreover, neatly organised compositions, such as those exemplified in Marie Stewart's letter to her daughter-in-law, Mary Hope, often facilitated the transcription process (Figure 4-3). In this manuscript, written when she was sixty-four years of age, both the main letter text (image left) and the superscription on the address leaf (image right) are penned in her italic script hand (Figure 4-3).

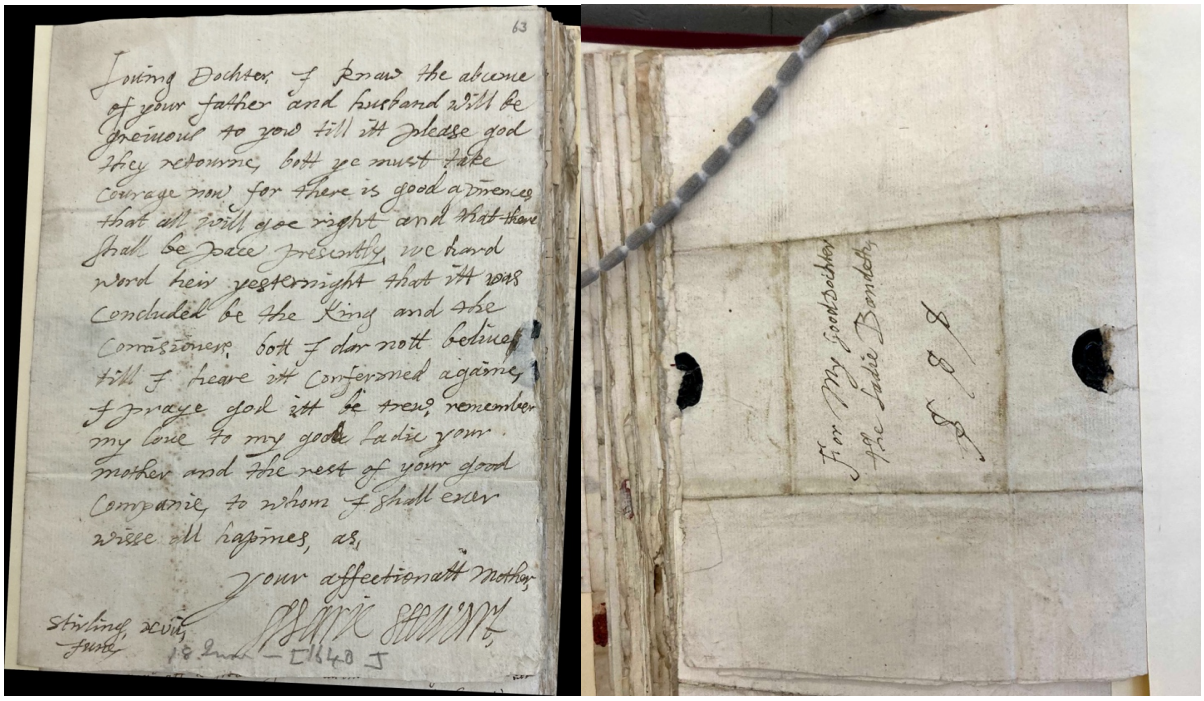

63
Loving Dochter I know the absence
of your father and husband will be
greivous to you till it pleasse god
they returne, bott ye must take
courage now for there is good aprences
that all will goe right and that there
shall be peace presently, we hard
word heir yesternight that it was
concluded be the King and the
Comissioners, bott I dar nott believe
till I heare it confermed againe,
I praye god itt be trew, remember
my love to my goode ladie your
mother and the rest of your good
companie to whom I shall ever
wisse all happines, as
your affectionatt mother
Stirling xxvij June 18 [illegible] 1640
For My Goodchter the Ladie Bandeth

Figure 4-3: Holograph letter sent by Marie Stewart, countess of Mar to Mary Hope, Lady Bandeath, NLS MS 6070 fols. 63–64, 18 June 1640

Additionally, slight damage to twenty-five of the StEr manuscripts made them more difficult to transcribe. Figure 4-4 illustrates one example in which the ink has run, possibly from water damage, resulting in blurred and illegible line endings.

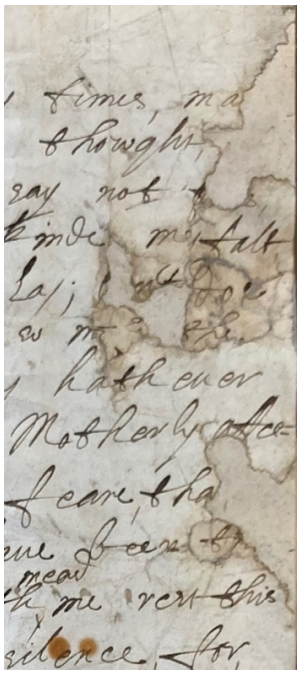


Figure 4-4: Detail of water damage (Colonel Alexander Erskine to Marie Stewart, countess of Mar, NLS MS 5155 fol. 8, 31 July 1631)

Paper tears also posed some challenges, as illustrated in Figure 4-5, where the final letters of a word beginning 'hap' are missing.

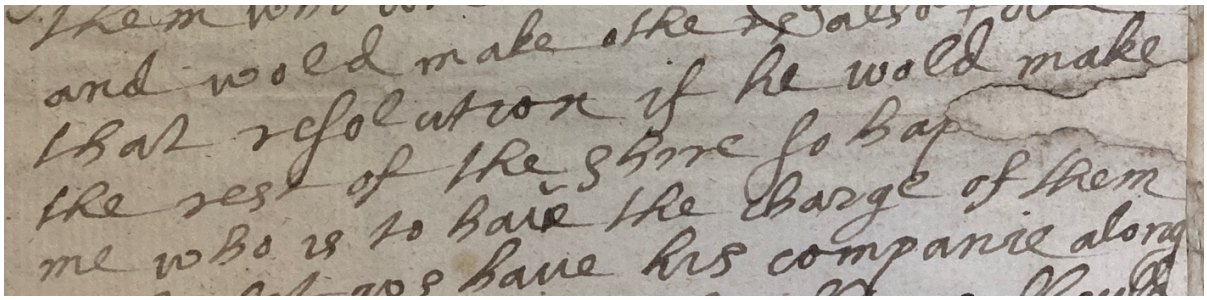


Figure 4-5: Detail of paper tear (Sir George Stirling of Keir and Cawdor to John Wallace, NLS MS 5155 fols. 24–25, 27 June 1640)

Notwithstanding these minor issues, the StEr letters are generally well preserved, with very few blemishes. Indeed, the transcriptions contain only around thirteen incomplete or missing

words out of almost 61,000 in the final corpus. In many cases, it was possible to supply the missing text for damaged sections, noting these additions as editorial interpolations.[96]

Once transcription was complete, the next stage involved adding TEI tags and metadata to the transcribed text. Each XML file was validated against the TEI P5 Version 4.9.0 (2025) guidelines, with Oxygen used to identify and correct any errors. The following sections provide an overview of the editorial approach to transcription and the tagging system. Facsimile images are provided alongside selected examples to illustrate manuscript letterforms.

4.2 Editing the StEr Letters

The spelling, abbreviation marks and individual graphemes used in texts like the StEr letters are packed with extralinguistic information.[97] To ensure accurate analyses, scholars have reiterated the importance of working either directly from primary sources or via reliable editions accompanied by a transparent editorial apparatus (Lass 2004, 21–26; Meurman-Solin 2004, 173–74, 2007; Elspaß 2012, 64; Hofman 2019, 44; Kaislaniemi 2021, 1, 12). This thesis agrees with Evans' (2020, 23) statement that early modern letters are 'multimodal' documents and that editors must take the utmost care when working with such complex artefacts. To this end, a detailed transcription policy, which accounts for the idiosyncratic elements of these specific manuscripts accompanies this thesis (Section 4.3).

Nevertheless, the policy's objective was not to produce a facsimile edition of the StEr letters. Rather, it was designed to address the thesis research questions whilst advancing the broader objective of demonstrating reproducible methods. To meet these goals, the policy focused on recovering the multilingual, epistolary writings of an early modern Scottish CoP in order to create a digital corpus that was both accurate and suitable for the analysis of formulaic language and symbols. Additionally, the resulting data needed to be reusable for future research. Accordingly,

[96] Approximately one-fifth of the 183 StEr letters (39) exhibit slight damage; however, it was possible to supply most or all of the missing text for the majority of these manuscripts. In eleven letters, there were twenty-five gaps where the missing text could not be reconstructed with certainty (excluding instances where text was deliberately deleted by the letter-writer). Of the thirteen missing or incomplete words, six resulted from paper tears, three from ink blurring, three from water damage, and one from the volume's binding.

[97] Historical linguists who have studied such features include van Eyndhoven and Clark (2020) who demonstrated how sociolinguistic factors influenced the degree of anglicised spelling in Older Scots texts. Benskin (1982, 14–15) also linked scribes' geographical location to their use of the grapheme thorn, finding that those writing in Scotland and the north of England between 1350 and 1450 employed the open form, <y>, rather than the closed form, <þ> (quoted in Smith 2012, 71).

the transcriptions were required to preserve original spelling and capture distinctive features of EModS handwriting.

As Section 3.2 noted, characteristically for early modern manuscripts, the StEr letters contain archaic and idiosyncratic spelling. At the beginning of the seventeenth-century, there were no official standards set out for Scots, the journey towards standardisation having been arrested for the reasons outlined in Section 3.2 (Macafee and Aitken 2002).[98] The situation was the same for English, with no complete dictionary or grammar available until the eighteenth century.[99] In contrast, there were efforts to impose tighter linguistic control on French, as demonstrated by the foundation of The Académie Française in 1635 (Rickard 1989, 100; 102). As a result, some EModF texts had begun to resemble Modern French. Nevertheless, in practice, the process of standardisation was gradual and handwritten French documents like the StEr letters continued to exhibit some erratic orthography and grammar (Rickard 1989, 105).

As well as textual format, the non-standard practices stemmed from other sociolinguistic factors. For EModF, these influences included dialectal variation and the tendency of educated writers to use Latin forms (Rickard 1989, 96–7). For EModS these were related to, for example, personal phonological systems and external linguistic pressure from anglicisation (Macafee and Aitken 2002; Smith 2012, 35; Bann and Corbett 2015, xix; 59). The unconventional spelling forms which presented challenges in identifying StEr formulaic language are discussed in 5.1.[100]

In addition to exhibiting spelling variation, the EModS StEr letters also contain the yogh and the y-thorn. The yogh, written as <ȝ> or <3> was derived from the Old English forms of [g] and [j] (Smith 2012, 27). Commonly, it represented initial [j] or [x] elsewhere, although occasionally, it was used in place of [w] or [z] (Smith 2005, 91). It was present in both Scots and English spellings until the end of the fourteenth century when it became obsolete in English manuscripts. The letter resembles <z> with the addition of a looped descender, and over time, the two became indistinguishable in handwriting. With the advent of printing in the sixteenth century, <z> was used in Scottish printed texts as there was no separate <ȝ> character. *DSL* states that in the

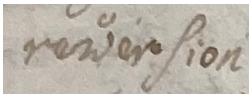
[98] The first Scots dictionary, John Jamieson's *Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language* was not published until 1808 (Smith 2012, 11).
[99] Such as Samuel Johnson's *A Dictionary of the English Language*, published in 1755 (Smith 2005, 9).

[100] The following websites offered helpful advice in deciphering the French StEr manuscripts: Brigham Young University. n.d. 'Introduction to French Palaeography.' Accessed 27 March 2025. https://script.byu.edu/french-handwriting/introduction. Portland State University. n.d. 'Reading old regime French documents.' Accessed 27 March 2025. https://web.pdx.edu/~brtl/Old-Regime-French.htm. Pettigrew, Stephanie. 2018. 'Paleography à la Française.', Unwritten Histories (blog), 16 January 2018. www.unwrittenhistories.com/paleography-a-la-francaise/.

seventeenth century, the yogh was replaced in Scots by <y> in line with English spellings (*DSL* 4.0, '3 n.'). However, ScottishHandWriting.com states it remained in use in Scots as late as the eighteenth century, and indeed, the StEr letter-writers frequently use it with a total of 941 yoghs present in StErCor2.

The runic OE thorn, <þ>, was similarly present in both Middle Scots and English until the end of the fifteenth century when it was mostly replaced in English by <th–> (Conde-Silvestre 2019, 23). The letterform carried on in the North and Scotland, where it became interchangeable with <y> in both handwriting and print (Smith 2012, 27).[101] The StEr writers use both the y-thorn and <th–> in their spellings.

The transcriptions also capture the grapheme <œ>, solely within the EModF manuscripts. Still used in Modern French, the ligature was written thirteen times in the StEr letters, ten times by Gabrielle and three by Esmé, as here:  (NLS MS 5070 fol. 2r), 'sœur' [sister].

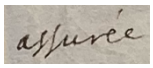
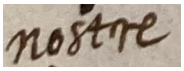
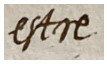
As well as unusual graphemes, the Scots manuscripts display prolific use of an upturned bowl-shaped diacritic, most often placed above a <u>, thus, <ŭ>  (NLS MS 5155 fol. 22r). This concave, cup-mark characterises EModS writing and is referred to here as a *tittle* (Rosie 2022, 4).[102] Along with <l>, <m> and <n>, the letter <u> was habitually formed by basic, vertical pen-strokes: *minims* (Beal 2008, 'minim'). Given the potential for misreading because of indistinct joins between minims, the practice of adding the diacritic to <u> was probably developed to distinguish it from <n> (Rosie 2022, 4). StErCor2 contains a plethora of tittles: 2049 <ŭ> graphemes in total. Occasionally, writers inaccurately placed the tittle above the letters <v>, <n> or <w> as in this example from a letter sent by Charles Erskine to his mother:  'rewersion' (NLS MS 5070 fol. 54r). These occurrences are not recorded by the transcriptions.

The EModF writings in the StEr dataset also indicate writers were alert to the possibility that readers might confuse minims. To ensure final <i> was not mistaken for the last minims of <u>,

[101] Benskin said Scots writers only used <y> for thorn in two ways, either in 'word-initial voiced contexts' (words beginning with <th>) or in the centre of a word where the thorn is followed by a suspension mark denoting abbreviation (1977, 507 quoted in Smith 2012, 27) However, two StEr letters illustrate writers using a thorn in the centre of words to represent the sound <th>, without any abbreviation: 'nayer' (J. Lantie to Marie Stewart, countess of Mar, NLS MS 5070 fols. 4–5, 10 March 1623) and 'faryer' and 'rayer' (Sir Louis Stuart to Marie Stewart, countess of Mar, NLS MS 5070 fols. 25–26, 12 October 1635).

[102] Note that Wolfe uses tittle to refer alternatively to the diacritic termed a macron here, which signified omitted letters such as <m>, <n>, <l>, and <–ion> (2020, 45).

<n> or <m>, it was sometimes substituted with <y>. One example from the StEr letters is  (NLS MS 5070 fol. 2r) 'Ainsy' instead of *Ainsi* [thus]. Additionally, the StEr EModF letters demonstrate <y> being substituted for <i> in the verb construction *j'ai* [I have], which is spelled instead as 'iay'  (NLS MS 5070 fol. 3r).

However, unlike the Scots letters, the EModF manuscripts contain very few diacritics, with only nine in the seven letters, all of which are acute accents placed over the letter <e>, for example, 'assurée'  (NLS MS 5070 fol. 2r). This may be explained by the fact that the five standard diacritics of the acute accent <´>, grave accent <`>, circumflex <^>, diaeresis <¨>and cedilla <¸> which now distinguish Modern French, were only introduced in the sixteenth century, about a hundred years before the StEr letters were written (Rickard 1989, 93–4, 96). During the early modern period, before French was fully codified, many words were written with an <s> that was later lost and, in many cases, came to be represented by a circumflex in modern French. For instance, Gabrielle Stuart's 'nostre'  (NLS MS 5070 fol. 3r) corresponds to modern French *nôtre* [our], and her 'estre'  (NLS MS 5070 fol. 3r) to *être* [to be].

In addition to alphabetic characters and the tittle, the transcriptions depict the handwritten symbols included in the StEr letters, including the fermesse, the cross and six-pointed star (Sections 7.3–7.4). Other symbols which form part of the text, such as the caret or hyphen are also represented in the transcriptions. The caret was often used to indicate an addition to the text, as it is today. In the StEr letters, it may resemble a small <x> or appear more like the modern caret mark <‸>. The hyphen, or double hyphen, was most often used to indicate that a word is broken across two lines.

The next section explains the transcription strategy for each of the letters and symbols discussed so far and more. The policy adopted here is one of minimal intervention informed by the editorial approaches of Simpson (2009), Smith (2012), National Records of Scotland (2015), and Rosie (2022). Although the transcriptions do not distinguish variant allographs, they preserve the original linguistic features that underpin this thesis' analyses. The policy should be read in conjunction with Section 4.4: Encoding Rationale.

4.3 Transcription Policy

4.3.1 Text

All the handwriting in the manuscript is transcribed, including the letter text, postscripts, superscription, and contemporary endorsements. Handwritten modern-day cataloguing marks are also transcribed, recognisable because they are written in pencil rather than ink and usually set distinct from the letter's main text. Figure 4-6 illustrates an example of an NLS *archivist mark* where the date, [16 Dec 1639] and the folio number, 51, are positioned in the top margin:

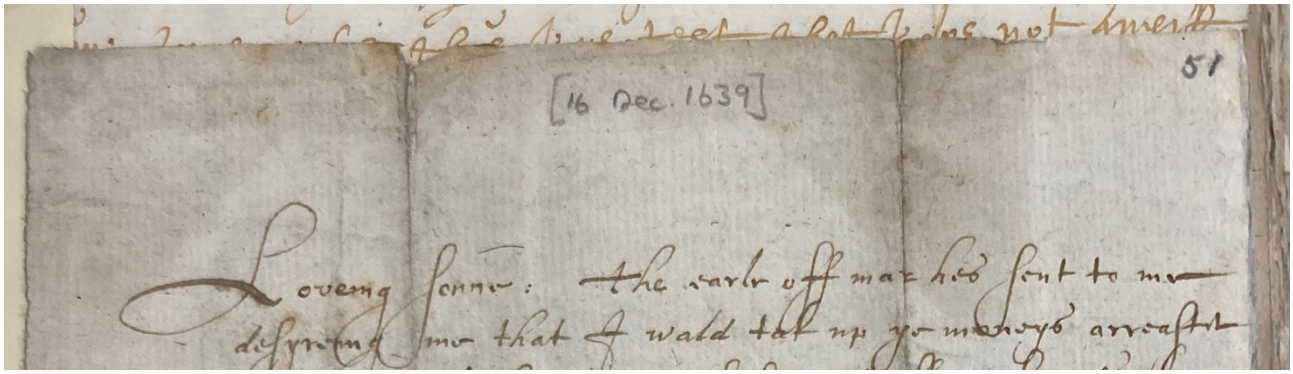


Figure 4-6: Example of NLS archivist mark (Marie Stewart, countess of Mar to Sir Charles Erskine, NLS MS 5070 fol. 51r, 16 December 1639)

By contrast, an NRS archivist records the shelfmark for GD124 15/34/6 on the folio's lower right-hand-side as depicted in Figure 4-7.

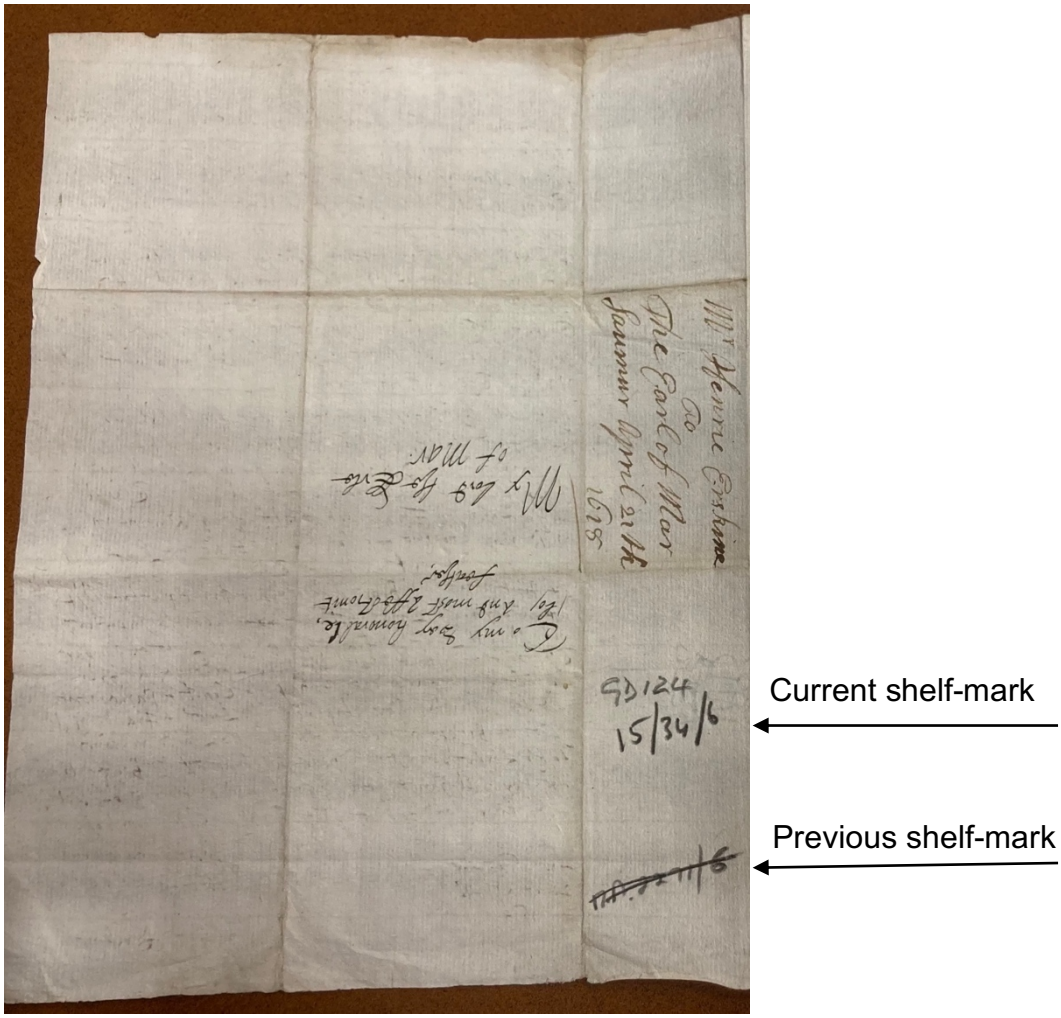


Figure 4-7: Example of NRS archivist mark (Sir Henry Erskine to John Erskine, 2nd earl of Mar, NRS GD124/15/34/6, 22 April 1618)

Like many of the NRS letters, this manuscript also contains a previous shelf-mark which has been struck-through at some point (Figure 4-7). The StEr transcriptions do not capture these deleted marks as they are obsolete. All the remaining, current archivist marks are transcribed at the start of the folio (or leaf), regardless of their physical position therein. Their location is recorded within their TEI tag, relative to the original letter text when it is viewed vertically, in the correct position for reading.

4.3.2 Material and Visual Features

As the research questions are not concerned with the exact visual appearance of each letter, this is not reproduced in the transcriptions. Instead, the manuscript foliation and locking mechanism is briefly described within the header metadata. The tagging system also records the start of each

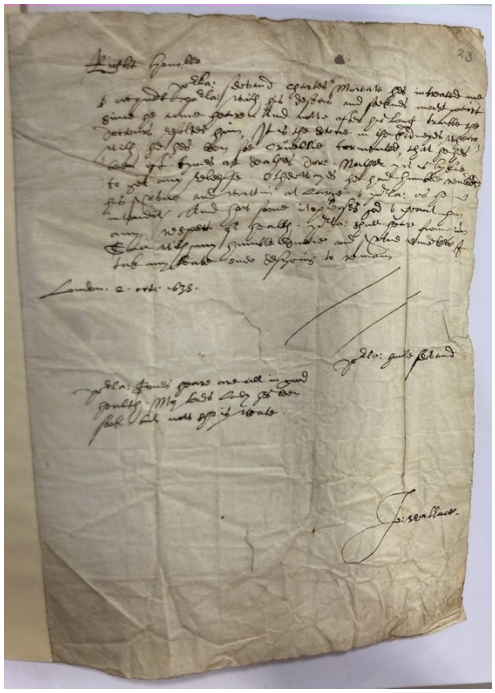
new folio (or leaf), and the text contained within that folio is transcribed within that section.[103] Generally, the transcriptions aim to emulate the letter structure, many of which are laid out as follows: opening (address form), letter text, closing, postscript, address leaf, and superscription. However, there are a couple of exceptions to this rule. The closings are arranged according to subscription, signature, location, and date, regardless of the position of each element on the physical page. The same goes for marginalia, transcribed at the end of the folio in which they are written, regardless of their placement. Finally, endorsements are transcribed at the end of the transcription, regardless of their folio location. For example, if a letter has a section of letter text written by a second correspondent, then that text is transcribed before any endorsements.

Changes to the hand and script are also marked up immediately before they occur in the text using <handShift>. The position of any text written sideways, vertically, or otherwise, is not recorded. These writings typically extend the main text, or function as insertions, postscripts, or endorsements, and so they are transcribed and tagged accordingly.

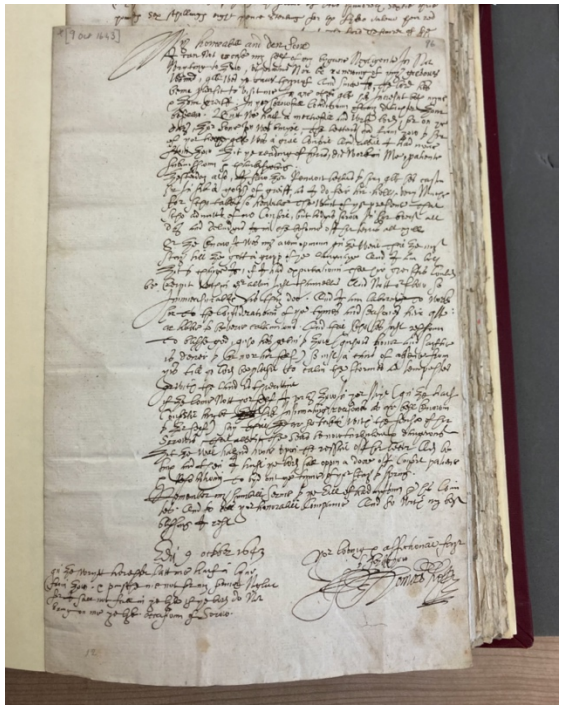
The TEI tag <space/> is used to mark significant space. Accurately determining whether the space left in a particular area of a letter is significant was essential for two reasons. First, the thesis seeks to understand the choice to include space in letter opening and formulaic sections. Second, because space plays a crucial role in early modern letters, documenting these instances will make the corpus relevant for answering subsequent investigations related to visual features. However, being certain of the intended nature of blank space poses some difficulties as Wiggins (2013a) points out. Thus, no measurements are given here about space, and it is tagged only where judged significant relative to the rest of the letter layout.

To illustrate, Figure 4-8 compares the space used in two letters, one sent by John Wallace to Marie Stewart, countess of Mar and one sent by Sir Thomas Hope to his son. The left-hand-side letter shows two gaps, one left before the subscription and one before the signature. The gaps are almost as large as the entire letter's body text section. In contrast, although the letter on the right-hand side shows an area of blank space left before the subscription and signature, compared with the entire body text section, it is small. In consequence, in StErCor2, the left letter is tagged for significant space, but the right is not.

[103] Here, *folio* is used to generally refer to a manuscript page (recto and verso sides). However, the term *leaf* is also used for those bifolia manuscripts indexed in the archive with a single folio number. To distinguish between their different pages, these are referred to here as having four *leaves*. For example: fol. 1 leaf 1r, leaf 1v, leaf 2r and leaf 2v (Appendix A).



John Wallace to Marie Stewart, countess of Mar, NLS MS 5070 fols. 23–24, 2 October 1638.

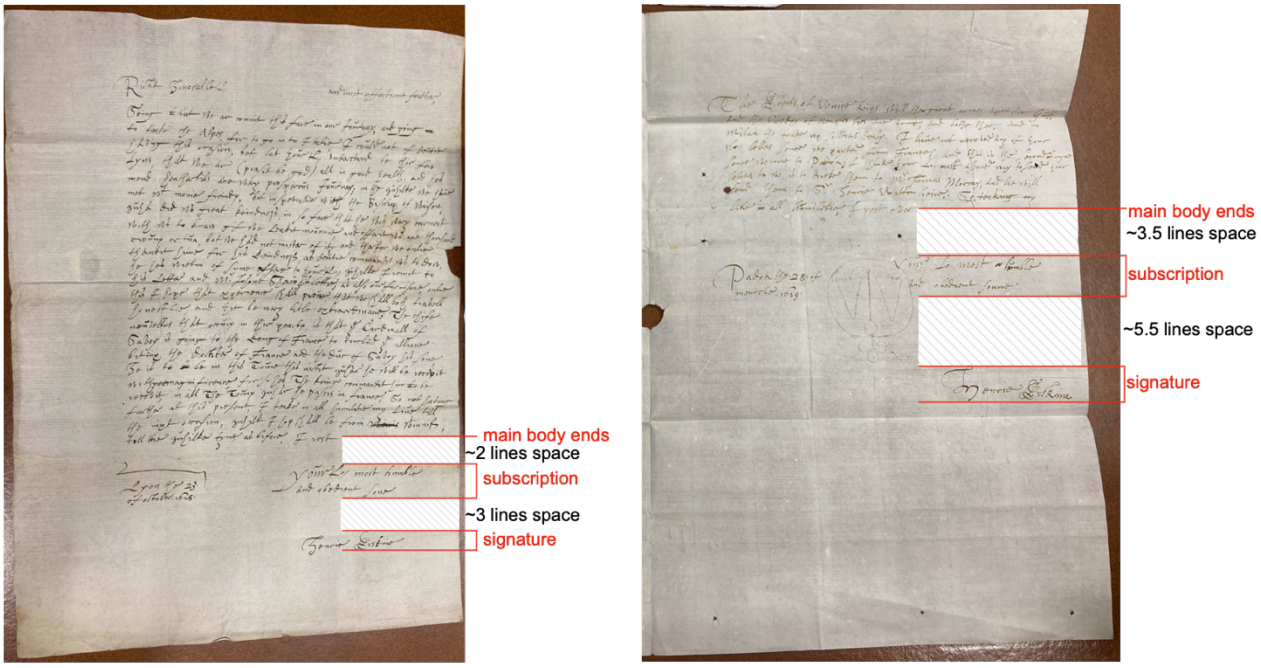


Sir Thomas Hope to Sir Alexander Hope, NLS MS 5070 fols. 96–97, 9 October 1643.

Figure 4-8: Judging significant space

Sir Henry Erskine's letter layouts further highlight the challenge of determining the significance of space in early modern correspondence, as illustrated by the pair of examples in Figure 4-9. StErCor2 includes sixteen letters sent by Henry to his father, all of which appear to be written in the same secretary script hand. Although it is difficult to confirm whether Henry wrote these letters himself (Section 1.3.4), given his father's high-rank and Henry's youth (he was a teenager) it is plausible that he made the effort to write the letters personally as a sign of respect.

The subscriptions and superscriptions in these sixteen letters show varying amounts of spacing and the two layouts in Figure 4-9 are no exception. Nevertheless, they follow a similar pattern of letter text, space, subscription, space, signature.



NRS GD124/15/34/9 leaf 1r (main letter text)

NRS GD124/15/34/11 leaf 1r (main letter text)

Figure 4-9: Sir Henry Erskine's subscription layouts

By comparing all sixteen of Henry's subscription layouts, we can hypothesise that even in letters where he left only a small gap of a couple of lines, he intended to indicate significant space. Accordingly, it is encoded as such in StErCor2.

In contrast to the openings, main text, and closings of Henry's letters, certain sections of the superscriptions appear to be written in a different hand as the trio of images in Figure 4-10 illustrates.

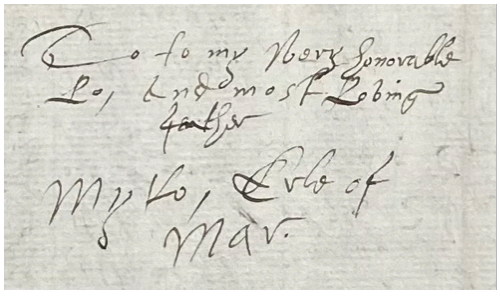


Image i: NRS GD124/15/34/3

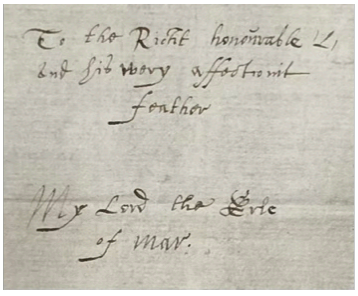


Image ii: NRS GD124/15/34/9

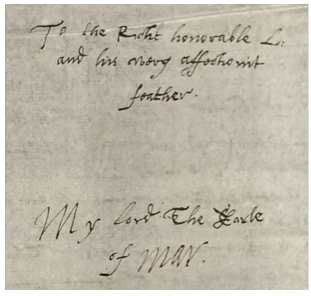


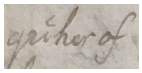
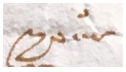
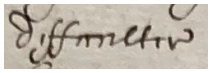
Image iii: NRS GD124/15/34/10

Figure 4-10: Sir Henry Erskine's superscriptions illustrating change of hand

Moreover, the fact that in all three superscriptions, the first block of text follows the pattern, *To my/the very/right honourable L[ord] and (his) most/very loving/affectionate father*, whereas the second follows *My Lo[rd] the Earl of Mar*, provides further evidence that different individuals penned the two. In such examples of Henry's superscriptions displaying two distinct handwriting

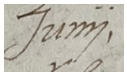
styles, the second hand typically follows the first. Notably, in some cases, such as the two right-most examples in Figure 4-1: Images ii and iii, the second writer left a blank space between the first and second blocks of text. This space is not considered significant, as it likely reflects the second writer's choice to leave a gap to distinguish their text from the first writer's, rather than conveying any special meaning. Accordingly, it is not encoded as significant space in StErCor2.

4.3.3 Spelling, Diacritics, and Special Characters

The transcriptions reproduce original spelling as far as possible. The letters <u>, <v>, and <w> were used interchangeably in both EModS and EModF, as were <j> and <i>, and all are retained here. The diacritic known as the tittle is represented as <ŭ>, as in 'qŭherof' [whereof]  (NLS MS 5070 fol. 54r) and 'yoŭr' [your]  (NLS MS 5070 fol. 10r). The letter <w>, originally formed as a double <u>, can appear in various forms, even in a single document. For instance, two distinct versions of <w>:  and  (NLS MS 5070 fol. 42r) occur in the same handwriting in a letter sent by Sir Thomas Hope. By comparing a writer's different renderings of <w> and <u>, it is possible to determine their intended letter in specific words. For example, in the word 'difficultie' [difficulty] from the same manuscript:  , the letter <u> appears distinctly different from the writer's rendering of <w>  , helping to clarify the meaning.

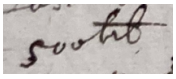
The French acute accent is also represented in the transcriptions, for example on <é>. The distinction between <z> and the obsolete letter yogh <ȝ>/<ʒ> is retained, as in 'ȝe' [ye]  (NLS MS 5070 fol. 56r) and 'zoʳ' [your]  (NLS MS 5070 fol. 40r). The fossil thorn, which resembles <y>, is transcribed as <y>, as in 'ye' [the]  (NLS MS 5070 fol. 65r). This form commonly appears in abbreviated words such as 'yᵗ' [that]  (NLS MS 5070 fol. 65r) and 'yʳᵒᶠ' [thereof]  (NLS MS 5070 fol. 40r). An exception to this policy is short and long <s>, which are both regularised to <s>.

Capitals are reproduced according to the writers' original intention. During this period, writers commonly used both upper- and lower-case letters at the beginning of proper nouns and sentences. Some Scots writers indicated an initial capital letter <F> by doubling a lower-case <f>

(Macafee and Aitken 2002; Bann and Corbett 2015, 24). Both initial <ff>  (NLS MS 80 fol. 22r) and initial long <I>  (NLS MS 80 fol. 22r) (which may stand for either <I> or <J>) are therefore retained, as in, 'ffeb' [Feb]  (NRS GD124/15/32/20): and 'Iunij' [June]  (NRS GD124/15/32/18). Decisions concerning majuscule and minuscule forms were informed by comparison with similar letterforms used elsewhere by the same writer. The tagging system does not record these distinctions, as they do not form part of the analysis.

4.3.4 Numerals, Dates, and Sums of Money

Numerals and dates are transcribed as written in Roman (<i>, <ii>, <iii>/<iij>) or Arabic (<1>, <2>, <3>) numerals, for example, 'xi'  (NLS MS 5070 fol. 15r) . Many dates in the StEr letters use a hybrid form, with Roman <i> for '1' and Arabic numerals for the remainder, as in 'i634'  (NLS MS 5070 fol. 15r). Where a letter writer included a date (typically in the closing formula near the subscription and signature), it is enclosed within the XML tag <dateline>. The abbreviation for Latin *centus* [one hundred] is transcribed as c[entus]. Writers frequently abbreviated the months of the year; these forms are expanded in square brackets according to the principles outlined in the next section.

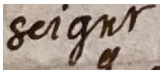
The Scottish denominations used by the letter-writers include the *merk*, equivalent to 13 Scots shillings and 4 pence and the *pound*, equivalent to one thirteenth of a pound sterling (Rosie 2022, 8). The abbreviated form of 'merkis'  (NLS MS 5070 fol. 11r) is transcribed as m[er]k[is]. Latin forms used for *libra* [pounds], as in '500lib'  (NLS MS 5070 fol. 36r), *solidus* [shillings], as in 'xvjs'  (NLS MS 5070 fol. 56r), and *denarius* [pence], as in 'xxd'  (NLS MS 5155 fol. 38r), are not expanded but are transcribed as l[ib], s and d, respectively.

4.3.5 Abbreviations: Suspensions, Contractions, and Special Symbols

The frequent use of abbreviations characterises early modern documents, and writers used numerous methods to signify them, including superscript letters, diacritics such as the macron, and other symbols (Beal 2008, 'abbreviation'). Although abbreviations do not form part of the

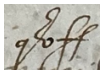
analytical focus of this thesis, these salient features are recorded so that they may be investigated by other researchers.

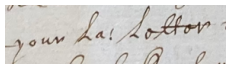
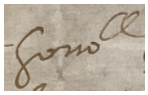
Several of the transcription policies consulted for this thesis opted to italicise the letters indicated as missing by an abbreviation (Smith 2012, 71; Wiggins 2017, xiv; Scott 2024, xv), while others enclosed absent characters in square brackets (Simpson 2009, 47; Rosie 2022, 12). In cases where superscript letters indicated an abbreviation, Simpson employed a combinatory approach, enclosing omitted letters in square brackets and italicising superscript letters within the abbreviated word (2009, 47).[104] For computerised transcriptions such as those incorporated in StErCor2, square brackets presented the most practical solution, as they allow abbreviations to be readily identified across different digital contexts. Unlike italics, which may be lost or inconsistently rendered across platforms, square brackets remain visible whether files are viewed in an XML format in Oxygen, in TXT format in AntConc, in a plain text editor, or in a word processing application such as MS Word. Consequently, square brackets are also adopted in the present thesis.

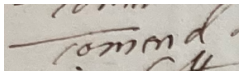
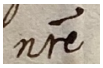
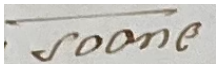
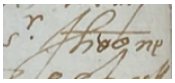
To reflect the individual and inconsistent nature of handwriting, which can at times make it difficult to determine whether a writer intended a letter to be superscript, the policy here is to modify Simpson's (2009) and Rosie's (2022) approach and place less emphasis on whether letters indicating an abbreviation were superscript or non-superscript. One example from the French letters is 'seignr'  (NLS MS 5070 fol. 3r), transcribed as seign[eur]. In this instance, although the writer Gabrielle may have intended the <r> to be superscript, the letter appears no smaller than the surrounding the text.

In summary, for suspended abbreviations, omitted letters and any final superscript or non-superscript letters are enclosed within square brackets. Examples from the Scots manuscripts in which non-superscript letters are used to abbreviate include 'lres'  (NLS MS 5155 fol. 27r), where <ett> is omitted and the word is transcribed as l[ettres], and 'Lo:'  (NLS MS 5155 fol. 44r), where <rdship> is omitted and the word is transcribed as Lo[rdship]. Further examples from

[104] For the other policies mentioned, in the case of abbreviations indicated by superscript letters, Scott (2024) italicised the missing letters then silently lowered the superscript letters and left them unitalicised. Wiggins (2017) and Smith (2012) italicised both the missing letters and the superscript letters whilst lowering the latter. Rosie (2022) enclosed the missing letters in square brackets and then silently lowered the superscript letters, leaving them unitalicised.

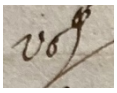
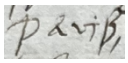
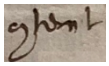
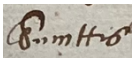
the Scots manuscripts where superscript letters are used include 'S^{r}'  (NLS MS 5155 fol. 44r), transcribed as S[ir]; 'q^{lk}'  (NLS MS 5155 fol. 44r), transcribed as q[huilk], [which]; 'ȝo^{ur}'  (NLS MS 5070 fol. 86r), transcribed as ȝo[ur], [your]; 'w^{t}'  (NLS MS 5155 fol. 44r), transcribed as w[ith]; and 'q^{roff}'  (NLS MS 5070 fol. 65r), transcribed as q[uheroff], [whereof].

Where possession is implied as in 'your La: Letter'  (NLS MS 5155 fol. 44r), the transcription is given as La[dyships] or Lo[rdships]. Where a writer used both fully realised and abbreviated versions of a word within the same document, abbreviations are expanded in accordance with the spelling of the fully written form. For example, where a writer used the spelling 'vpoun' [upon], the abbreviated form 'vp^{n}' is expanded as vp[oun]. Similarly, 'hono^{ll}'  [honourable] (NLS MS 5070 fol. 8r) is expanded as hono[rabill] or hono[rabell], depending on the spelling adopted by the writer elsewhere in the same letter. Where no fully realised form of a word appears within a letter, the most common spelling identified in other StErCor2 letters is adopted.

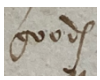
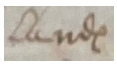
The StEr letters also show writers using diacritics in place of textual omissions. An EModF example is Gabrielle's use of a diacritic, possibly a macron or a tilde, placed above <q> to indicate the abbreviated form of *que*  (NLS MS 5070 fol. 3r), transcribed as q[ue]. Medial letters missing from contracted words are likewise enclosed in square brackets, as in the EModS,  (NLS MS 80 fol. 44 leaf 1r), com[m]end, and the EModF examples  (NLS MS 5070 fol. 3r), n[ost]re [our] and  (NLS MS 5070 fol. 3r), co[mm]e, [like]. One exception is the writer John Erskine (Mar elder), who frequently added a macron above <n> or <m>, in contexts where abbreviation appears unlikely. For instance, his words  (NLS MS 80 fol. 49 leaf 2r), 'soone' [son] and  (NLS MS 80 fol. 46 leaf 1r), 'Ihoone' [John] are entirely topped by a macron. In such cases, Erskine's words are not expanded.

Where superscript letters do not indicate abbreviation, they are not enclosed in square brackets but are silently lowered, as in 'no^{t}'  : not. The contraction  (NLS MS 5070 fol.

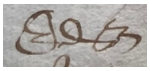
15r), ‘Mr’, which remains in common use today, is retained and the superscript <r> is likewise silently lowered.

In addition to letters, symbols were commonly used to designate abbreviations in both Scots and French early modern manuscripts and the StEr letters provide several examples of this practice. For instance, the symbol  (NLS MS 5070 fol. 3r), is transcribed as vo[us], [you] and  (NLS MS 5070 fol. 2r) is transcribed as q[ue], [that]. A symbol which appears frequently in EModS writing is a ligature resembling the German letter *Eszett* also known as *scharfes S*, <ß>  (Rosie 2022, 7). In StErCor2, the symbol is transcribed as <s> and followed by any missing or superscript letters expanded in square brackets, for example: s[is], s[es], s[er], s[ir], s[cher], and s[chir]. Where the *Eszett* symbol does not designate an abbreviation, it is transcribed as a double <s>, <ss>, as in  (GD124.15.34.1 leaf 1r): Pariss. The same principle applies to the symbol designating the letters <con> or <com>, which is transcribed as, for example,  (NLS MS 5070 fol. 25r), c[on]tent or  (NLS MS 5070 fol. 17r), c[om]mittis.

When the letters <tio> were abbreviated, as here,  (NLS MS 5070 fol. 15r), the word is expanded as altera[tio][n]ing. In this instance, a suspension mark following the <tio> abbreviation indicates a missing <n> and the omitted letter is enclosed in a second set of square brackets. Elaborated <p> graphs are expanded as, for example,  (NL Scot MS 5070 fol. 90r), p[ro] or  (NL Scot MS 5070 fol. 42r), p[er]t, as is the hook-shaped <-er> graph, as in  (NL Scot MS 5070 fol. 38r), ev[er]rie.

The StEr letters contain numerous examples of the downward-curving, looped mark commonly used at this time to indicate plural forms (Simpson 2009, 44). This symbol may curve to the left as here:  (NLS MS 5070 fol. 19r), transcribed as good[is], or to the right as in  (NLS MS 5070 fol. 69r), transcribed as land[is]. The existence of different plural forms for Scots and English during the early modern period, where EModS is represented by <-is> and EModE by <-es> (Smith 2012, 45), combined with the fact that these documents, like all EModS writings, display varying degrees of anglicisation, makes it difficult to determine with certainty

which form the writer intended. In such cases, the selection was based on the primary language of the letter or aligned with any fully written-out plural forms within the text. Applying this rule resulted in all of the abbreviated plurals (approximately 140 instances) being transcribed using the Scots form, <-is>. These results should, however, be interpreted with caution, as it is not always possible to be certain of a writer's intention in relation to specific abbreviations. In contrast, ligatures such as <th>, <sh>  , or <st> are not enclosed in brackets but are represented simply as thus or must.

As the spelling of proper names was not regularised in the early modern period, these are reproduced exactly as originally written. Abbreviated place names are expanded and modernised, for example,  (NLS MS 5070 fol. 15r), Ed[inbu]rgh. However, signatures are not expanded as they are 'considered iconic of self-representation' (Wiggins 2013a, 'Transcription Policy'). Abbreviations are not recorded in the XML tags, as they do not form part of the thesis analysis.

4.3.6 Punctuation and Word Division

Original punctuation is recorded as a full stop  <.>, virgule  </>, comma <,>, semi-colon  <;>, colon <:>, hyphen  <->, double hyphen  ⇔ and brackets,  < >. Editorial judgement informed the transcription of spacing between words, punctuation marks, and marks that proved difficult to distinguish, such as the comma and the virgule. For example, based on relative the size of the punctuation mark between the words 'sent' and 'This' compared with the surrounding letters in  (NLS MS 5155 fol. 47r), it was transcribed as a virgule: ar sent/ This.

Where words are divided across two lines, a single or double hyphen records the break and the word is transcribed on the first line, as in  (NLS MS 5070 fol. 25r) rendered as appeir-ance or  (NLS MS 80 fol. 20), rendered as conse=quence. When two words are joined, they are transcribed as they appear, for example, forifyour. Punctuation marks are not recorded in the XML tags, as they are not part of the thesis analysis.

4.3.7 Symbols, Flourishes, and Underlinings

Ampersands  , being an escape character in XML, are encoded using the Unicode character & <U+FF06, Unicode Consortium 2024> to avoid parsing errors. In order to address Research Question 2c: 'How did the CoP use symbols in their correspondence?,' symbols are captured within the transcriptions. This process identified four symbols in the StEr letters. Fermesses such as  (NLS MS 5087 fol. 87r), are transcribed as *$* (DOLLAR SIGN, U+0024**;** Unicode Consortium 2024); the six-pointed star  (NLS MS 5087 fol. 87r) is transcribed as ✡ (STAR OF DAVID, U+2721; Unicode Consortium 2024); and the Christian cross  (NLS MS 5070 fol. 3v) is transcribed as ✚ (HEAVY GREEK CROSS, U+271A; Unicode Consortium 2024).[105] The sole monogram is transcribed as DdC. The XML tag <g> is used to encode the symbols along with their associated attributes. Flourishes and underlining are not recorded, as these features are not addressed by the research questions. Editorial judgement was used to distinguish such marks from the symbols (Sections 7.2; 7.5).

4.3.8 Deletions, Corrections, Gaps, Damage, and Indecipherable Words

Minimal textual corrections, such as overwriting, are not recorded. Words that have been entirely deleted yet remain legible, such as  (NRS GD124/15/34/6 leaf 1r), are transcribed (e.g., intreat ȝou) and tagged with the XML element <del>. Text that is damaged but is readable or deducible is also transcribed but tagged instead with <damage>. Where text is unreadable due to deletion, damage, or poor handwriting, it is not transcribed and is instead tagged with the element <gap>. Where it was impossible to determine an accurate transcription of a word or letter, this is indicated by a question mark corresponding to each undecipherable letter, for example: ???lett. Where it was possible to conjecture a letter or word, it is preceded by a question mark, as in ?etrait. Words inserted above, below, or in the margin are tagged with the element <add>, although their precise position is not recorded.

[105] Another candidate was considered to represent the fermesse in the transcriptions. It is <S̷>, Unicode character, LATIN CAPITAL LETTER S WITH OBLIQUE STROKE (U+A7A8) (Unicode Consortium 2024). However, due to formatting issues with that character, the dollar sign was selected instead. There were also some challenges involved in representing the star symbol. The Star of David symbol represented the best choice although the black and white glyph has a limited coverage in fonts and must be formatted in Wingdings.

4.4 Encoding Rationale

As noted in Section 4.2, the StErCor2 transcription policy had two main aims: to compile a corpus focused on addressing the research questions while remaining flexible enough to be shared and used by others. This resulted in the transcriptions capturing the following features: all of the manuscript text in the original orthography, abbreviations (broadly but not in detail), significant space, and symbols (but not flourishes or underlining). As this section demonstrates, the StErCor2 corpus is lightly annotated, containing fewer tags compared to other corpora that employ more complex tagging schemes.[106] In response to concerns raised by Desenclos (2016) and Dumont, Haaf and Seifert (2019–20) who highlighted the challenges of digitally capturing the complex features of early modern letters, the TEI guidelines were recently expanded to include a new element, <correspDesc> (TEI Guidelines P5 Version 4.9.0 2025). This addition allows for more detailed recording of the letters' materiality, production, reception, and afterlife.

However, some analysts have also cautioned against excessive tagging: Sinclair described it as a 'perilous activity' that can undermine the 'integrity' of the raw text (2004, 191). Taking this into consideration, the StErCor2 TEI-XML markup scheme was developed to compliment the transcription policy and to focus on a defined set of research questions. At the same time, it ensures that interventions are clearly visible, allowing other users to adapt or remove them as needed, as advocated by Lass (2004, 39–46). In addition, the scheme provides metadata alongside the text by tagging the following within each file:

- Within the header section:
    - Letter title, corpus details, editorial notes, archival location, shelfmark, main language and physical description
- Within the text:
    - Archivist marks, page and line breaks, additions and deletions, damage, gaps
    - Distinct sections where the text switches to a different language[107]
    - Instances of significant space
    - Changes to the hand

[106] Examples of corpora which have more complex tagging schema include Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550–1608 (Wiggins, Bryson, Starza Smith, Timmermann, and Williams 2013); La Correspondance du Chancelier Antoine du Bourg (1535–1538) (Poncet and Desenclos 2016); and The Newton Project (Iliffe and Mandelbrote 2024).

[107] Borrowings into the primary language are not tagged.

- Parts of the letter (opening, main text, closing, signature, location and date, postscript, marginalia, and superscription)

Furthermore, while these components of the markup aim to answer the first research question, the tagging system also zeroes in on a separate set of features to allow it to address the second question which considers how the StEr CoP used formulaic language in their correspondence. The following three elements in the letters are tagged in response to this query:

- Religious formulae[108]
- Epistolary formulae: address forms, subscriptions, and superscriptions[109]
- Symbols[110]

The markup does not tag:

- Diagnostic variants of EModS and EModE (as anglicisation is not the focus of this thesis).
- Particular words derived from French, Latin or English (as this is not a study of multilingualism).
- Abbreviations or palaeographic features such as yoghs or tittles (as this is not a study of palaeography).
- Every aspect of the letter's layout (as the research questions do not focus on visual layout).

The corpus also allows:

- A plain-text transcription of each letter to be extracted which can be used for quotes within this thesis and other research writings. These transcriptions of entire letters can also be shared as part of knowledge exchange projects, such as workshops or presentations.

Full details of the StErCor2 tagging system are provided in one of StErCor2's accompanying files: StErCor2_Tagging_System.txt. Next, Section 4.5 describes the AntConc corpus compilation.

[108] Chapter 5 explains the process of identifying and tagging these formulae.

[109] Chapter 6 explains the process of identifying and tagging these formulae.

[110] Chapter 7 explains the process of identifying and tagging these formulae.

4.5 AntConc Corpus Compilation

With the transcription and tagging process complete, the corpus compilation on AntConc commenced. While AntConc is compatible with TEI, it has certain limitations. Effective corpus analysis requires distinguishing between data and metadata, and AntConc offers several strategies to achieve this. Users may select 'Ignore Header' or 'Ignore Footer' and may also 'Ignore non-embedded tags' by specifying the start and end tags used in the markup (in the case of TEI, angle brackets < >).[111] These options are located at the bottom of AntConc's Token Definitions Settings window (Figure 4-11).

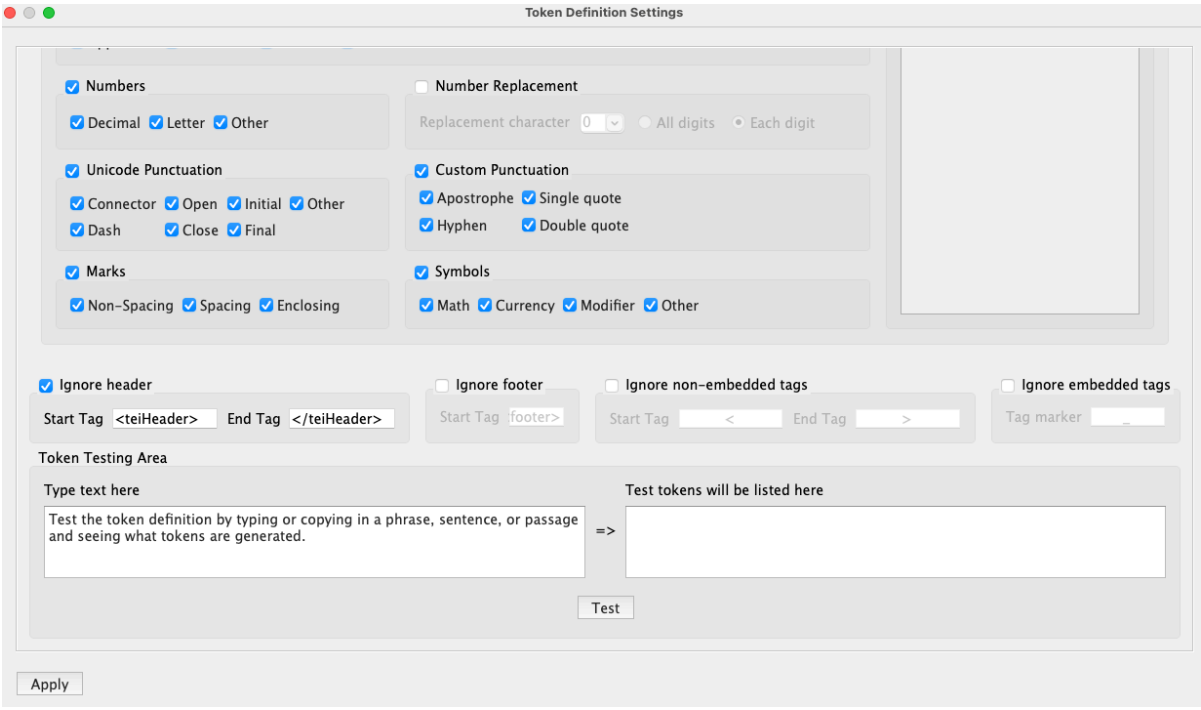


Figure 4-11: AntConc's token definition settings window

However, in practice, when the corpus was compiled using XML files and with the 'Ignore Header' option selected, AntConc only excluded the initial section of the <teiHeader>. The outcome is illustrated in Figure 4-12, which shows the beginning of one of the output corpus files, where part of the header is erroneously retained:

[111] AntConc users may also choose the option to 'Ignore embedded tags'. However, since these are used to mark-up parts of speech, which do not fall within this project's analytical framework, the option was not required.

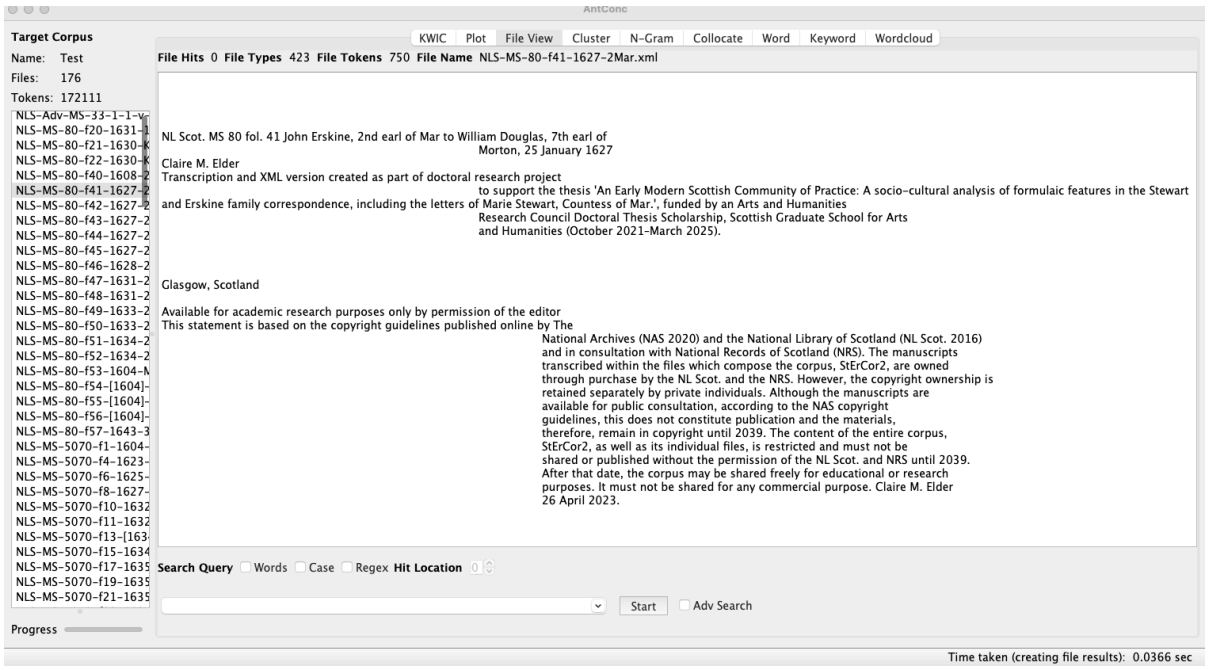


Figure 4-12: Test StErCor2 file with header info retained

Further testing revealed an additional problem with the 'Ignore non-embedded tags' option. When enabled, the option removed the XML tags but retained their enclosed content, thereby incorporating metadata into the corpus text and compromising the accuracy of search results and subsequent analyses. Figure 4-13 illustrates this: the content of the <fw> tag, GD124/15/57/7 Box I Bundle no 178 no 7, appears as if it were part of the letter text.

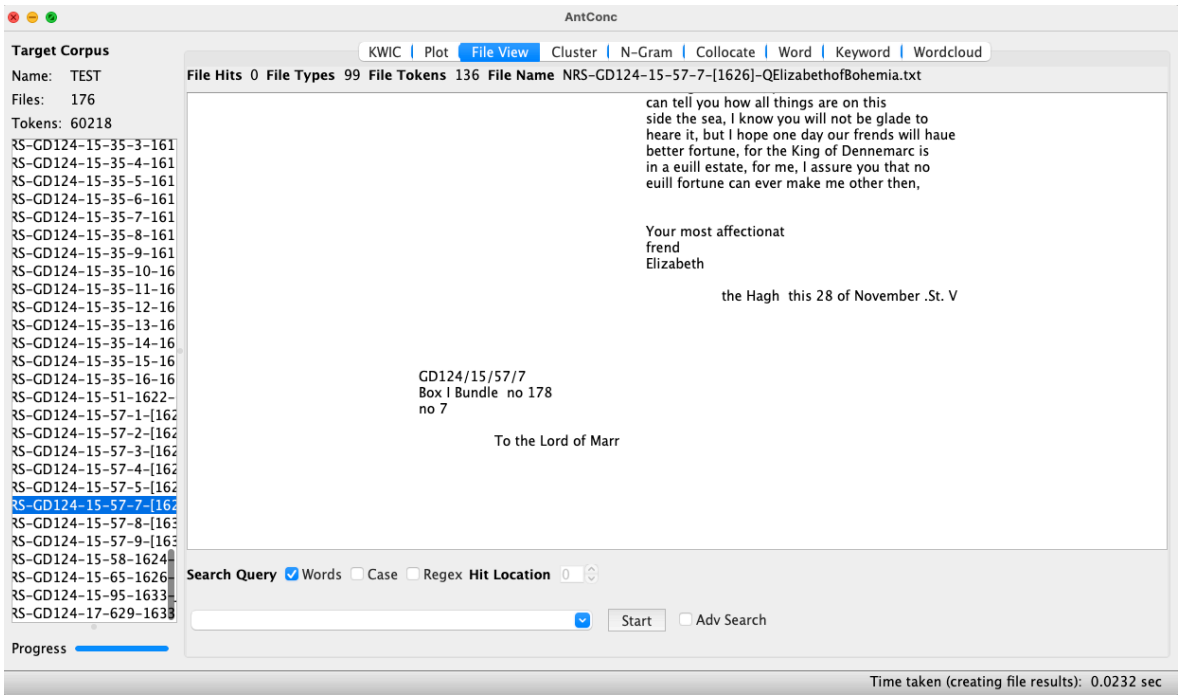


Figure 4-13: Test StErCor2 file with <fw> content retained

Furthermore, when all the tags in a corpus are concealed in this way, they can no longer be used to retrieve the data they encode. For instance, the StErCor2 subscriptions (one of the three types of epistolary formulaic language central to this thesis' research questions) could not be identified and extracted without their tags. A possible improvement to the AntConc interface would be to expand corpus compilation options, allowing users to specify which tags to ignore or recognise and thereby determine precisely what data to include.

Despite these limitations, AntConc compared favourably with other corpus analysis toolkits owing to its excellent usability.[112] Its *KeyWord in Context* (KWIC) tool reveals how words and phrases are used across the corpus and was particularly suited to this thesis, as it enables seamless navigation between a search hit, its concordance lines, and its context within an individual letter file. The minor drawbacks noted above were addressed by implementing the following solutions. First, removing the residual tags and metadata that were irrelevant to the thesis' analyses produced a streamlined set of files ready for compilation. In some cases, both tag and content were deleted (e.g., <handShift>, which encodes the writer's name before a change in handwriting), while in others only the tag was removed (e.g., <signed>, which marks a signature). Second, reformatting the XML files as TXT files allowed AntConc to exclude the full content of the <teiHeader>.

The first step, of removing residual tags and metadata was achieved through a series of 'Find and Replace' commands run in Oxygen on the StErCor2 TEI-XML files. An additional set of commands modified the remaining tags by removing their element names and replacing them with the attribute name. For example, `<seg type="subscription"></seg>` became `<subscription></subscription>`. This simplification eliminated unnecessary characters, making it easier and faster to visually parse the search results output in AntConc. Detailed instructions for corpus users on how to carry out these steps are included in one of StErCor2's accompanying files: Corpus_Compilation_and_Data_Extraction.txt.

4.6 Generating Plain-text Transcriptions

As this project aims to improve access to Scottish archival materials such as the StEr letters, it adopts an open-research ethos while complying with copyright requirements. Accordingly, the

[112] This thesis also trialled other corpus tools: Sketch Engine, Voyant, Simple Corpus Tool, and Lancsbox. However, as of January 2024, their compatibility with TEI was similarly limited. Like AntConc, none of these tools allowed searches to target specific TEI-XML tags and extract data accordingly. Consequently, it was not possible to distinguish between tags containing data relevant for analysis and those that did not.

StEr transcriptions are currently available in digital form for private study, educational, or non-commercial research. To facilitate this, a method was developed to produce individual or multiple plain-text files in a barrier-free format for general readers.

Two tools proved well-suited to this task. The first, Python, is a readily accessible, open-source programming language, ideal for writing simple scripts to support textual analysis.[113] The second, Beautiful Soup (Richardson 2023) is a free, regularly updated, Python library that can extract data from XML files and create new plain-text files.[114] For this project, two simple scripts were developed: the UNIX shell script run_get_text.sh and the Python script gettext2.py. Both use BeautifulSoup to generate plain text versions of the StErCor2 files.

The UNIX script, run_get_text.sh, offers two options: it can run on all the files in the current directory, or it can be run with a single filename passed in as a parameter. The script executes the Python script gettext2.py, then outputs the extracted plain text to a file named output.txt (backing up any existing file with that name beforehand). Instructions for corpus users on how to generate the plain-text files are included in one of StErCor2's accompanying files: Generation_of_Transcriptions.txt.

4.7 Sociolinguistic Metadata

As noted above, the StErCor2 has a limited tagging system designed to answer the thesis' research questions. However, in keeping with the approach taken for ScotsCorr (Meurman-Solin 2007), CEEC-400 (Nevalainen, Raumolin-Brunberg, Kaislaniemi, Keränen, Mikko Laitinen, Nevala, Nurmi, Palander-Collin, Säily, and Sairio 2020) and Middling Culture: The Cultural Lives of the Middling Sort, Writing and Material Culture 1550–1650 (Richardson, Hamling, and Earl 2019–22), the analyses are also informed by metadata stored outwith the TEI-XML files. Following the method for CEEC-400 (2020), the metadata is contained in a separate MS Excel workbook. The information relates to the informants' sociolinguistic backgrounds, the letter content, the manuscripts' material features, and other facts uncovered about the archival collections, locations, dates, and names.

[113] It is also supported by free tutorials available online, for example at PythonHumanities.com (2018).

[114] Extensive documentation on Beautiful Soup is available from www.crummy.com/software/BeautifulSoup/bs4/doc/#id17 (Richardson 2023).

Table 4-2 details the information captured for each letter in the MS Excel file, StErCor2_Workbook.xlsx:

Table 4-2: StErCor2 metadata recorded in MS Excel

Letter	
Shelfmark, sent date, sent from location, sent to location, main script (italic, secretary or mixed), main language (EModS, EModE, EModF), (likely) holograph/(likely) scribal, significant space, symbols (type, count, location), seals/floss.[115]	
Sender/recipient	
Sex	Male (M), female (F), unknown
Rank	royal, noble, gentry, middling, clergy, labourer
Confessional Affiliation(s)	(Likely) Presbyterian, Catholic, Episcopalian, Unconfirmed
Specific relationship	Family and friend relationships are, for example, mother to son, in-law to in-law, friend to friend, and clergy to noble. More distant relationships are, for example, noble to noble, middling to noble, and labourer to noble.
Relative status	equal, lower to higher, higher to lower
For those labels in the workbook which are preceded by a question mark, the information is unconfirmed and given as a suggestion. For example, ?middling or ?equal.	

The *rank* and *relative status* categories represent simplified adaptations of those used by Middling Culture (2019–22). Rank denotes the social stratum to which an informant belonged at the time a given letter was sent or received. The categories are *royal*; *noble*, referring to individuals with hereditary or monarch-granted titles, such as countess, earl, duchess, or duke; *gentry*, referring to those without peerage titles but who may have held titles such as knight or baronet; *middling*, broadly encompassing professionals and merchants, often serving the nobility; *clergy*, denoting ordained individuals; and *labourer*, a general label for those below the middling sort.

These categories are necessarily broad and serve only general classificatory purposes. CoP members such the male offspring of the Earl and Countess of Mar who did not inherit a title, are designated as gentry. However, their proximity to high-ranking noble parents means they would,

[115] This list is not exhaustive and the workbook records other information for some of the letters which was gathered as part of the project. Whilst informative, these do not specifically form part of the project's sociolinguistic analyses.

in practice, have been high-status gentry, and several (James, Anna, Mary, and Margaret) became nobles in their own right through marriage. More broadly, early modern Scotland's social structure was far from fixed. For many informants, particularly those classed as middling or labourer, little to no biographical information is available. The aim here is simply to indicate the hierarchical nature of the correspondents' relationships.

With this corpus infrastructure and metadata framework in place, the thesis now turns from methodology to analysis: Chapter 5 begins the empirical analysis by examining how members of the StEr CoP deployed religious formulaic language as a shared communicative resource for constructing meaning, alignment, and relationships within their correspondence.

Chapter 5 Religious Formulaic language

This chapter addresses Research Question 2a: how did members of the StEr CoP use religious formulaic language to construct and negotiate relationships, exert mutual influence, and reflect sociolinguistic identities? It begins by outlining the methods used to identify and categorise religious formulae in the corpus (5.1), presents a quantitative overview of these formulae (Section 5.2), and then considers several case studies of correspondents' use of religious language (Sections 5.3–5.6). The chapter concludes with a summary and discussion of the findings (Section 5.7).

5.1 Identifying Religious Formulaic Language

As Section 2.4 explained, Wray's (2002, 9) definition of formulaic sequences, adopted here, is wide-ranging. For those seeking narrower descriptions, such as identifying distinct formulaic elements in a dataset: in this case, the religious formulae (hence *relforms*) in StErCor2, Wray advised beginning by locating appropriate examples, since 'the relationship between identification and definition [is] circular' (2002, 19). Thus, this thesis first identified potential StEr relforms before defining the category.

The most direct method was to search for lexis in the domain of religion in StErCor2. This thesis adapted Pfeiffer and Schiegg's (2020, 254–56) two-stage methodology, which combined computerised and manual lexical searches in a 750k-token corpus of nineteenth-century letters. Because their corpus was too large to allow full manual checking, they used selective 'paper and pencil' methods to focus on a subset of data and examine intra-writer variation (Pfeiffer and Schiegg 2020 254–56).[116] In contrast, the smaller size of StErCor2 (61k tokens) allowed all hits to be checked by eye. This dual, macro–micro approach ensured that any religious lexis missed in the initial corpus-based stage was captured in the second manual stage, providing both comprehensive coverage and fine-grained validation.

Given the multilingual nature of the material, searches covered Scots, anglicised Scots, English, and French. For Scots, AntConc's KWIC queries included *blissing/blessing*, *God*, *holy*/*haly*, *kirk*, *minister*, *Lord*, *pray(er), saul/soul*, *speritI/spirit,* and *word*.[117] Variable spelling was addressed

[116] Bengough-Smith (2023, 9) also applied this manual technique to locate religious formulaic language in his corpus of twenty-two sixteenth-century letters in French.

[117] Queries were devised using Semantic Domains (www.semdom.org, accessed April 2024) and *DSL* (2004).

by searching for stems plus the wildcard *. For example, Table 5-1 illustrates results from the query *bl** which retrieved variants of *bless.* A PDE translation is included after each result.

Table 5-1: Example of AntConc relform search (bl*)

I haif iust ressoun to [I have just reason to	**blasone** reproach	my good sone my good son]
for ye sessioun hes not [for the session has not	**bled** bled	weill I will avaitt vpoun some other vrgent occasioun well, I will wait upon some other urgent occasion]
I pray god [I pray God	bles bless	yow both eurie waye you both every way]
your deir wife a loyefull mother [your dear wife a joyful mother	Blesed blessed	be his name for itt be His name for it]
eurie new [every new	blesing blessing	we resaue att his hand we receive at his hand]
The most high God [The most high God	blesse bless	yow and yours you and yours]
ye woinderfull [the wonderful	blissing blessing	of God in ye victorie of God in the victory]
But But	blissit blessed	Be the lord quha hes not forget to luik vpon yow be the Lord who has not forgotten to look upon you]
to meddill vith that [to meddle with that	**blok** scheme	ȝoŭr lordship can considder your Lordship can consider]

The emboldened, erroneous results ‘blasone’, ‘bled’, and ‘blok’ were checked against *DSL* and *OED*, and discarded. Polysemous words such as the verb *pray* also highlight the importance of manual checking to avoid semantically incorrect data. To explain, *pray* may denote the act of addressing God, ‘I pray god bles yow both eurie way’ [I pray God bless you both every way] (NLS MS 5070 fol. 58, 13 January 1640) or it may convey a secular request, ‘I praye yow forgett nott this’ [I pray you forget not this] (NLS MS 5070 fols. 49–50, 18 November 1639). Williams (2013b, 134–36) also noted the semantic differences of *pray* and found it fulfilled different sociopragmatic functions within the Thynne letters where writers directed it both towards God, and towards people. In this thesis, only those examples directed to God would be included among the relform candidates.

In addition to Scots, the identification process incorporated data from the eleven StEr letters in English and seven in French. Table 5-2 lists the relforms included in the seven French manuscripts, along with their PDE translations.

Table 5-2: StEr French religious formulae

Shelfmark	Sender	Recipient	Item in EModF	Item in PDE
NRS GD3/5/29	Henrietta Stuart	Anna Livingstone	cest la vollonte de dieu	It was God's will
NRS GD406/1/9597	Henrietta Stuart	James Hamilton	prient Dieu vous donner space Monsieur en parfete sante hureuse et longue vie	I pray God to give you Sir, with perfect health, a happy and long life
NLS MS 5070 fol. 3	Gabrielle Stuart	Marie Stewart	Dieu ne veult pas me donner tant de ioies	God would not wish me to have so much joy
NLS MS 5070 fol. 3	Gabrielle Stuart	Marie Stewart	il fault esperer en notre bon Dieu quil nous donne quelque fois de Grandissimes Ioies	we must hope in our good God that he sometimes gives us great joys the less we hope for them
NRS GD124/15/42/9	Catherine de Balsac	Marie Stewart	se pandent je pryeray notre bon Dyeu me'n fier la grasse	I will pray the good God to trust me with his grace

A preliminary inspection confirmed the findings of Rutten and van der Wal (2012, 177), Dossena (2013, 50–57), and Pfeiffer and Schiegg (2020, 265), all of whom observed that religious items exhibit variation in both form and function. Pfeiffer and Schiegg's analysis prioritised provenance, classifying items as religious if they appeared in selected nineteenth-century Bible versions and arranging them along a 'continuum of usages'. At the most formulaic end were direct quotations from scripture; in the middle, formulae with minor deviations; and at the least formulaic end, items that merely alluded to or paraphrased biblical content (Pfeiffer and Schiegg 2020, 252–53).

Provenance proved equally useful for identifying relforms in the StEr corpus and was established with reference to five religious texts. As outlined in Section 3.2, these works would have been familiar to members of the StEr CoP to varying degrees, depending on confessional affiliation. The earliest of these is The New Testament in Scots (Nisbet, c. 1520; hereafter Nisbet). Although unavailable to most readers in this period, it is included, the rationale being that even where Scottish correspondents only had access to English language bibles, they may have rendered religious expressions in their mother tongue, particularly in epistolary contexts, which, as noted in Section 2.1, may reflect spoken language most closely.

Next is the Geneva Bible, the most widely used text in Scotland during this period (Dawson 2019, 15). The first version printed in Scotland was the Bassendyne Bible, published in 1579 (Smith 2012, 222), and it may have been this edition that the Scottish members of the StEr CoP used. However, since no complete Bassendyne edition is currently available online, the version

consulted here is *The Geneva Bible: A Facsimile of the 1560 Edition* (1969; hereafter Geneva). Alongside the Geneva Bible, *The Book of Common Order of the Church of Scotland* (Church of Scotland 1611; hereafter BCOrder) is also included due to its ubiquity. Also selected is the 1611 version of the King James Bible (The Holy Bible: 1611 King James Version 2024; hereafter KJB-1611). Although not sanctioned for use in Scotland at this time, it was widely used in England by Episcopalians, where it was officially authorised for church reading (Hamlin and Jones 2014, 11). Finally, the Catholic text, The Holy Bible: Faithfully Translated into English out of the Authentical Latin, Diligently Conferred with the Hebrew, Greek, and Other Editions in Divers Languages (English College of Douay 1510–1582; hereafter Douay-Rheims) is included, as it would have been used by Catholic members of the CoP.

While provenance provides a useful basis for identifying relforms, the StEr letters show little evidence of correspondents reproducing scriptural passages verbatim, or of visually marking such passages through punctuation, script, or language change, as observed by Pfeiffer and Schiegg in their corpus of German letters (2020, 257–58). Instead, many StEr relforms draw on scriptural language without exact reproduction. Although this thesis likewise recognises a spectrum of formulaicity, its primary aim is not to measure degrees of textual correspondence with specific religious sources. Rather, it seeks to identify reliably those sequences functioning as relforms and to trace connections between correspondents' linguistic choices and their broader exposure to religious discourse.

Accordingly, the thesis extends the framework by incorporating the parameters of function and form from Wray and Namba's schema (2003, 28), enabling the analysis to capture prefabricated expressions beyond strictly religious texts. As Bengough-Smith (2023, 75) observes, 'in practice formulaic sequences could perform multiple functions at once', and the relforms identified here exhibit a similar tendency towards functional overlap. The flexible nature of the sliding scale of formulaicity also accommodates items that are formulaic for multiple reasons. For example, blessings in early modern letters often follow highly conventional patterns (Dossena 2013, 50).[118] These may initially be categorised as relforms due to their provenance as, for example, 'I committ yow to godis grace' [I commit you to God's grace] (Thomas Hope to Alexander Hope, NLS MS 5070 fols. 84–85, 17 February 1641), resembling 'I commend you to God, and to the

[118] The studies discussed here used a variety of terms for such formulae of blessing. For example, Pfeiffer and Schiegg (2020, 272) termed the formulae of blessing used to structure letters in opening and closing sections 'text-structural religious formulae,' whereas Rutten and van der Wal (2013, 54), following Wray (2002), called them 'text-constitutive formulae.' In contrast, Dossena (2013, 50) termed such blessings 'crystallized expressions' and grouped them with 'health and greeting' religious formulae.

word of his grace' (KJB-1611, Acts 20:32), and 'the lord bles yow all' [the Lord bless you all] (Marie Stewart to Charles Erskine, NLS MS 5088 fol. 78, 15 December c.1639), echoing 'The Lord blesse thee, and keepe thee' (KJB-1611, Numbers 6:24).

However, such blessings may also be categorised as relforms based on their position in the text: early modern guides recommended such blessings as appropriate letter conclusions. Fifteenth-century Latin Chancery models described them as 'Valediction and Apprecatio' (Richardson 1984, 213–14 quoted in Nevalainen 2001, 205), while Woolley's seventeenth-century handbook labelled them 'Conclusions' (1675, 228 quoted in Tanskanen 2003, 189).[119]

Of the 183 StEr letters, forty-five contain a blessing, three-quarters of which (39) appear immediately before the subscription, as recommended by such manuals (Section 2.2.2). This dual justification, of provenance and textual function, supports their classification as relforms: not only are they drawn from religious sources, but they also functioned as discourse markers signalling the close of a letter while pragmatically conveying affection or goodwill.

Beyond BLESSINGS, which alone among the relforms are distinguished typographically through layout, the StEr letters include other recognisable formulae noted in prior research. For example, 'we shall god villing be this nixt winter at Paris' [we shall, God willing, be this next winter at Paris] (Henry Erskine to John Erskine (Mar elder), NRS GD124/15/34/11, 28 Mar 1619) and 'if it pleasit the lord to send them any guid forto miet' [if it pleased the Lord to send them any good for to meet] (Marion Douglas to Marie Stewart, NLS MS 5070 fols. 69-70, 27 June 1640) parallel the *God willing* formulae (from the Latin, 'Deo volente') observed by Dossena (2013, 51). These prayer-like utterances are imbued with the expectation that humans must submit to God's will whilst hoping to be 'spared' (Dossena 2013, 51).

Similarly, senders drew on aspects of God's nature to strengthen requests through 'argumentative textualisation patterns' in religious language (Pfeiffer and Schiegg 2020, 265). For example, in 'for godis sake do that quhilk may setle them' [for God's sake, do that which may settle them' (Thomas Erskine to James Erskine, NLS MS 5070 fols. 8–9, 1 May 1627) or 'as hee neuer resiseth pardon to a Penitent sinner, so your Ladyship vil pardon my offence' [as he never resists pardon to a penitent sinner, so your Ladyship will pardon my offence' (Alexander Erskine to Marie Stewart, NLS MS 5155 fol. 8, 31 July 1631), the sender suggests the recipient should emulate God's forgiveness and charity (Section 5.3). There are also formulae praising or thanking

[119] Another manual which advocated ending on a blessing was, *Le Stile et Manière de Composer, Dicter, et Escrire Toute Sorte d'Epistres* (Anonymous, variously attributed to Pierre Durand and Jean de la Moyne 1553, 107–8).

God, such as ‘thanks to the lord our Gratious god’ [thanks to the Lord, our gracious God’, and instructions like ‘be ye thankfull to him’ [be you thankful to him’ (Marie Stewart to Charles Erskine, NLS MS 5070 fols. 49-50, 18 November 1639).

By contrast, some sequences were prosaic descriptions of religious events rather than scriptural echoes. For example, in a travel letter to his father, Henry Erskine reported Louis XIII of France’s attempts to force ‘them of the religion’ in Bern to surrender church rents to the crown. In longer extracts such as Example (48), relforms are highlighted by underlining.

> (48) As conserning noŭvelles, I doŭt not bot ȝoŭr lordship hes heard alreadie qhow the keing wald haŭe forsit them of the religion in Bearne, (quhilke is ane principalitie that wos of aŭld annexit to the kindome of navar) to rendre beake the rentis of the Keirke, to him, that he micht resteablis the mese and the Bischopis in the forme they wor bifor the reformation.
> [As concerning news, I do not doubt [that] your Lordship has already heard how the king would have forced those of the religion in Bern, (which is a principality that was annexed, of old, to the Kingdom of Navarre) to render back the rents of the kirk, to him, that he might reestablish the mass and the bishops in the form they were before the reformation] (NRS GD124/15/34/8, 9 September 1618).

Although this example contains religious lexis (‘religion’, ‘Keirke’, ‘mese’, ‘Bischopis’ and ‘reformation’), Henry’s remarks are informative and mundane, raising doubts about their status as relforms. Yet the expression ‘them of the religion’ is grammatically formulaic in Wray’s sense because it reduces processing effort, and pragmatically it signals shared belief via an epithet familiar to both sender and recipient (2002, 93). Its formulaicity is further confirmed by its frequency: the phrase appears six times in total across Henry’s letters and once in John Schawe’s. Thus, despite lacking provenance in religious texts, discourse of the type underlined in Example (48) is determined to be relform on the basis of form and function.

5.1.1 Defining Religious Formulaic Language

Having outlined the religious formulae identified in StErCor2, the discussion now returns to the question posed at the outset of this section: how can we define religious formulaic language? This thesis adopts the following schema for determining whether a sequence qualifies as being religious formulaic language within StErCor2, building on the classification systems of Rutten and van der Wal (2012, 2013), Dossena (2013), and Pfeiffer and Schiegg (2020), and in conjunction with Wray’s framework (2002; Section 2.4). One of the following criteria must be met:

1. The sequence’s provenance (whether modified or quoted verbatim) can be traced to one of the five religious reference texts (Section 5.1).

2. The sequence contains semantically correct religious lexis.

After applying this schema to StErCor2, the next step was to tag the relforms using TEI-XML notation.

5.1.2 Tagging the Religious Formulae

Many passages in the StEr letters contain multiple religious lexical items, as in this passage addressed to Charles Erskine from Marie Stewart:

> (49) thanks to the lord our Gratious god, thatt itt hath pleased him to make yow a father, and your deir wife a Ioyefull mother. Blesed be his name for itt. I haue hard be your sisters of her estat, the lord will haue a cair of her I doubt nott, bott in the mein time be ye thankfull to him, and more cairfull to serue him nor euer ye ware, eurie new blesing we resaue att his hand shuld produce new desires,affections, and Indeuores to seek to him, and honour him a right
>
> 'thanks to the lord our gracious God, that it has please him to make you a father, and your dear wife a joyful mother. Blessed be his name for it. I have heard by your sisters of her estate, the lord will have a care of her I doubt not; but in the mean time be you thankful to him, and more careful to serve him than ever you were, every new blessing we receive at his hand should produce new desires, affections, and endeavours to seek to him, and honour him right' (NLS MS 5070 fols. 49-50, 18th November 1639)

As noted in Section 2.4, Wray's definition of formulaic sequences is flexible and does not impose a fixed length. In practice, AntConc's KWIC tool limits context output to twenty-five tokens on either side of a hit, giving a maximum total token size of fifty-one (hit + left and right contexts). Sequences exceeding this limit will not display start or end TEI-XML tags in the results window, preventing precise extraction. Accordingly, each tagged sequence was kept under fifty-one tokens. Within this constraint, separate utterances were identified using editorial judgement, following Wray and Namba (2003, 27).

Each sequence was tagged with the TEI element <rs> with the attribute @type="relform'. In Example (49), five distinct formulae were tagged as follows:

```
<rs type="relform">thanks to the lord our Gratious
god,thatt itt
hath pleased him to make yow a father,</rs>
and your deir wife a Ioyefull mother. <rs
type="relform">Blesed
be his name for itt.</rs><rs type="relform">I haue hard
be your
sisters of her estat, the lord will haue a cair
of her I doubt nott,</rs> bott in the mein time
```

```
<rs type="relform">be ye thankfull to him, and more
cairfull to
serue him nor euer ye ware,</rs> <rs type="relform">eurie
new blesing
we resaue att his hand shuld produce new
desires, affections, and Indeuores to seek
to him, and honour him a right.</rs>
```

Once tagged, the sequences were extracted into a spreadsheet for analysis. Keeping each sequence under fifty-one tokens ensured that each relform hit fit within the AntConc KWIC result window, allowing them to be copied directly into MS Excel. The spreadsheet, StErCor2_Workbook.xlsx, contains all the relforms in the worksheet 'Relforms' where they are categorised according to the schema outlined in Section 5.1.1.

5.1.3 Classifying the Religious Formulae

The religious formulae were further classified into the nine categories, drawing on Rutten and van der Wal (2012, 2013), Dossena (2013), and Pfeiffer and Schiegg (2020). Classification occurs in the MS Excel workbook rather than the XML files. Encoding all relforms under a single broad <relform> tag keeps the corpus flexible, allowing future researchers to apply alternative categorisations and supporting the thesis' aim of creating a reusable corpus. This approach also streamlines the process: a single tag captures all relforms, while Excel provides an efficient platform for assigning them to the precise categories outlined in Table 5-3.

Table 5-3: Categories of religious formulae

TYPE	DESCRIPTION
BLESSING	A commitment to God's favour or protection, often situated near the opening or closing of a letter.
GOD'S WILL	An expression of the expectation that humans must submit to God's will.
PRAYER PROMISE	A promise or offer of prayer to God.
PETITION TO GOD	A petition, appeal, or prayer directed to God.
PRAISE OR THANKS TO GOD	An expression of thanks or praise to God.
INVOCATION	A call upon God to witness an oath or vow.
REFERENCE TO DIVINE WISDOM OR POWER	A reference to the omniscience and omnipotence of the Holy Trinity, often linked with submission to God's will.
EXHORTATION	A religious-type instruction or admonition
INFORMATIVE	A statement providing information about temporal matters.
FIGURATIVE	An expression conveying emotion, or evaluative meaning through metaphor, simile, or other figurative language, without directly invoking or referring to God or religion.

The first type of formula, BLESSING, expresses the act of committing someone to God's favour and protection. In this system, BLESSINGS may appear anywhere in the text of a letter, unlike in Dossena's (2013) study, which considered only those occurring in the opening and closing sections. GOD'S WILL refers to a formula resembling the highly conventional utterance invoking divine will. When a sender refers to praying to God on behalf of others, the formula is designated PRAYER PROMISE.

Formulae in which the sender directs a petition, appeal, or prayer to God are labelled PETITION TO GOD, while PRAISE OR THANKS encompasses expressions of praise or gratitude addressed to God. INVOCATION OF GOD marks instances where God is invoked to witness an oath or vow, and REFERENCE TO DIVINE WISDOM OR POWER captures correspondents' belief in and submission to God's all-encompassing knowledge and authority. EXHORTATION refers to formulae issuing religious instruction, and INFORMATIVE formulae concern entirely earthly or secular matters. Lastly, FIGURATIVE formulae employ simile or metaphor to express sentiment, or evaluation, without directly invoking God.

5.2 Quantitative Overview of the Religious Formulae

Overall, 114 of the 183 StEr letters (62%) contain relforms, with a total of 300 formulae tagged, while the remaining sixty-nine letters (38%) contain none.[120] Table 5-4 lists the senders, by sex, who included relforms in their letter and shows the distribution of the number of relforms in their letters.

Table 5-4: Religious formulae according to sender

Individual female senders: 7	**No. letters with RFs: 26**	**No. letters without RFs: 18**
Marie Stewart (Mar)	17	11
Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia	3	7
Henrietta Stuart (Huntly)	2	0
Catherine de Balsac (Lennox)	1	0
Marion Douglas (Drum)	1	0
Margaret Feilding (Hamilton)	1	0
Gabrielle Stuart	1	0
Individual male senders: 22	**No. letters with RFs: 85**	**No. letters without RFs: 32**
John Schawe	20	3
Henry Erskine (Cardross)	15	1
Alexander Erskine	11	10
John Erskine (Mar elder)	5	10
John Rollock	5	4
Thomas Hope (Craighall)	5	1
Arthur Erskine (Scotscraig)	4	0
John Wallace	3	0
Alexander Henderson	2	0
Thomas Hamilton (Binning)	2	0
Thomas Erskine (Kellie)	2	0
John Leslie (Rothes)	1	0
James Erskine (Buchan)	1	0
John Lyon (Kinghorn)	1	2
David Murray (Gorthy)	1	0
Henry Dow	1	1
G. Johnston	1	0
George Norvell	1	0
J. Lantie	1	0
John Allisone	1	0
John Forbes	1	0
Kinloch	1	0
Groups of male senders: 2 sets	**No. letters with RFs: 2**	**No. letters without RFs: 0**
George Baird and Ewan Dunmure	1	0
Estates members	1	0
Senders of unknown sex: 1	**No. letters with RFs: 1**	**No. letters without RFs: 0**
C.S.	1	0

[120] Of the letters analysed, 107 of 165 EModS letters contain 291 relforms; 3 of 11 EModE letters contain 4; and 4 of 7 EModF letters contain 5.

Table 5-4 shows that the majority of individual female senders, 7 of 10, included relforms in 26 of their 44 total letters.[121] A comparable pattern is observed among individual male senders: 22 of 32 included relforms in 85 of their 117 letters. Two sets of group senders, Baird and Dunmure, and the Estates members, also included relforms in their two StEr letters. Relforms also appear in a single letter sent by an informant of unknown sex, C.S.

There are 15 senders whose letters contain no relforms. Three of these are women who sent letters individually: Katherine Clifton (Lennox), Marie Erskine (Marischal), and Diane de Clére, while Anna Erskine (Rothes) sent her letter jointly with her husband. Ten men also omitted relforms from all of their StEr letters: John Erskine (Mar younger), Louis Stuart (Kirkhill), Alexander Leslie (Leven), Esmé Stuart (Lennox younger), James Stuart (Lennox-Richmond), Charles Erskine (Alva-Bandeath), James Graham (Montrose), George Stirling (Keir), Daniel Andersone, and I. Reade. Additionally, a joint letter sent by John Leslie (Rothes) and John Lyon (Kinghorn) contains no relforms, although as Table 5-4 shows, as individual senders, their letters do include them. Finally, [L] de Balsac, a sender of unconfirmed sex, also did not include relforms in their letter.

Those senders who included relforms outnumber those who did not by just over two to one, and with over three hundred items captured in the corpus, the evidence demonstrates that the StEr letters constitute a rich source for analysing such formulaic language. Figure 5-1 illustrates the distribution of the 300 relforms across their nine categories as defined in Table 5-3:

[121] This does not include the sole joint female sender, Anna Erskine (Rothes) whose co-authored letter with her husband, John Leslie (Rothes) contains no relforms.

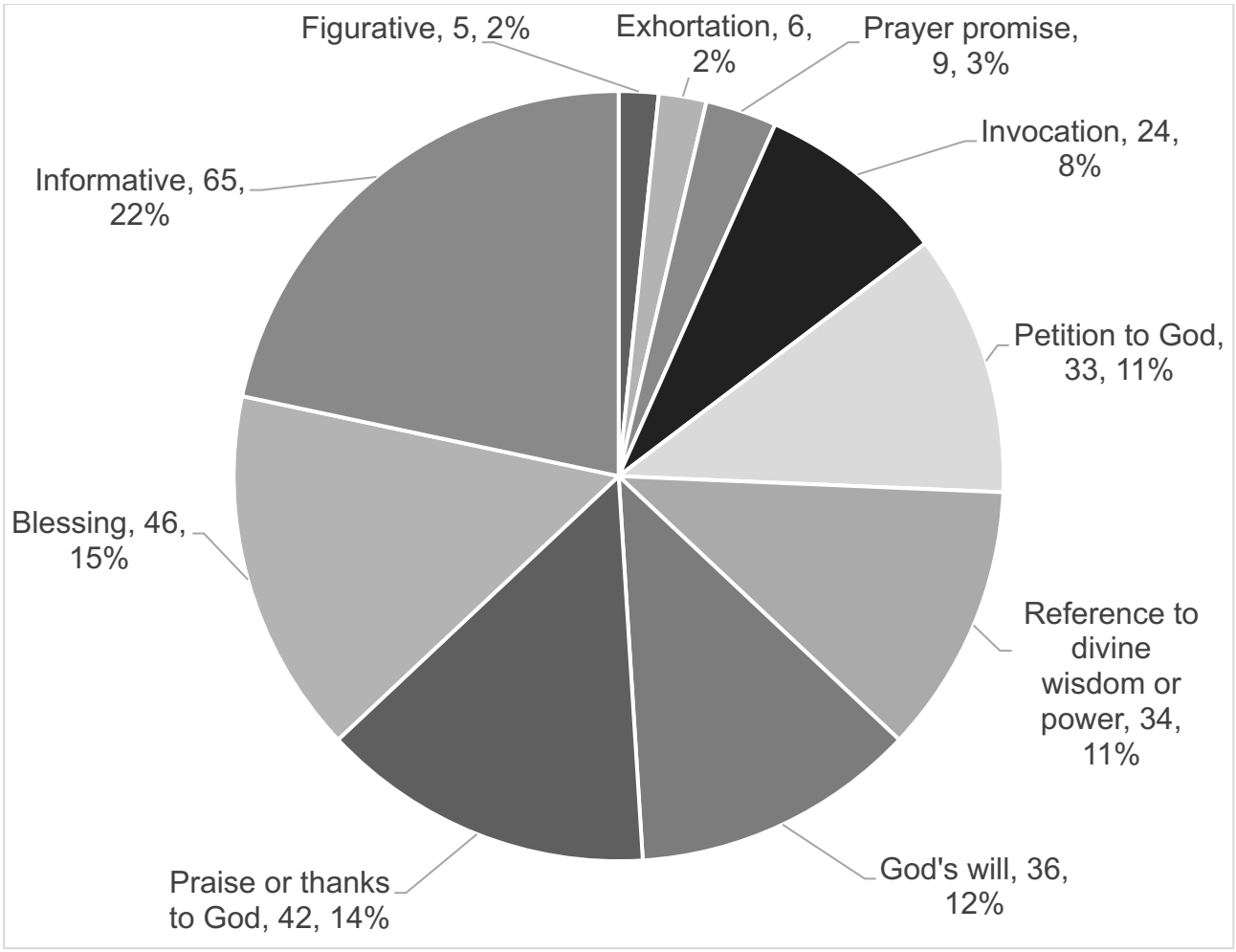


Figure 5-1: Distribution of relforms by category

Figure 5-1's pie chart shows that the largest category subset within the entire set of 300 StErCor2 relforms was INFORMATIVE (65, 22%), followed by BLESSING (46, 15%) and PRAISE OR THANKS TO GOD (42, 14%), which occur in similar numbers. The categories of GOD'S WILL (36, 12%), REFERENCE TO DIVINE WISDOM OR POWER (34, 11%), PETITION TO GOD (33, 11%), and INVOCATION (24, 8%) also cluster closely together. The remaining three categories: PRAYER PROMISE (9, 3%), FIGURATIVE (5, 2%), and EXHORTATION (6, 2%) occur much less frequently.

Although Figure 5-1 suggests a preference for informative-type religious language within the StEr letters, a note of caution is necessary, as this count does not consider the number of letters. The data can be skewed when a single letter contains multiple relforms. Table 5-5 therefore presents an alternative perspective where the number of unique letters containing each relform category is counted and given as a percentage of the entire corpus.

Table 5-5: No. of StEr Letters by category of relform

Category	No. of letters which contain that category of relform	% of total StEr letters (183)
BLESSING	44	24%
GOD WILLING	30	16%
PRAISE OR THANKS TO GOD	27	15%
REFERENCE TO DIVINE WISDOM OR POWER	24	13%
PETITION TO GOD	24	13%
INFORMATIVE	24	13%
INVOCATION	19	11%
PRAYER PROMISE	9	<1%
FIGURATIVE	5	<1%
EXHORTATION	5	<2%

Table 5-5 indicates that BLESSINGS occurs across more letters than INFORMATIVE relforms: 44 letters compared to 24 (24% as opposed to 13%). Notably, a single sender, Henry Erskine, accounts for the majority of the INFORMATIVE examples. This pattern can be explained by both the relatively high number of Henry's letters preserved in StErCor2 (sixteen in total, written between 1617 and 1624) and by their subject matter. Composed during his educational travels on the Continent, these letters frequently describe the religious tensions and political manoeuvring unfolding across Europe at the onset of the Thirty Years' War in 1618 (Stewart and Nugent 2020, 18; 29). Given these concerns, it is unsurprising that his correspondence contains a correspondingly high proportion of information-oriented relforms.

Letters containing GOD'S WILL formulae are also relatively numerous at 30 (16%). The four categories PRAISE OR THANKS TO GOD (27, 15%), REFERENCE TO DIVINE WISDOM OR POWER (24, 13%), PETITION TO GOD (24, 13%), and INVOCATION (19, 11%) appear in similar proportions, ranging from 27 to 19 letters. The final three categories: PRAYER PROMISE (9), FIGURATIVE (5), and EXHORTATION (5) remain comparatively rare, a pattern consistent with the distribution shown in Figure 5-1. The prominence of BLESSINGS and GOD'S WILL formulae aligns with findings from previous scholarship: Rutten and van der Wal (2012, 181) and Pfeiffer and Schiegg (2020, 272) both found blessing formulae to be the most frequent in their corpus and commonly used structure letters, while Pfeiffer and Schiegg (2020, 265) also note that writers often invoked God's will to justify their actions.

Relforms appear across the two largest categories of communicative functions, BUSINESS and FAMILIAR, as also noted by Dossena (2013, 50–57). The distribution within these two categories is as

follows: of the 40 letters classified as BUSINESS, 22 (55%) contain relforms and 18 (45%) do not. Of the 47 letters classified as FAMILIAR, 28 (60%) contain relforms and 19 (40%) do not. Finally, among the letters classified as both BUSINESS and FAMILIAR, 64 (67%) contain relforms and 32 (33%) do not. Taken together, these figures suggest that there is no clear correlation between the presence of religious language and whether a letter is classified as BUSINESS or FAMILIAR, since both types roughly follow the same overall pattern, with around three-fifths of the letters containing a relform. This mirrors the corpus-wide distribution, in which 114 of the 183 letters (62%, or roughly three-fifths) contain relforms.

When the data are examined according to authorship, scribal or holograph, a slightly different pattern is observable. Considering only the 139 letters classified in the corpus as Likely Holograph, Holograph, Likely Scribal or Scribal (and excluding the 44 letters in which the handwriting of the main body cannot be identified or which survive only as copies), the following distribution appears. Of the 125 (Likely) Holograph letters, 80 (64%) contain relforms and 45 (36%) do not; of the 13 (Likely) Scribal letters, 6 (46 percent) contain relforms and 7 (54%) do not. Broadly speaking, then, holograph letters appear more likely to contain religious language. However, given the significant disparity in sample size: there are nearly ten times as many holograph as scribal letters in StErCor2, this finding must remain tentative.

5.3 Religious Formulaic Language in Familial Exchanges: Marie Stewart in Context

The first case study of religious formulaic language begins with an overview of Marie Stewart's relforms before comparing her practices with those of other familial correspondents within the CoP. As noted in Section 1.3.3, Stewart sits at the centre of the CoP and has the widest network of informants, making her an ideal case for examining relform use across the community. The following tables allow readers to refer to Stewart's own relforms, while those used in letters addressed to her are cited in the discussion. Table 5-6 categorises the thirty-five relforms from her holograph letters, and Table 5-7 the six from her scribal letters.

Table 5-6: Religious formulae in Marie Stewart's sent letters (holograph)

HOLOGRAPH (35 relforms found in 14 letters)		
Letter	**Formula text**	**Formula type**
To John Murray Adv.MS 33.1.1 [v] fol. 118	for neixt god she hes bein my only preseruer	PRAISE OR THANKS TO GOD
	her perting from me is noles nor the separation of the soull from the bodie	FIGURATIVE
To Mary Hope MS 5070 fols. 63-64	I knaw the abcence of your father and husband will be greiuous to yow till itt please god they retourne	GOD'S WILL
	I dar nott beliue till I heare itt confermed againe, I praye god itt be trew	PETITION TO GOD
To Charles Erskine		
MS 5070 fols. 45-46	prying god to send me good newis of my deir berne	PETITION TO GOD
MS 5070 fols. 49-50	I recomend yow all to God	BLESSING
	be ye thankfull to him, and more cairfull to serue him nor euer ye ware	EXHORTATION
	eurie new blesing we resaue att his hand shuld produce new desires, affections, and Indeuores to seek to him, and honour him a right	
	I begine this letter in giuing thanks to the lord our Gratious god, thatt itt hath pleased him to make yow a father	PRAISE OR THANKS TO GOD
	God send good newis from court	PETITION TO GOD
	I haue hard be your sisters of her estat, the lord will haue a cair of her I doubt nott	
	Blesed be his name for itt	PRAISE/THANKS TO GOD
MS 5070 fol. 58	I pray god bles yow both eurie waye	BLESSING
	god is wottnes how deir she is to me	INVOCATION
MS 5070 fols. 59-60	recomending yow and all freinds there to god	BLESSING
MS 5070 fols. 61–62	recomending yow all to god	
MS 5088 fols. 76–77	wissing the blesing of god to be still with yow all	
	I will end this now, and remitt all things to god, and yow	
	be this mein haue the blesing of god one all that is yours	
	I praye god his going now to your good father maye work the right effeck	PETITION TO GOD
	god shall be witnes to me that I neather desire, nor meines wrong to you, nor to anie	INVOCATION
	the Lord saintifie all thes crosses he hath laid one me that I maye make a right usse of them all	REFERENCE TO DIVINE WISDOM OR POWER
MS 5088 fol. 78	the lord bles yow all, acording to the desires of	BLESSING
MS 5088 fol. 79	I remittet all to god, latt it gae what waye he pleases best	REFERENCE TO DIVINE WISDOM OR POWER
MS 5088 fols. 80–81	the lord bles yow all	BLESSING
	I knaw nott how to giue our good god thanks for his merci and cair touards your brother William	PRAISE OR THANKS TO GOD
	the lord send us all ane hapie mitting	PETITION TO GOD
	I hope we shall meitt in a better place	FIGURATIVE
	the will of god must be reuerenced, we must stoup onder his hand and nott grouge nor murmure att his duings	GOD'S WILL
	the lord make me thankfull for his goodnes	PRAISE OR THANKS TO GOD
MS 5088 fols. 82–83	I long to heare what newis ye haue god send them good	PETITION TO GOD
MS 5155 fol. 19	ye maye take my blesing with yow	BLESSING
	I take god to witnes what my mind is touards yow	INVOCATION
MS 5155 fols. 20–21	the minister says his erent is to gett ane	INFORMATIVE
	to seek resolution how to putt me from the seatt of the kirk	

Table 5-7: Religious formulae in Marie Stewart's sent letters (scribal)

NON-HOLOGRAPH (6 relforms found in 3 letters)		
Shelfmark (NLS)	**Formula text**	**Formula type**
To William Douglas MS 80 fol. 53	as knaws god quha mot preserve ȝour Lordship eŭir	BLESSING
To Charles Erskine MS 5070 fols. 67-68	speake a good word for Mr Robert Key his preferment to ye vaiking kirk off Inuerkething	INFORMATIVE
	and recommendis yow to godis directione in all your intentiones	BLESSING
	my prayer shalbe daylie to god for yow	PROMISE OF PRAYER
To Thomas Hope MS 5155 fols. 30-31	that I may depart in peace when it shall pleas my Lord	REFERENCE TO DIVINE POWER/WISDOM
	which postethe my end god knowethe when	

Among her twenty holograph letters, fourteen (70%) contain relforms, while three of her eight scribal letters (38%) include them. Therefore, on average, Stewart appears to have been less likely to include relforms in her scribal letters than in her holograph ones. However, the relatively small number of letters, and their varying token counts, combined with the corpus' strong skew toward holograph letters (Section 5.2 noted there are nearly ten times as many as scribal examples) makes this difficult to treat as a firm finding. Although the discrepancy is less extreme for Stewart (she has 2.5 times as many holograph letters as scribal), a similar imbalance limits the strength of any conclusions that might be drawn about the relationship between religious language and whether a letter was penned by the sender or a scribe.

Across her seventeen holograph and scribal letters which contain religious language, the largest number of relforms are categorised as BLESSINGS (12). A pattern which reflects their high numbers in the wider corpus (Table 5-5). Seven of Stewart's BLESSINGS appear immediately before the subscription, functioning as discourse markers to signal the close of the letter, as also observed by Dossena (2013, 50) and Pfeiffer and Shiegg (2020, 272). This practice of placing the correspondents 'under divine protection' (Rutten and van der Wal 2013, 52) is also shared more widely within the CoP as fourteen other members also concluded thirty-eight of their letters with a blessing.

In order to carry out the ritualised action of blessing, many of the correspondents employed performative directives. Table 5-5 shows that Stewart used the verb *recommend* four times in closing blessings directed to her son Charles. Three are holograph examples: 'I recomend yow all to God' [I recommend you all to God]; 'recomending yow and all freinds there to god' [recommending you and all friends there to God]; and 'recomending yow all to god'

[recommending you all to God]; and one is scribal: 'recommendis yow to godis directione in all your intentiones' [recommend you to God's direction in all your intentions]. In a fourth holograph example she used the verb 'wish': 'wissing the blesing of god to be still with yow all' [wishing the blessing of God to be still with you all], an expression which transforms the wish into a prayer (Dossena 2013, 51).

Examples from the conclusions of letters addressed to Stewart also use performative directives. For example, *commit*: 'I committ your Ladyship to the protection of the almightie and shall remaine' [I commit your Ladyship to the protection of the almighty and shall remain] (Arthur Erskine, NLS MS 5155 fols. 44-45, 19 May 1643); 'committis ȝour Ladyship in ye protectione of ye almichtie' [commit your Ladyship in the protection of the Almighty] (J. Lantie, NLS MS 5070 fols. 4–5, 10 March 1623); and 'Sua humblie committis ȝour ladyship to ye blissing of godis grace' [So humbly [I] commit your Ladyship to the blessing of God's grace] (Thomas Hope, NLS MS 5070 fols. 17–18, 3 March 1635). Directives of this kind are among the dialogic features that cause letters to resemble spoken conversation (Jacobs and Jucker 1995, 8). Such BLESSINGS may even have corresponded to early modern spoken leave-taking rituals that accompanied in person farewells.

Outwith Stewart's received correspondence, other correspondents employed different performative verbs in their epistolary BLESSINGS. For example, in concluding his letters to John Erskine, John Schawe used *pray*, *beseech*, and *leave*: 'so praying the almightie to blisse and prosper your lordship' [so praying [to] the Almighty to bless and [make] your Lordship prosperous'] (NRS GD124/15/32/12, 11 August 1618); 'so besiching the almightie to blisse your lordship' [so beseeching the Almighty to bless your Lordship'] (NRS GD124/15/32/8, 22 December 1617), and 'so lauing your lordship to the prouidence of the almightie Rests' [so leaving your Lordship to the providence of the Almighty, [I] rest] (NRS GD124/15/32/9, 21 April 1618). The prevalence of such performative speech acts in the StErCor2 BLESSING relforms supports Williams' (2013a) findings for EModE correspondence, showing that EModS letter-writers used such techniques more often than is common in present-day usage.

As well as positioning BLESSINGS at the end of letters, correspondents also integrated them into the body of the text. A letter from Stewart to her son Charles provides a striking example. In response to pressure from both Charles and his father-in-law, Thomas Hope, to reach decision regarding a contract, Stewart characterised them as urging her to decide too hastily, and resisted their demands through calm self-assertion:

> (50) experience hath teached me werie deir lessons, that so long as I liue I will find itt and that to my great grife and harme, so ye must excuse me to take sum time, for my pairt I shall euer be rewled be reason, and I think no more shuld be craued of me
>
> [experience has taught me very costly [painful] lessons, which I will feel for as long as I live, and to my great grief and harm. So you must excuse me for taking some time. For my part I shall ever be guided by reason, and I think no more should be asked of me.] (NLS MS 5070 fol. 58, 13 January 1640)

The final lines of this letter include the BLESSING 'I pray God bles yow both eurie waye' as Example (51) shows:

> (51) I pray god bles yow both eurie waye,
> I haue wreaten to the Erle of Rothes for mester William Weimes, ye must halpe him all ye can, My mind and heart is so opprest that I can wreat no more bott that I am still,
> your louing mother
> Marie Stewart
>
> [I pray God bless you both every way.
> I have written to the Earl of Rothes about Mr. William Weimes, you must help him all you can. My mind and heart are so oppressed that I cannot write any more but I am still,
> your loving mother,
> Marie Stewart] (NLS MS 5070 fol. 58, 13 January 1640).

It is possible that Stewart originally intended to conclude the letter with this benediction, thereby performing both the action and its verbal expression. Instead, however, she displaced it, first with a request that Charles assist 'William Weimes', and then with a statement revealing the emotional strain and weariness she was experiencing: 'My mind and heart is so opprest…' . Yet by finally ending with 'I am still, your louing mother', she fashioned herself as an affectionate parent despite any frustration she may have felt towards her son. Letter conclusions were among the sites early modern correspondents used to fashion identities that were socially appropriate and relationally strategic (Williams 2013a). By insisting on her constancy, 'I am still', Stewart performed relational repair as much as parental affection.

Wiggins (2017, 82) cautions that such positively polite closing formulae might not always authentically represent the correspondents' relationship. However, Stewart's broader use of affectionate language suggests otherwise. Endearments included her letters directed to Charles such as 'My heart' [my heart] (NLS MS 5070, fols. 59–60, 27 January 1640) and 'my best berne' and 'your suitt heart' [my best child, your sweetheart] (NLS MS 5155, fols. 20–21, 30 July 1639), along with her expressions of concern, such as 'your last shew of apaine of your head which putts

fears in my mind' [your last show of pain in your head which puts fears in my mind] (NLS MS 5088, fol. 78, 15 December c.1639) and 'the doos of the park ar longing for yow, and so am I' [the pigeons in the park are longing for you, and so am I] (NLS MS 5070, fols. 49–50, 26 November 1639), and the delight she expressed in her grandchildren, including 'your littell charles is a fine fallow' [your little Charles is a fine fellow] (NLS MS 5088, fols. 80–81, 17 October 1643), all point to a consistent pattern of sincere maternal warmth. As Wiggins (2017, 82) found in Bess of Hardwick's letters to her daughter Mary, Stewart's epistolary voice appears to reflect genuine attachment. Like Bess, she used closing formulae whose sincerity is best understood within the context of her own correspondence rather than by comparison with conventional usages in other writers.

Stewart's choice of relforms also reveal a consistent moral orientation: she framed familial relationships through the lens of Christian love and divine authority. Her concern for her offspring's welfare: 'prying god to send me good newis of my deir berne' [praying God to send me good news of my dear child] (NLS MS 5070 fols. 45–46, 9 November 1639), demonstrates how she connected emotional with religious discourse in her letters. Similar devotional framing appears in an INVOCATION she included in her letter of 13 January 1640 to Charles, where she remarked of her daughter-in-law Mary Hope: 'God is wottnes how deir she is to me' [God is witness how dear she is to me] (NLS MS 5070 fol. 58). She also emphasised acceptance of GOD'S WILL in her letter to Mary: 'I knaw the abcence of your father and husband will be greiuous to yow till itt please god they retourne' [I know the absence of your father and husband will be grievous to you until it pleases God [that] they return] (MS 5070 fols. 63–64, 17 June 1640). Via these linguistic rituals she articulated submission to providence.

Stewart's thanksgiving letter written upon the birth of her grandchild, cited earlier in Example (49), further illustrates this tendency. It opened with relforms which give PRAISE OR THANKS TO GOD:

> (52) I begine this letter in giuing thanks to the lord our Gratious god, thatt itt hath pleased him to make yow a father, and your deir wife a Ioyefull mother. Blesed be his name for itt. I haue hard be your sisters of her estat, the lord will haue a cair of her I doubt nott, bott in the mein time be ye thankfull to him, and more cairfull to serue him nor euer ye ware, eurie new blesing we resaue att his hand shuld produce new desires,affections, and Indeuores to seek to him, and honour him a right
>
> [I begin this letter in giving thanks to the lord, our gracious God, that it has pleased him to make you a father, and your dear wife a joyful mother. Blessed be his name for it. I have heard by your sisters of her state. The Lord will have a care of her I do not doubt, but in the meantime be you thankful to him, and more careful to serve him than ever

> you were. Every new blessing we receive at his hand should produce new desires, affections and endeavours to seek to him, and honour him aright] (NLS MS 5070 fols. 49-50, 18th November 1639).

Here in Example (52), Stewart explicitly credited God for the family's good fortune, echoing contemporary Christian belief that blessings in health and childbirth were indications of divine favour (Bengough-Smith 2023, 87). By foregrounding the I-centred act, 'I begine […] in giuing thanks', she demonstrated personal gratitude. Moreover, in 'Blessed be his name for it', she echoed scriptural formulae such as 'Thy blessed name' ('A Confession of Sins, to be used before Sermon'; 'The Lord's Prayer' [BCOrder, 281]), and 'Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time forth and for euermore' (KJB-1611, Psalm 113:2). Her imperative EXHORTATIONS, 'be ye thankfull', and '[be] cairfull to serue, should produce […] indeuores to seek […] and honour him' also lend her voice a sermon-like tone.

Such commanding language may seem surprising within a woman's letter. Dossena (2013, 52) found sermonising in nineteenth-century Scots letters, though most were authored by men to brothers. Comparable female examples do exist for this period, however. In a 13 May 1629 letter to her son included in ScotsCorr, Marion Douglas (Drum) urged him 'for godis caus be heidfull' [for God's sake be heedful], warning that others would attempt to provoke him (2007, NRS GD185/19/6/7). Similarly, Elizabeth Melville, Lady Culross, offered 'sternly loving, pious advice' to her son through series of exhortative-type religious expressions in letters sent 1625 and 1629, echoing the tone of a sermon; she wrote likewise to the Reverend John Livingstone, 'like a mother in God' (Reid-Baxter 2015, 217; Section 3.2).[122]

In their letters, Stewart, Melville and Douglas, used such exhortative language to project parental authority, guiding their sons along the right path. There is no sense that Stewart was overbearing: as Reid-Baxter observes for Melville, the intent here is solicitous rather than commanding. Unlike her emotionally charged 1640 letter to Charles (ex. 50), Stewart concluded this letter conventionally with a BLESSING: 'I recommend yow all to God' [I recommend you all to God], signalling resolution and spiritual order.

---

[122] Examples of Melville's exhortations to James include: 'Be ernist with god, crave his derectioun', 'Bewar to do against your consciens.', 'preas to repent […] and he will be reddy to receve you', 'forget not your buik, iff ye be wyse'; 'Stryve against your cheif sin, do nothing that may nourish it' (27 August 1625). Later exhortations include: 'remember quhat pains the lord hes tane upon you', 'Quhat ye find inlaiking, preas to mend.', 'Be ernist in prayer', 'Read and lern the word of god', 'stryve against this idoll sins', 'remember the words of Christ', 'Feare your awin waiknes, and beg ernistly strent[h] and grace from him who hes aboundance to give' (30 January 1629) (Edinburgh University Library, MS Laing III.347 as edited by Reid-Baxter 2015, 210–13).

Other CoP members similarly employed relforms to negotiate moral and familial dynamics. In a letter of apology to his mother, Alexander Erskine used religious rhetoric to frame repentance and forgiveness in parallel terms:

> (53) my intention in this leter, is, nather to lessen my falt, nor to make any appollogies, but, to craue pardon for it, as your Ladyship doeth from god almightye, and as I ame fully asseured that, as hee neuer resisteth pardon to a Penitent sinner, so your Ladyship vil pardon my offence […] freely forgiueing mee my offences, as yow desir Almighty God for to forgiue yours
>
> [my intention in this letter is neither to lessen my fault, nor to make any apologies, but to crave pardon for it as your Ladyship does from God Almighty. And as I am fully assured that, as he never resists pardon to a penitent sinner, so your Ladyship will pardon my offence […] freely forgiving me my offences, as you desire for Almighty God to forgive yours] (NLS MS 5155 fol. 8, 31 July 1631)

By invoking the relationship between divine and human mercy, he appealed to his mother's piety and sense of duty. Moreover, his concluding assurance: 'I recommend your Ladyship in soul, and body, and shall striue to qualifie my selfe Madame' [I recommend your Ladyship in soul and body and shall try to qualify my self Madam] (NLS MS 5155 fol. 8, 31 July 1631), mirrors Stewart's self-fashioning as morally accountable before family and God.

Like Marie Stewart, Thomas Hope (who was father-in-law to Stewart's son Charles) also employed relforms to combine parental authority with spiritual reflection. In a StEr letter addressed to his son Alexander, Hope referred to an unspecified incident, that, as he put it, had 'gevin me so deep a wound to my hart' [wounded my heart so deeply] (NLS MS 5070 fols. 84–85, 17 February 1641). Like Stewart with Charles, he acknowledged the distress his son had caused, asking God to keep his son from 'crocing ye wearie hart of your aged father, and bringing his gray haires to ye grave with sorow' [crossing the weary heart of your aged father, and bringing his grey hairs to the grave with sorrow]. To Alexander, Hope blended admonition with self-effacement, positioning himself as burdened in his PETITION TO GOD: 'I must take tyme to gather my spirit, the Lord pittie me and direct yow in a more prudent way' [I must take time to gather my spirit, the Lord pity me and direct you in a more prudent way]. Thomas Hope also sought to his temper his son's behaviour by reminding him that the Lord was attentive and would eventually provide help; urging patience: 'keip ȝow from tempting ye Lord by distrust and diffidence in not waiting patientlie for a relieff of your distressis from him' [keep you from tempting the Lord by distrust and diffidence in not waiting patiently for him to relieve your distress]. In this way, he used

relforms as Stewart, and indeed Melville, and Douglas did, to reinforce moral instruction through faith, framing parental guidance as spiritually sanctioned.

Hope also used relforms in his correspondence with Stewart. In one letter, he opposed a course of action she had proposed with which he disagreed. Referring to her late husband he stated of her plan: 'I am sure it is againis the will of yat most nobill saull that now restis with the Lord' [I am sure it is against the will of that most noble soul that now rests with the Lord] (NLS MS 5070 fols. 17–18, 3 March 1635). Here he invoked John Erskine's memory to dissuade her, reminding her that he, now in heaven, would be aware and disapprove of her intended action.

Stewart's letter to John Murray offers a contrasting use of religious language. Whereas she conveyed parental authority in her letters to Charles, here she adopted a deferential tone as she extended thanks and apologised for detaining Murray's wife longer than expected during a recent visit:

> (54) If I knew how to giue yow dew thanks for the manie fauours I haue resaued of yow I wold strayue to doe itt bott as the obligations goes far beond my deserts so doth the meines com short in shawing my thankfulness, bott in desires, […] I am neather ingraite nor forgatfull of the caire and loue that yow and your wife my deir freind hes had of me, for neixt god she hes bein my only preseruer, excuse me than I pray yow for bieng the caus of her long staye for her perting from me is noles nor the separation of the soull from the bodie
>
> [If I knew how to give you due thanks for the many favours I have received you I would strive to do it, but as the obligations go far beyond my deserts so do the means come short in showing my thankfulness, but in desires, […] I am neither ungrateful nor forgetful of the care and love that you and your wife, my dear friend, have had for me, for next to God, she has been my only preserver. Excuse me then I pray you for being the cause of her long stay, for her parting from me is no less than the separation of the soul from the body] (NLS Adv.MS 33.1.1 [v] fol. 118, [10 October 1614]).

In contrast to the strategy used in her letter to Charles where Stewart gave direct PRAISE OR THANKS TO GOD, here she projected a low-level of personal agency by using an indirect construction to convey her gratitude and by presenting herself as inadequate and powerless ('if I knew how to giue yow'; 'the obligations goes far beond my deserts'; 'the meines com short'). Stewart's inclusion of the speech-like directives 'excuse' and 'pray' confirms the resemblance of written apologies to spoken conversation, particularly through their dialogic features (Jacobs and Jucker 1995, 8). A conventional marker of politeness in early modern letters, the verb *pray* (Elsweiler 2022, 63–64; Williams 2013a) is imbued with negative politeness by being prefaced with the formulaic sequence 'excuse me'. By adopting such negatively polite strategies, Stewart constructed humility as both moral and social performance.

Moreover, via her relform which positioned Murray's wife as 'neixt god, my only preserver', Stewart elevated their friendship to near-sacred status. Her FIGURATIVE lament that separation from her friend was 'noles nor the separation of the soull from the bodie' echoes both biblical and poetic formulaic language. For example, Geneva (James 2:26) has 'For as the body without the spirit is dead, even so the faith without works is dead.' Also, in Caldwell's dedicatory poem to Stewart, is the following line: 'The Earth also did tremble whilst the Soule of the Lord separated from his Bodie, threatening to swallow them vp' (1625). In this way, Stewart used relforms to lend poetic, devotional resonance to her apology, possibly reflecting her elite education and reading habits.

Collectively, these examples show that Marie Stewart and other CoP members frequently used BLESSINGS as commendatory endings to their letters, often incorporating performative, speech-like verbs. Correspondents adapted such biblical language to position themselves as Christians consciously attentive of their duty to God and to one another. They also attributed their favourable circumstances to divine providence, emphasising the necessity of accepting GOD'S WILL. As parents, Marie Stewart and Thomas Hope employed relforms as a rhetorical strategy to reinforce their own assertions and decisions, PETITIONING GOD to guide their adult offspring toward proper conduct both in life and in filial duty, illustrating how they should behave, both in life and as a dutiful child. Hope used a similar strategy in writing to Stewart, seeking to persuade her to act as he deemed best. While many relforms draw on biblical phrasing, Stewart also employed more FIGURATIVE and distinctive expressions, reflecting her advanced education and familiarity with contemporary literature.

5.4 Religious Formulaic Language in Petitionary Letters

Eight out of the ten petitions included in StErCor2 contain relforms as shown in Examples (55–62) where the relform type is provided after a PDE translation:

(55) John Forbes to Marie Stewart (NRS GD124/15/95, 2 January 1633)

> I will be forced in the spring ensewing to cum south & remain as a begger at your Ladyships gate & to complean to god & to exclame to all men off the wrong that I receave
> [I will be forced in the spring ensuing to come south and remain as a beggar at your Ladyship's gate and to complain to God and to exclaim to all men of the wrong that I receive] (EXHORTATION)
>
> Madam albet the Lord hes takin the sight off myn eyes frome me

[Madam, albeit the Lord has taken the sight of my eyes from me] (REFERENCE TO DIVINE WISDOM OR POWER)

committing ȝour Ladyship my Lord & all ȝouris to godis protectioun
[committing your Ladyship, my Lord and all yours to God's protection] (BLESSING)

ȝour Ladyships humble servand & daly oratir
[your Ladyship's humble servant and daily oratour] (PRAYER PROMISE)[123]

(56) John Allisone to Marie Stewart (NRS GD124/17/629, 1633)

I beseik ȝowr guid ladyship for the reward of god to peitie my esteat
[I beseech your good Ladyship, for the reward of God, to pity my state] (INVOCATION)

be the grace of god I sall pay In tyme coming
[by the Grace of God I shall pay in time coming] (GOD'S WILL)

for godis caus to caus len me ane boll of meall,
[for God's cause to lend me a boll of meal] (INVOCATION)

with the gift of god this ȝeir I sall payit
[with the gift of God this year I shall pay it] (GOD'S WILL)

my selff my wyff and pwre childring sall daylie pray for healh wealth and prosperitie for my lord ȝowr Ladyship and all ȝowr howall proginie
[myself, my wife, and [our] poor children, shall daylie pray for health, wealth and prosperity for my Lord, your Ladyship, and all your whole progeny] (PRAYER PROMISE)

(57) Thomas Erskine to James Erskine (NLS MS 5070 fols. 6–7, 24 April 1625)

be the graice of god I will keepit this appontment
[by the Grace of God I will keep this appointment] (GOD'S WILL)

be the grace of god betwixt this & mertimes if not before the monye shalbe payed
[by the grace of God, between this and martinmas, if not before, the money shall be paid] (GOD'S WILL)[124]

since it hes pleised god to take my owld & gratious maister

[123] Oratir: A person who offers up prayers for one. Freq. with the possessive of the person prayed for. (*DSL* 4.0 'Orator n.1'.).

[124] Mertimes: The feast of St. Martin, 11th November, one of the term-days or quarter-days. Freq. Martinmes in winter, for distinction from the feast of the translation of St. Martin, 4th July. (*DSL* 4.0 'Martinmes n.').

[since it has please God to take my old and gracious master] (REFERENCE TO DIVINE WISDOM OR POWER).

(58) Thomas Erskine to James Erskine (NLS MS 5070 fols. 8–9, 1 May 1627)

be the graice of god to dispose of my selfe in a more free & contented fashone
[by the grace of God to dispose of my self in a more free and contented fashion] (GOD'S WILL)

him that shalle be the graice of god discharge all thingis to your lyking & evir remaine
[him that shall, by the grace of God, discharge all things to your liking and ever remain] (BLESSING)

(59) Alexander Erskine to Marie Stewart (NLS MS 5155 fols. 14-15, 24 July 1638)

shalbee glade that the scots may not deserue the reputation of religiouse foules
[shall be glad that the Scots may not deserve the reputation of religious fools] (INFORMATIVE)

(60) Alexander Erskine to John Leslie (NLS MS 5155 fols. 16-17, 24 July 1638)

the content of his Maiestie and the good and peace of his fatheful subiects, wich I shall euer pray for
[the content of his Majesty and the good and peace of his faithful subjects, which I shall ever pray for] (PRAYER PROMISE)

wich I know yowr Lordship doeth shune, and I hope god vill auerte, to his glorye
[which I know your Lordship shuns, and I hope God will avert, to His glory] (PETITION TO GOD)

(61) Marie Stewart to William Douglas (NLS MS 80 fol. 53, 3 February 1604)

as knaws god quha mot preserve ȝour Lordship eŭir
[as knows God who must preserve your Lordship forever] (BLESSING)

(62) Henrietta Stuart to James Hamilton (NRS GD406/1/9597, undated [bf. 1636])

prient Dieu vous donner space Monsieur en parfete sante hureuse et longue vie
[I pray God to give you Sir, with perfect health, a happy and long life] (PETITION TO GOD)

These letters illustrate exchanges across different social ranks, showing correspondents petitioning both peers and superiors, and vice versa. The widest discrepancy in relative social status appears in the petitions of Forbes (ex. 55) and Allisone (ex. 56), both of which were

addressed to Marie Stewart. Although little biographical information survives for these men, their letters emphasise the disparity between their positions and that of the Countess. In his letter, Allisone requested additional time to repay a debt owed to Stewart for eleven 'poultry fowls' [chickens] at four shillings each.[125] He explained that a harsh winter had ruined his harvest, leaving him penniless and asked her to lend him oatmeal seed to resow. Forbes also sought assistance, though he seems to have been better off: he asked the Countess to intercede with her husband, who owed him four years of annualrents amounting to 2400 merks for land inherited under his late parents' will.[126] To compound matters, Forbes stated that he could no longer work due to the loss of his eyesight.[127]

Given the gendered imbalance of the period, it may seem surprising that both men addressed the Countess rather than the Earl of Mar. Although Scots and English law barred women from owning property or land, some nonetheless engaged actively in legal affairs (Mason 2019). As Sections 3.2 and 3.3 noted, Stewart substituted for her husband in the Sheriff's Court during his absences and engaged in legal action during her widowhood. Thus, in addition to being an astute and attentive businesswoman, as confirmed in Elder's (2022) account of her correspondence, she also had practical knowledge of Scots law. The two petitions further suggest that the men had met the Countess personally and regarded her as a capable and influential advocate.

Both petitioners employed relforms as part of their requestive strategies, aligning with the linguistic script of 'humility and entreaty', but in distinct ways. As Example (56) demonstrates, Allisone sought to engage Stewart's sympathy and appealed to divine reward, 'I beseik ȝowr guid ladyship for the reward of god to peitie my esteat'. He also invoked God's name directly in his

[125] With 20 shillings to the Scots pound, the total for 11 chickens at 4 shillings each would be 44s. or £2 4s. Scots.

[126] 2400 merks was equal to £1600 Scots or around £133 English. In 1633 this was a substantial sum, equal to around seven years wages for a skilled tradesman (The National Archives "Currency converter: 1270–2017" n.d. a).

[127] Both letters are written in secretary script, yet they differ in material features that complicate interpretation. Allisone's letter contains no date in the main body of the text, but a secretarial endorsement on the reverse allows it to be attributed to 1633. The absence of both date and signature suggests that the extant version may be an administrative copy rather than the original manuscript. This makes it difficult to determine whether Allisone wrote the letter himself or dictated it to another hand. By contrast, Forbes' letter survives with both signature and sent date, 2 January 1633, written in the same hand as the rest of the text. This consistency indicates that it is likely the original manuscript. However, the content of the letter confirms that Forbes could not have been the scribe: having lost his eyesight, he must have dictated the text to another writer. Whatever their circumstances of composition, such letters would have been carefully crafted, as each man was in desperate circumstances and depended upon the effectiveness of these written appeals to secure Stewart's intervention.

plea, ‘for gods cause to len me ane boll of meall’. Forbes also used a relform that cast his suffering as divinely ordained, stating ‘the Lord hes takin the sight off myn eyes’ (ex. 55).

Both underlined their lowliness, though with different emphases. Allisone styled himself her ‘pŭr servitor’, stressing that his ‘pwre childring’ had nothing to ‘leive on’. He reinforced this with self-effacement, repeating the adverb *humbly* twice, and the verb *beseech*, as in ‘I beseik yowr guid yowr Ladyship’. Forbes likewise asked Stewart to have ‘commiseratioun of the distressed’ and ‘meserable estait’ to which he was ‘redactit’ [commiseration of the distressed and miserable state to which he was reduced], stressing that he had ‘nothing quherupon to live’ [nothing to live upon], and declaring emphatically ‘I have no other releff bott to becum a begger’ [I have no other relief but to become a beggar]. Like Allisone, he drew on humility markers, using the adjective *humble* four times and the verb *entreat* once. He further emphasised his helplessness in the statement ‘I have gottin nothing, except that quhilk I have gottin off my brethrein out of thair naturall affectioun’ [I have gotten nothing, except that which I have gotten off my brethren out of their natural affection], which may have carried an indirect appeal to Christian charity by encouraging Stewart to emulate the generosity of his kin.

Allisone’s letter continued to minimise his agency, attributing his inability to pay to external circumstances, ‘throw the extreordener evell yeir of the frost I ame unablle to pay’ [through the extraordinary evil year of frost I am unable to pay]. He also shifted responsibility for repayment onto divine providence, using GOD’S WILL relforms such as ‘be the grace of god I sall pay In tyme coming’ and ‘with the gift of god this ȝeir I sall payit’ (ex. 56).

By contrast, Forbes balanced deferential language with elements from the ‘supposal and assurance’ script, reflecting his stronger position as a creditor. Example (63) shows that he reminded Stewart that he had previously raised his grievance, asserted her awareness of her husband’s default, and invoked her chamberlain as evidence:

> (63) I have hard (espetially off your Ladyships chalmerlen) thomas esplen that your Ladyship is myndfull yeroff; as is weill yneugh knawin and I doubt not bott your Ladyship heireth yeroff; and this mater (whairwith your Ladyship is weill yneugh aquanted befoir this)
>
> [I have heard (especially from your Ladyship’s chamberlain) Thomas Esplen, that your Ladyship is mindful thereof; as is well enough known and I doubt not but your Ladyship hears thereof; and this matter (wherewith your Ladyship is well enough acquainted before this] (NRS GD124/15/95, 2 January 1633)

He also reasserted his legal entitlement with technical terminology: 'I wes lautfully vested & ceased in such ane pert off those landis' [I was lawfully vested and seised [put in legal possession] in such a part of those lands').[128]

One of Forbes' relforms departs from submissive language by introducing a veiled threat: 'I will be forced in the spring ensewing to cum south & remain as a begger at your Ladyships gate & to complean to god & exclame to all men off the wrong that I receave' (ex. 55). The passive opening 'I will be forced' signals helplessness, but the subsequent escalation shows his willingness to create a public spectacle, exhorting directly to God while also threatening to denounce the injustice before others. Section 3.1 noted the Countess' household account book records her giving alms repeatedly to those gathered outside noble residences, so such a threat was not implausible. By warning that he might move beyond written petition to in-person vocal complaint, Forbes implied a display that could embarrass Stewart and damage her household's reputation. He also urged a prompt reply, directing her to 'anser with the bearer yat vpon the receaving yeroff' [answer with the bearer upon receipt].

Despite this assertive stance, Forbes reaffirmed his deference at the close via a PRAYER PROMISE for the Countess, styling himself as '3our Ladyships humble servand & daly oratir' (ex. 55) in the subscription. Allisone also pledged a PRAYER PROMISE for the entire Mar household: 'that my selff, my wyff, and pwre childring sall daylie pray for health, wealth and prosperitie for my Lord, 3owr Ladyship and all 3owr howall proginie' (ex. 56).

The remaining six petitionary letters in StErCor2 describe exchanges between higher-ranking correspondents. Their main difference from Forbes and Allisone's letters is the overall sparing use of relforms, with the exception of Thomas Erskine (Kellie). For example, Alexander Erskine's letter to his mother, seeking help for his brother James Erskine (Buchan), contain only one INFORMATIVE relform, placed after his appeal: 'I […] shalbee glade that the scots may not deserue the reputation of religiouse foule's' (59). His remark may refer to the tense climate in the months after the implementation of the National Covenant in February 1638 as Scottish resistance to Charles I's policies continued to build (Stewart 2013, 98). Similarly, in his letter on the same subject to his brother-in-law John Leslie, the two relforms he included were not tied to his appeal on behalf of James. Instead, he sought to dispel suspicion of political conspiracy, as this longer extract, which precedes the text given in Example (60) demonstrates:

[128] Vested & ceased: 'In the phrase vest(it) and sesit' (*DSL* 4.0 'Ses v.1' sense 1c.(1)).

(64) I must now make appollogie for my so long silence becaus of my long seikenese and being abroad, and for that the maligintie of the time is such, and my simplisitie so great, that my vordes may bee misinterpreted, and priuat frendshipe reputed publik factione, wich I know yowr Lordship doeth shune, and I hope god vill auerte, to his glorye the content of his Maiestie andthe good and peace of his fatheful subiects, wich I shall euer pray for

[I must now make an apology for my long silence, because of my lengthy sickness and being abroad. And since the malice of the times is such, and my simplicity so great, my words may be misinterpreted, and private friendship taken for public faction, which I know your Lordship shuns [avoids], and which I hope God will avert, to His glory, the contentment of His Majesty, and the good and peace of his faithful subjects, which I shall ever pray for.] (NLS MS 5155 fols. 16-17, 24 July 1638)

By employing a PETITION TO GOD, 'I hope god vill auerte, to his glorye', he called upon a higher power to prevent suspicion of scheming, then compounded this by affirming loyalty to the king (Charles I) and promising continual prayer for peace. Although not located at the end of the letter, this PRAYER PROMISE comes close. It is followed only by the subscription, 'so my humble seruice being presented to my sister, and my wyfes to yow both I rest' [so my humble service being presented to my sister, and my wife's to you both, I rest]. As noted in Section 5.3, there is a distinct pattern of StEr CoP members including a relform at or near the close of letters. Indeed, the two petitions sent by women (both containing only one relform) follow this pattern: Stewart ended her letter to William Douglas with a BLESSING, 'as knaws god quha mot preserve ȝour Lordship eŭir' (ex. (61), and Henrietta Stuart concluded with a PRAYER PROMISE, (in PDE): *I pray God to give you Sir, with perfect health, a happy and long life* (ex. 62).

As Section 3.1 noted, Henrietta combined humility with assurance in her requestive strategies in this letter (ex. 22) and Stewart did the same in her letter to Robert Ker. Yet in addressing Douglas, Stewart adopted a more assertive stance. Section 3.1 analysed her requestive strategies in greater detail but here it is enough here to note the connection between both her and her sister's sparing use of relforms (only one in each letter, conventionally situated at the end) and their more confident approaches as compared with Forbes and Allisone.

By contrast, the last petitioner, Thomas Erskine, also relied on humbler strategies in his letters to James Erskine, in which he sought more time to pay a debt. In both, he shifted responsibility for fulfilment onto God, using the same GOD'S WILL formula four times in Examples (57(58): 'be the gra[i]ce of god'. He also cast the death of James VI/I as part of God's plan: 'it hes pleised god to take my owld & gratious maister' (ex. 57). His letters are otherwise rich in deferential language: he used the verbs *entreat* three times and *beseech* once and declared

himself to be at fault: ‘It is my falt & not his I offind your lordshipe’ [It is my fault and not his [that] I [have] offended your Lordship] and ‘I am asseamed’ [I am ashamed] (NLS MS 5070 fols. 6–7, 24 April 1625; fols. 8–9, 1 May 1627). He also elevated James whilst promising future service, stating, ‘I salbe aibll […] to dispose of my selfe in a more free & contented fashone then evir I have done to this honorabill in all my haille lyfetyme’ [I shall be able […] to dispose of myself in a more free and contented fashion than I have ever done in my whole lifetime to this honourable [one]’.

Taken together, these petitions reveal how correspondents across the social spectrum adapted relforms to negotiate status, obligation, and vulnerability. These examples have shown that senders used different amounts of relforms in their letters, and that there was a correlation between this and the type of requestive language they employed: fewer relforms equalled a more assertive approach aligned with the ‘supposal and assurance’ script, while a greater use of relforms signalled a humbler style. The fact that two of StErCor2’s petitions (one from Marie Stewart to Robert Ker (Section 3.1) and one from Alexander to his mother, Stewart [NLS MS 5155 fol. 18, 16 August 1638]) contain no relforms at all suggests that correspondents did not necessarily regard them as a required feature of petitions.

Correspondents employed relforms in anticipation of their having a specific effect on the reader in certain situations (Dossena 2013, 47). In ending their letters with a BLESSING, senders reinforced social solidarity and framed their requests within a spiritual bond, placing themselves and the recipient under God’s care. Henrietta’s PETITION TO GOD fulfilled a similar purpose, committing the recipient into God’s protection. Thomas Erskine’s main strategy was to stress that matters lay entirely in GOD’S WILL, thereby perhaps providing a defence should he fail to follow through on promises made. For Forbes and Allisone, relforms also served as reminders of the Presbyterian belief that all men and women were equal under God, permitting those of reduced social standing to petition their superiors.

This evidence demonstrates that ordinary folk could successfully correspond with a woman whose societal position far exceeded their own. According to Day’s (1568) instructions for petitions from a lower- to a higher-status correspondent, Allisone’s approach was ideal in its humility. Forbes, however, took a riskier, bilateral stance, combining self-assurance with self-effacement: while confident he had been wronged, he nevertheless invoked God as the ultimate authority over both parties. It is unclear whether Allisone’s repayment was postponed or if Forbes recovered his money, but perhaps the most convincing proof of their success lies in the letters’ survival. The Countess’ decision to preserve them confirms their acceptance as legitimate documents exhibiting the hallmarks of epistolary literacy.

5.5 Religious Formulaic Language across Confessional Boundaries

Sections 5.3 demonstrated that the letters could serve as a space in which correspondents expressed their faith values and reinforced community and familial ties (Dossena 2013, 47). This section considers how senders sought to mitigate potential difficulties when corresponding with individuals of different confessional faith or political allegiances, so that the CoP might be upheld and communication sustained.

StErCor2 includes ten extant exchanges between CoP members whom this thesis identifies as certainly or very likely to have held differing confessional allegiances. These include one letter from Henrietta Stuart to Anna Livingstone (NRS GD3/5/29, undated), and six addressed to Marie Stewart, five from members of her family: Catherine de Balsac (NRS GD124/15/42/9, c.1620), Gabrielle Stuart (NLS MS 5070 fol. 3, 28 January 1617), Esmé Stuart (NLS MS 5070 fol. 2, 16 May 1605), [L] de Balsac (NRS GD124/15/42/7, 3 March, c.1620), and Diane de Clére (NLS MS 5087 fol. 87, undated); and one from her friend, Margaret Fielding (NLS MS 5070 fols. 30–31, 17 January 1636). Finally, there are three letters sent to William Douglas: one by James Stuart (Richmond-Lennox) (NLS MS 80 fol. 20, 1 March 1631) and two by Katherine Clifton (NLS MS 80 fol. 21, undated, [poss. 1 January 1630); fol. 22, 29 October 1630).

The latter trio, which illustrate correspondence addressed to a Scottish Presbyterian (William Douglas) by an Episcopalian who attended the Protestant church of England (James Stuart), and an individual who openly followed Catholicism (Katherine Clifton), contain no explicit religious language. This absence is not unexpected, given that, sixty-nine StEr letters contain no relforms. Yet it is also possible that the omission reflects sensitivity to confessional difference. Although Clifton's two letters predate the Bishops' Wars, when religious tensions were less acute, Catholicism remained prohibited in both England and Scotland.

The letters sent to Marie Stewart by individuals within her family also illustrate exchanges between a devout Presbyterian and five of the CoP members linked with Catholicism. For Diane de Clére, Esmé Stuart (Lennox younger), and [L] de Balsac, their letters contain no relforms. Gabrielle Stuart and Catherine de Balsac each included only minimal examples, two and one respectively. Catherine's sole formula is the PETITION TO GOD: 'je pryeray notre bon Dyeu me'n fier la grasse' [I will pray the good God to grant me his grace] (NRS GD124/15/42/9, c.1620) situated near the close of her letter. As Section 5.3 noted, such positioning is common in the corpus: of the fifty-three relforms which are positioned immediately before the subscription, thirty-eight convey a BLESSING, while most others constitute PRAYER PROMISES (6) or PETITIONS TO GOD (4), often for

another's health or wellbeing.[129] In contrast, Catherine here emphasises her own relationship with God rather than invoking his blessing for her daughter or others.

Gabrielle also included no BLESSINGS but twice made a REFERENCE TO DIVINE WISDOM OR POWER as shown in Examples (65–66):

> (65) De pouuoir esperer de nous voir, cest ung bon heur que ie nose me promettre craignent D'en estre priuee Mais il fault esperer en notre bon Dieu quil nous donne quelque fois de Grandissimes Ioies lors que moings nous les esperons
>
> [To be able to hope to see each other is a happiness that I dare not promise myself for fear of being deprived of it. But we must hope in our good God, who sometimes gives us the greatest joys when we least expect them] (NLS MS 5070 fol. 3, 28 January 1617)

> (66) ie vousdres quil ce peust que vous me dommassies une de mes niepees et que ie peusse aprendre a touttes les aultres les ouurages Dieu ne veult pas me donner tant de ioies.
>
> [I wish you could send me one of my nieces and that I could teach her and all the others these needlework crafts. But God does not wish to give me so much joy] (NLS MS 5070 fol. 3, 28 January 1617)

Here Gabrielle stressed humility, presenting herself as a servant of God reluctant to appear overly desirous of his gifts. In her letter to Anna Livingstone, Henrietta Stuart also employed relforms sparingly, using only a single GOD'S WILL relform as she counselled patience in the face of a recent bereavement: 'iauois entandu de la mort de ma petite fille vostre niepce ce quil fault prandre en passianse puis que cest la vollonte de dieu' [I had heard of the death of the little girl, your niece which we must take with patience since it is the will of God] (NRS GD3/5/29, undated). Henrietta's Catholicism was an open secret, and in this instance, she was writing to a committed Presbyterian woman.

It is difficult to determine whether the sparing use of relforms in these familial exchanges carries specific significance. However, it may be notable that the letters omitted any BLESSINGS, or expressions OF PRAISE OR THANKS TO GOD for the correspondents' health: two of the forms most regularly employed by other StEr CoP members (Figure 5-1). Despite these omissions, Chapter 7

[129] According to each category of relform, the count of StEr senders who positioned a relform immediately before a subscription in one or more of their letters is as follows: fourteen senders used thirty-eight BLESSINGS; six senders used six PRAYER PROMISES; four senders used four PETITIONS TO GOD; two senders used two GOD'S WILL; one sender used one INVOCATION; one sender used one PRAISE OR THANKS TO GOD; and finally, one sender used one REFERENCE TO DIVINE WISDOM OR POWER.

will consider whether the senders may have chosen to express their shared faith not through language, but through visual symbols.

The final example of correspondence across confessional boundaries is Margaret Fielding's letter to Marie Stewart, which contains twenty relforms, the highest number per letter in StErCor2. Evidently, longer letters may tend to contain more formulaic language. Table 5-8 accounts for this by comparing letters with the highest relative counts, showing the ratio of relform tokens to total letter tokens. Although approximate, these ratios are broadly comparable, as most of the relforms consist of ten to fifteen tokens.

Table 5-8: StEr letters with high relform counts

Sender	Letter	Ratio of relform tokens to total tokens
Margaret Feilding	NLS MS 5070 fols. 30–31	1:3.5
David Murray	NLS MS 5070 fol. 1	1:3.5
Marie Stewart	NLS MS 5070 fols. 49-50	1:4
Marie Stewart	NLS MS 5088 fols. 76–77	1:5
Henry Erskine	NRS GD124/15/34/2	1:6
Henry Erskine	NRS GD124/15/34/8	1:7

Table 5-8 confirms that Feilding's letter, alongside Murray's, has the highest proportion of relforms in StErCor2. As the daughter of an English courtly couple who resided in Warwickshire, William Feilding, Viscount Feilding (later Earl of Denbigh), and Susan Villiers (Scally 2004), it is notable that Feilding's letter was written in EModS. The spelling is characterised by a range of Scots forms, including <quh>, as in 'qwhat' [what] and 'quhom' [whom]; <aw>, as in 'sawll' [soul]; <sch>, as in 'schaim' [shame]; preterite endings <it/et>, as in 'loweit' [loved], 'wantit' [wanted], 'tellit' [told], and 'chayngett' [changed]; the present-tense form 'sall' [shall]; <-is> plural endings, as in 'papistis' [papists] and 'wayis' [ways]; <ei> digraphs, as in 'feir' [fear] and 'deilling' [dealing]; and other Scots spellings such as 'beseiking' [beseeching], 'blise' [bless], 'heirefter' [hereafter], and 'ledyship' [Ladyship].

Feilding had been contracted to marry the Scottish nobleman James Hamilton, 1st duke of Hamilton (1606–1649), the eldest son of StEr CoP member James Hamilton, 2nd Marquess of Hamilton, and 4th Earl of Arran, at around nine years old (Scally 2004). Although the letter's authorship is unconfirmed, its italic script, highly deferential tone and personally sensitive content

suggest that Feilding likely wrote it herself to convey respect to Stewart. If self-penned, this raises questions as to whether she acquired fluency in Scots through early residence in Scotland, her husband's influence, or Scottish attendants. She may have deliberately selected to write in Scots to Marie Stewart due to the Countess' Scottish connections. Regardless, the letter shows the closeness of the women's relationship, as it reveals she had been experiencing a particularly challenging period marked by illness, suspicions of religious conversion, and the desertion of previously close friends. These troubles were compounded by the absence of letters from Stewart, which led Feilding to believe that she too had withdrawn her friendship.

She began by thanking Stewart for her rare and long-desired letter, describing the anxiety she had felt whilst waiting for it through an INVOCATION to God: 'god knois qwhat griwe it hes bine to me that I hawe hard so sildwme from yowr ledyship' [God knows what grief it has been to me that I have heard so seldom from your Ladyship]. She then emphasised her relief through a further series of relforms:

> (67) I doe perceawe the continowanc of yowr ledyships affectiowne to hir that I hop in the lord sall niwer giwe yowr ledyship caws to alter bot be the contrar sall indewor to the wtermost of my power to deserwe yowr ledyships lowe the lord incres grace daylie in my sawll and make me thankfwll to god for his mercifwll deilling with me manie wayis both in my sawll and bodie
>
> [I do perceive the continuance of your Ladyship's affection to her, that I hope in the Lord he shall never give your Ladyship cause to alter, but on the contrary, shall endeavour to the utmost of my power to deserve your Ladyship's love. The Lord increase grace daily in my soul and make me thankful to God for his merciful dealing with me many ways both in my soul and body] (NLS MS 5070 fols. 30–31, 17 January 1636).

Here, Feilding interwove God into the friendship itself, creating a three-way epistolary exchange as Rutten and van der Wal observed in Dutch letters (2012, 177). She sought to PETITION TO GOD to preserve their friendship and 'incres grace daylie in my sawll', a formula which echoes Catherine de Balsac's: 'I will pray the good God to trust me with his grace' (NRS GD124/15/42/9, c.1620). Additionally, Feilding offered PRAISE OR THANKS TO GOD for his 'merciful dealing […] in my soul and body'.

She also credited God for the care shown by 'good Mr Iohn mwray' [good Mr John Murray] during her recent illness: 'itt was the lords grit mercie to me that he wes heir att that tym' [it was the Lord's great mercy to me that he was here at that time] via another PRAISE OR THANKS TO GOD relform. And while acknowledging the unkindness of some in her social circle, she also thanked God that 'I had niwer wantit [for] trow frinds' [I had never wanted [for] true friends'), including her

'kynd wncle […] sir frederik' [kind uncle […] Sir Frederick'] who she noted had suffered social censure for supporting her.

Feilding then turned to her principal concern: rumours concerning her religion, reporting that 'the earl of ladirdaill tellit me that he was informed I had chayngett my religiowne qwhat cowld be wors nor this' [The Earl of Lauderdale told me that he was informed I had changed my religion; what could be worse than this]. She was reassured that Stewart had not believed such 'ewill reports' [evil reports], which Feilding complained were 'withowt any grownd bot meir malise' [without any ground but mere malice], declaring, 'I thank god ware both alyke trowe and all maid be papistis' [I thank God [that they] were both alike, believed and all made by, papists]. She further emphasised the intensity of her feelings with the statement, 'I had rethir niver a bine born befor athir of thaim had bine trow' [I had rather never have been born before either of them had been true]. Her use of the epithet 'papists' is clearly pejorative, suggesting that despite their differing confessional affiliations, both women aligned themselves through a shared anti-Catholic stance.

These remarks are distinctly assertive and complaintive, demonstrating Feilding's desire to emphatically repudiate what she characterised as malicious gossip. Yet they are immediately followed by a longer passage in which she shifted tone, employing several PRAISE/THANKS TO GOD formulae:

> (68) I will begine and think quhat the lord hes done for me as yowr ledyship sayis well in yowr leter swre the lord hes loweit me that hes done so mwch for me and quhom he loweis onis he lowes to the end his lowe is onchayngable and so I may say for I am niwer I thank god withowt the confort of swm frind altho I be in a strayng cwntrie for alwayis as the lord remoues a frind he giwes me anothir on lwked for the lord make me thankfull to him that is the awther of all my good sweit madame latt me heir ofter from you for yowr kynd and religiows leter is grit confort to me
>
> [I will begin to think what the Lord has done for me. As your Ladyship says well in your letter, surely the Lord has loved me [who] has done so much for me; and whom he loves once, he loves to the end, his love is unchangeable. And so I may say, for I am never, I thank God, without the comfort of some friend, although I am in a strange country. For always as the Lord removes a friend, he gives me another one unexpected. The Lord make me thankful to him who is the author of all. My good sweet Madam, let me hear often from you often, for your kind and religious letter is [a] great comfort to me] (NLS MS 5070 fols. 30–31, 17 January 1636).

Example (68) illustrates how Feilding moderated her complaints regarding the 'onkyndnes of my neirest frind's [the unkindness of my nearest friends] via relforms expressing gratitude: 'I will […] think quhat the lord hes done for me and swre the lord hes loweit me that hes done so mwch

for me'. She also noted that she had taken to heart Stewart's reminder of God's eternal, 'onchayngable love', conveyed in her 'kynd and religiows leter', the latter adjective suggesting that Stewart had used spiritual language in her letter to her friend. In her reply, Feilding sought to emphasise both that she had heeded Stewart's advice and that she was thankful to God for his blessings, while implicitly contrasting Stewart's continued loyalty with the failure of other friends to show similar constancy.

In her PRAISE OR THANKS TO GOD relform, 'as the lord remoues a frind he giwes me anothir on lwked for', Feilding effectively rephrased and recontextualised the biblical expression 'the Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken it' (Geneva, Job 1:21); 'the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away' (KJB-1611, Job 1:21). This practice aligns with Dossena's (2013, 50) observation that correspondents amalgamated sermon-like language with religious formulaic language in their letters in order to strengthen mutual positive face and foster a sense of inclusivity. Here, Feilding placed a positive and consolatory interpretation upon God's removal of friends from her.

Other categories of relform used by Feilding demonstrate that, like Gabrielle Stuart, she accepted that her desires were subject to God's will. For example, she qualified her hope that Stewart would 'ewer estime of me as on of yowr trowest serwands and meinest cwssings' [ever esteem of me as one of your truest servants and humblest cousins], with the PETITION TO GOD 'god make me riche in grace' [God make me rich in grace]. She also foregrounded her belief in and submission to God's power through a REFERENCE TO DIVINE WISDOM OR AUTHORITY, affirming 'I will not neid to feir the want of any thing the lord sies good for me' [I will not need to fear the want of anything the Lord sees good for me]. Finally, she marked the letter's close with a BLESSING: 'beseiking the lord to blise yowr ledyship and all yowrs with the best blisinges with prayers and professions of humble service both heir and heirefter' [beseeching the Lord to bless your Ladyship and all yours with the best blessings both here and hereafter] reiterating her desire to be of service both on earth and in the hereafter.

Section 5.5 has shown that most of the nine exchanges between correspondents of different faiths contained little to no religious language. The exception within this set was Margaret Feilding, who employed twenty relforms in her letter to Marie Stewart. Given her remarks discussed above, it seems likely that the two women had developed a correspondence style in which both the language and the content could be characterised as distinctly religious.

Moreover, whilst lamenting the recent difficulties she had experienced, Feilding consistently tempered her expressions of distress with PRAISE OR THANKS TO GOD for what she still possessed and

with PETITIONS TO GOD that he would never forsake her and would ensure the continuation of their friendship. In this way, Feilding employed relforms to mitigate potential awkwardness, both in addressing the sensitive issue of the rumours circulating about her and in acknowledging her fear that Stewart might also have withdrawn her affection. Moreover, by including a BLESSING in the lead-up to the letter's final section, she adhered to a conventional early modern epistolary practice exhibited by other CoP members.

By contrast, correspondents who used few relforms did not follow Feilding's example in including such a commendation. It is difficult to determine whether any particular significance lies behind this absence, or indeed the general scarcity of relforms in their correspondence. However, Chapter 7 will consider whether correspondents, such as Gabrielle, Esmé, and Diane de Clére, who used few or no relforms may instead have chosen to incorporate a different element to convey religious meaning: namely, the use of symbols.

5.6 Comparing Alexander Henderson and David Murray's Religious Formulaic Language

Section 5.1's discussion of relforms and the resulting schema of criteria (Section 5.1.1) emphasised the importance of provenance in identifying such sequences. This section examines the relforms employed in three FAMILIAR letters sent by Scottish correspondents whose roles arguably engaged with religious discourse more intensively than those of any other members of the CoP: the poet David Murray (Gorthy) and the minister Alexander Henderson.

As a religious leader, the rationale for including Henderson is immediately evident. Throughout his education and career, he would have developed extensive knowledge of both scripture and other religious texts. He delivered religious sermons and speeches (including to parliament) and corresponded and published on theological matters (Henderson 1937, 12; 79). Murray's inclusion is likewise justified: coming of age in the 1580s, during a post-Reformation period in which the Kirk discouraged all poetry that was not devotional, he was deeply literate in religious rhetoric and poetical imagery. In 1615 he reworked Psalm 104 to produce his poem entitled *A paraphrase of the CIV. Psalme*, which he prefaced with a dedicatory verse to James VI (Murray 1615).[130]

[130] Psalm 104 begins 'Blesse the Lord, O my soule, O Lord my God, thou art very great' (KJB-1611, Psalms 104); 'My soul, praise thou the Lord: O Lord my God, thou art exceeding great' (Geneva, Psalms 104).

Within StErCor2, Murray has a single letter to Marie Stewart, while Henderson has two sent to the countess. Murray's relforms are presented in Examples (69–73), and Henderson's in Examples (74–81):

David Murray of Gorthy to Marie Stewart, countess of Mar, NLS MS 5070 fol. 1, 20 October 1604

(69) I prayse the Lord for yowr health in delyuering yow of yowr burthen

[I praise the Lord for your health in delivering you of your burden.] (PRAISE OR THANKS TO GOD)

(70) blissit be the Lord quha hes not forget to luik vpon yow in yowr danger and trubill and of his fre mercy and gudnes hes delyverit yow

[blessed by the Lord who has not forgotten to look upon you in your danger and trouble, and [in] his free mercy and goodness.] (PRAISE OR THANKS TO GOD)

(71) thairfoir sing with Mary that blissit song of thankisgeving My soule doeth magnifie the lord my spreit reioyseth in god my sauuiowr.

[Therefore sing with Mary that blessed song of thanksgiving: My soul magnifies the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour] (EXHORTATION)

(72) I sall both prayse and pray the Lord continuallie for his mercy towardis yow and for yowr continewance in his feare vnto the end

[I shall both praise and pray the Lord continually for his mercy toward you, and for your continuance in his fear unto the end] (PRAYER PROMISE)

(73) the peace of the blissit sprit be with yow for euir

[The peace of the blessed Spirit be with you forever] (BLESSING)

Alexander Henderson to Marie Stewart, countess of Mar NLS MS 5155 fols. 5–6, 26 June 1631

(74) yet it was neirest the will of God and most for the well of the kirk that I shoŭld not remoove wherin I behooved

[Yet it was nearest the will of God and most for the good of the kirk that I should not remove, wherein I was obliged] (GOD'S WILL)

(75) while I live remember with humble gratitŭd and with my prayers to God the respect and favor I have experienced.

[While I live, remember with humble gratitude and with my prayers to God the respect and favor I have experienced] (PRAISE OR THANKS TO GOD)

(76) The most high God blesse yow and yoŭris and give wnto yow your heartis desyre

[The most high God bless you and yours and give unto you your heart's desire] (BLESSING)

(77) To the truelie noble and most Christian Lady My Lady the countesse of Mar

[To the truly noble and most Christian lady, my Lady, the Countess of Mar] (INFORMATIVE)

Alexander Henderson to Marie Stewart, countess of Mar, MS 5070 fol. 10, 16 June 1632

(78) to intreat yoŭr Ladyship to acqŭiese concerning this particŭlar in Godis good providence

[To entreat your Ladyship to acquiesce concerning this particular in God's good providence] (EXHORTATION)

(79) what is most behouvefull for the good of the whole, which shoŭld be preferred to the benefit of any particŭlar congregatioŭn

[What is most needful for the good of the whole, which should be preferred to the benefit of any particular congregation] (INFORMATIVE)

(80) God knowes how willinglie I wold rŭnne to please my Lord and yoŭr Ladyship in eŭerie thing wherin God is not displeased

[God knows how willingly I would run to please my Lord and your Ladyship in everything wherein God is not displeased] (INVOCATION)

(81) I recommend my lord, yoŭr Ladyship and this whole pŭrpose to the Lordis Grace and shall euir continŭe

[I recommend my Lord, your Ladyship, and this whole purpose to the Lord's grace and shall ever continue] (BLESSING)

The tone of Murray's letter is one of considerable intimacy and closeness. His purpose was to congratulate Stewart on the safe delivery of her child after she had been 'seik and euill at ease' [sick and ill at ease] during a difficult pregnancy. His concern is evident in the admission, 'my hairt was mightelie trublit' [my heart was mightily troubled], as he felt her situation had been worsened by a long journey riding from the north. The closeness of their friendship is further suggested in his gentle reproach: 'I am sorie that ȝe suld forget yowr frendis for I heare very seldome fra yowr ladyship' [I am sorry that you should forget your friends for I hear very seldom from your Ladyship] (NLS MS 5070 fol. 1, 20 October 1604).

By contrast, Henderson's letters to the Countess were relatively plainspoken and indicate a relationship characterised by cordial respect rather than intimacy. In his letter of 1631, he explained why he had not transferred to another kirk despite attempts made by Stewart and her husband to encourage him to do so. Although this is a FAMILIAR letter, Henderson conveyed a business-like tone from the outset via the formal lexis in his statement: 'the caŭses of my resolŭtioŭn and the impedimentis of my transportatioŭn ar made knowne vnto yoŭr Ladyship by them who can dilate them more impartiallie' [the causes of my resolution and the impediments of my transportation are made known to your Ladyship by those who can relate them more impartially] (NLS MS 5155 fols. 5–6, 26 June 1631). Almost one year later, in 1632, he reiterated his refusal, declaring 'your Ladyship will find others more meit for that charge then I can be' [your Ladyship will find others more suitable for that office than I can be] (NLS MS 5070 fol. 10, 16 June 1632).[131]

Some aspects of Murray and Henderson's relforms overlap while others diverge. With respect to provenance, several have clear parallels in religious texts. Murray's PRAISE OR THANKS TO GOD formula, 'Blissit be the Lord' (Ex. 70) mirrors the anglicised form, 'Blessed be the Lord', which occurs over thirty times in both Geneva and KJB-1611.[132] The figure of speech, 'his fre mercy and gudnes' (Ex. 70) echoes Psalm 23:6: 'Surely goodnes and mercie shall followe me all the daies of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for euer' (KJB-1611). In the Psalm, the two personified virtues of 'goodnes and mercie' combine to form a hendiadys that presents them as a single, active force. Here, however, Murray positioned God as the active agent, as did Stewart when she credited God with her family's good fortune (Section 5.3). Moreover, by using the adjective 'fre', Murray distanced his expression from Catholic notions of self-directed devotion or meritorious works, instead articulating it within a distinctly Calvinist theological framework: one in which God freely and unconditionally bestowed His mercy upon the Countess (Reid-Baxter 2025, 2).

Murray's 'prayse the Lord [for his mercy]' (exs. 69, 72) also recalls scripture: 'Praise the Lord, for he is good, for he is good, for his mercy endureth forever' (Geneva, Chronicles 16:34), and the public prayer in the BCOrder, 'praise thy holy name' (103). His phrase 'continewance in his feare unto the end' (ex. 72) combines elements of two biblical verses: Geneva, Psalm 143:1, 'that he

[131] Meit: Of a person or persons: Suitable or acceptable for some position, function, occupation, or the like; competent, capable, well-qualified; apt, fit. (*DSL* 4.0 'Mete adj.1'). Charge: The office of pastor to a congregation. (*DSL* 4.0 'Charge n.').

[132] For example, in Geneva and KJB-1611, Luke 1:68; Psalm 28:6; Psalm 31:21; Psalm 68:19, Psalm 72:18; and Psalm 124:6.

may spend the remnant of his life in the true fear and service of God', and Geneva, Psalm 119:33, 'Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes, and I will keep it unto the end'. The latter prepositional phrase appears almost verbatim in Margaret Feilding's letter to Stewart, in the relform 'quhom he loweis onis he lowes to the end his lowe is onchayngable' (ex. 68). However, whereas Feilding employed this formula to express God's immutable love, Murray sought to refer to the believer's duty of reverence and piety. In doing so he attributed Stewart's recovery not solely to divine mercy, but also to the steadfastness of her faith.

One of the most distinctive references to scripture in the StEr corpus is found in Murray's paraphrasing (ex. 71) of the 'Magnificat', Mary's hymn of praise which appears in Geneva: 'Then Mary said, My soul magnifieth the Lord, And my spirit rejoiceth in God my Saviour' (Luke 1:46–47). Nisbet rendered this in Scots as 'My saule magnifies the Lord, And my spirit has glaidit in God my heil' [my health] (Nisbet I, 190), and the formula also appeared in the BCOrder hymn, 'The Song of Blessed Marie, called Magnificat' (212).

Rather than invoking a psalm of thanksgiving to Christ's mother for the safe delivery of Stewart's 'burthen' as might have been expected, Murray metaphorically encouraged her to 'sing with Mary' (ex. 71) a prose version of the 'Magnificat' (Reid-Baxter 2025, 1–2). Although such a reference may appear seem surprising given Stewart's former Catholicism, Reid-Baxter contends that Murray's Presbyterian convictions are once again made evident, as he encouraged Stewart, an ordinary human mother, to identify with Mary rather than to venerate her (2025, 1–2). Murray's use of the preposition 'with' in the phrase 'sing with Mary', rather than 'to Mary', reinforces this distinction, distancing the expression from Catholic devotional practice (Reid-Baxter 2025, 1). Through this relform, Murray thus reaffirmed the purity of their co-religious friendship and their shared adherence to the Presbyterian faith.

Henderson also deployed relforms to underscore the confessional beliefs he shared with the Countess, though his approach and purpose differed from Murray's. He invoked GOD'S WILL to emphasise that his refusal to relocate parish was 'neirest the will of God' (exs. 74) rather than a personal decision. Additionally, while deferentially acknowledging the Countess' 'respect and favor' in his 'prayers to God' (ex. 75), he made clear that both he and Stewart were bound to 'acquiesce […] in God's good providence' (ex. 78), ensuring that neither acted in a way that might displease God. His also noted that his decision was 'for the well of the kirk' (ex. 74) which prioritised the 'good of the whole' rather than for the 'benefit of any particŭlar congregatioŭn' (ex. 79). Here, Henderson alluded to the biblical metaphor of the Kirk as a single body composed of many interdependent parts, thereby reminding the Countess of a central Presbyterian concept:

that individual actions should advance the collective good rather than personal ambition (Stewart 2016, 340).

Henderson's allusion parallels Dossena's observations on nineteenth-century CoPs, in which letters personified the Kirk as embodying the group's shared beliefs (2013, 56). By identifying Marie Stewart in the superscription as a 'Christian lady' (ex. 80) he also foregrounded her faith, presenting her as a devout believer who was part of a collective, whose duty was to adhere to God's will.[133] This tactic mirrors that employed by Calwell in *The Countesse of Marres Arcadia*, where he addressed his readers as 'Christian' in the introductory 'Advertisement to the Christian Reader' (Caldwell 1625).

Both Murray and Henderson concluded their letters with BLESSINGS. Murray's 'the peace […] be with yow' (ex. 73) recalls the scriptural formulae 'Grace be vnto you, and peace from God our Father' (KJB-1611, Colossians 1:1). However, his phrase 'blissit sprit' (ex. 73) proves more challenging to identify in scripture, where 'holy spirit' is the more common term, appearing over fifty times in BCOrder and nine times in Geneva.

Henderson's epithet 'The most high God' (ex. 76), from the concluding BLESSING of his 1631 letter, likewise appears frequently in both scripture and poetry. It occurs twelve times in Geneva and KJB-1611 (e.g., Genesis 14:20; Hebrews 7:1, Psalm 9:2), and in the public prayers of BCOrder (116). It also appears in Hume's *Hymnes* (1599), in the Scots form 'God maist high' (25; 31). The idiom 'hertis desyr' (ex. 69) also appears across both genres: in the hymn 'The Song of Simeon' (anglicised as 'my heart's desire', BCOrder, 208) and in Caldwell (1625, 17): 'take thy Majestie to witnesse, Lord, it is my hearts desire, that the flesh, and powers of corruption be weakened, that the Spirit, and renewed part of my soule bee strengthened'. Henderson's BLESSING (ex. 76) thus broadly reflects Psalm 37:4: 'Delight thy selfe also in the Lord; and he shall giue thee the desires of thine heart' (KJB-1611; cf. Geneva, 'he shall give thee thine heart's desire').

Finally, the possessive noun phrase 'Lordis Grace' (ex. 81), found in the BLESSING that concludes Henderson's 1632 letter, corresponds to the biblical 'the grace of the Lord' (KJB-1611, Acts 15:11; Corinthians 13:14), in which the prepositional phrase serves to foreground the headword 'grace'. While 'Lord' does not appear in the equivalent Geneva phrasing, 'God's grace' is attested there (Colossians 1:1; Psalm 24:1, Hebrews 2:9) and in Caldwell (1625, 128; 371). Although Henderson's BLESSING (ex. 81) does not appear verbatim in scripture, it echoes Acts 20:32

[133] The notion of the collective good also led to individual Covenant subscribers feeling as though they became 'associated […] with an imagined national community' (Stewart 2013, 90).

'I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace' (Geneva; KJB-1611). Henderson's adaptation of biblical phrasing suggests a deliberate effort to align his closing benedictions with scriptural authority. In doing so, he reaffirmed both own ministerial role while expressing respect for the Countess and her family.

This section has demonstrated that the relforms used by David Murray and Alexander Henderson reflected distinct yet complementary expressions of Presbyterian faith. Murray's intimate and poetic language draws on biblical sources to convey gratitude and divine mercy within a Calvinist framework, while Henderson's more formal tone underscores obedience to God's will and the collective duty of the kirk. Both conclude with BLESSINGS, reaffirming their shared religious identity and moral alignment within the correspondence network.

5.7 Religious Formulaic Language: Discussion of Findings

The findings confirm that members of the StEr CoP shared a repertoire rich in religious formulaic language with religious formulaic language appear across both BUSINESS and FAMILIAR letters in the corpus. BLESSINGS accounted for the largest proportion of relforms in the corpus, followed by relatively even representation of GOD'S WILL, PRAISE OR THANKS TO GOD, REFERENCE TO DIVINE WISDOM OR POWER, PETITION TO GOD, INFORMATIVE, and INVOCATION types. Less frequent were PRAYER PROMISE, FIGURATIVE, and EXHORTATION relforms. These formulae often drew explicitly or implicitly on biblical or liturgical sources, embedding scriptural resonance within epistolary practice. This echoes patterns in nineteenth-century Scottish correspondence where some of the religious language resembled sermons (Dossena 2013, 50–57),

Consistent with wider early modern correspondence, variation occurred not only in the quality and placement of relforms but also in their pragmatic and interpersonal functions. BLESSINGS, often near the letter close, commended recipients to divine protection and frequently contained performative directives such as *recommends, pray, beseech, and leave* (also found by Rutten and van der Wal 2012, 181; 2013, 52; Dossena 2013, 50; Wiiliams 2013a; Pfeiffer and Shiegg 2020, 272). INVOCATIONS and PETITIONS TO GOD strengthened requestive strategies, while relforms expressing GOD'S WILL or functioning as vows allowed correspondents to assert sincerity, emphasise moral integrity, or counter suspicion: particularly important within a socioreligious climate where perceived irregularity of faith could result in ostracism or prosecution.

The analysis also shows that correspondents often transcended differences of status, gender, and even confessional affiliation through shared references to faith, creating 'common ground [...] regardless of [...] social barriers' (Dossena 2013, 57). Religious formulae reinforced CoP membership, reflecting moral and ethical beliefs and reinforcing participants' social roles (also found by Dossena 2013, 47; Pfeiffer and Schiegg 2020, 270). Within the StEr corpus, correspondents positioned themselves as conscientious Christians, mindful of their duty to God and to one another. They attributed both personal fortune and adversity to divine will, using relforms to express gratitude, humility, and faith. Section 5.3 illustrated how parents like Marie Stewart and Thomas Hope employed formulaic language pedagogically, guiding their children's conduct and moral understanding, while Stewart's use of figurative relforms also reveals her advanced education and literary awareness.

Section 5.4 showed that petitionary letters revealed a correlation between more deferential tones and a higher density of relforms, suggesting that increased reliance on religious language served to enhance humility and legitimacy. Petitioners frequently invoked divine will or mercy to frame requests, appealing to Christian charity as a moral rationale for a favourable response. By contrast, Section 5.5 demonstrated that letters exchanged across confessional boundaries contained fewer relforms, possibly reflecting cautious self-positioning or deliberate restraint. An exception was Margaret Feilding, whose letter demonstrated the highest frequency of such expressions, incorporating God as an active participant in friendship. Like David Murray and Marie Stewart, Feilding credited God with the blessings in her life and expressed gratitude for divine providence and spiritual counsel.

Finally, Section 5.6 demonstrated convergence and divergence in relform usage. David Murray's letters reflected poetic and theological alignment with Presbyterianism, situating himself and Stewart within a shared confessional friendship. By contrast, Henderson employed relforms more prescriptively, urging acceptance of divine will in a manner akin to Stewart and Hope's guidance to children. Collectively, these examples illustrate that religious formulaic language functioned not only as a marker of faith but also as a tool for persuasion, moral alignment, and communal identity within the StEr correspondence network.

Building on the discussion of religious formulaic language, the next chapter considers whether CoP members employed epistolary formulae to achieve similar interpersonal and social effects. It examines patterns across the corpus and compares them with contemporary usage to assess the extent of shared conventions. As with relforms, attention is given to how formulaic choices could signal alignment, solidarity, or equality between correspondents, or alternatively,

assert hierarchical authority. Unusual or distinctive examples are also highlighted and analysed to determine why correspondents departed from convention. By linking linguistic form with relational strategy, this chapter demonstrates how epistolary formulae functioned as a complementary resource alongside religious and symbolic practices in negotiating meaning, status, and affiliation within the StEr CoP.

Chapter 6 Epistolary Formulaic Language

This chapter addresses Research Question 2b: how did members of the StEr CoP use epistolary formulaic language to construct and negotiate relationships, exert mutual influence, and reflect sociolinguistic identities (specifically through address forms, subscriptions, and superscriptions)? It beings by outlining the criteria used to identify and define these three types of epistolary formulaic language (Section 6.1), before providing a quantitative overview of their distribution within StErCor2 (Section 6.2). It then examines variation in the use of epistolary formulaic language across a range of sociolinguistic factors, considering salutations (Section 6.3), highly formulaic examples (Section 6.4), kinship language (Section 6.5), affective and unusual examples (Section 6.6), and the expression of politeness through the use of significant space within formulae (Section 6.7). The chapter concludes with a discussion of the key findings (Section 6.8).

6.1 Identifying and Defining Epistolary Formulaic Language

This thesis has established that formulaic language may be understood as a set of words and other elements that are stored in memory rather than composed anew with each act of writing, and that epistolary formulae are often highly routinised not only in their linguistic form but also in their structural placement (Sections 2.4; 2.4.2). However, to date, it has described only their general positions in the layout of a letter: address forms in the opening, subscriptions in the closing, and superscriptions on the exterior (Daybell 2012, 12–13). Building on this foundation, the present section defines these three types of epistolary formulae, beginning with the address form.

6.1.1 The Address Form

In letter openings, there has long been overlap between the address form, the direct term of address to the recipient (e.g., *My Lord*), and the salutation, the prefabricated expression of greeting or commendation prescribed in the medieval *ars dictaminis* tradition [art of letter writing] as *captatio benevolentiae* [securing of goodwill] (Magnusson 1999, 78). Such salutations included formulae like ‘We greet you well/after hearty commendations’, or ‘I recommend me unto you’, following Latin-Chancery (Richardson 1984) and French-based (Davis 1965) models (Nevalainen 2001, 205; 208; 210).

Early modern letter-writing manuals typically regarded the address form as an essential component of the salutation, though they did not always distinguish the two explicitly. For instance, neither de la Moyne's (1566) French manual nor Fulwood's (1568) English version made a clear distinction between the address and salutation. Others, such as Day (1568) and Breton (1602), treated them as distinct categories, while acknowledging that some letters might omit the address form altogether (Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 1995, 562). Modern usage reflects a similar fluidity. Beal's (2008) defines salutation as:

> a greeting, usually of a somewhat formal kind….The term 'salutation' may be applied to the conventional modern greeting at the beginning of letters, 'Dear…' or 'My dear…', which became standardized by the eighteenth century. Earlier forms of salutation were more varied, although still incorporating very respectful addresses to the recipient ('Right Worshipful', 'My Lord', 'Sir', etc.). Some fairly standardized forms were adopted for a range of official communications, such as royal letters beginning 'Right trusty and wellbeloved, we greet you well' or Privy Council letters beginning 'After our very hearty commendations' and the like.' (2008, 'salutation')

Beal's examples illustrate that, historically, both address forms and other formulaic greetings could be subsumed under the broader heading of 'salutation.'

Given the potential for terminological and functional overlap in historical sources, this thesis distinguishes address forms from salutations and other opening formulae within the StEr correspondence. This distinction enables consistent tagging, retrieval, and analysis of each type in the corpus. Wray (2002, 19) recognises that 'the relationship between identification and definition [is] circular' for formulaic language. Therefore, instances of formulae must first be identified in order to arrive at an accurate definition.

Following this principle, each opening formula in the StEr corpus was examined before establishing a working definition: *address form* refers to a term of address directed to the recipient (including any accompanying symbols) that appears in the letter opening. *Salutation* refers to a prefabricated expression of greeting or commendation in the letter opening, distinct from but often accompanying the address form. Comparison with examples in Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (1995), Nevalainen (2001), Nevala (2003, 2004), Williams (2013a), and Wiggins (2017) allowed the following distinctions to be made in Examples 82–89 where the address form is underlined:

<u>Address form followed by salutation</u>:

(82) <u>Madam</u> my humble service presintted (NRS GD/124/15/95)

(83) <u>Madame</u> My maist hummble seruice Rememberit (NLS MS 5070 fols. 4–5)

(84) My lord. My veray hairthie commadations rememberit (NLS. MS 80 fol. 53)

Address form without any salutation:

(85) Charles, since your perting I hard newis (NLS MS 5070 fols. 73–74)

(86) Good Madame, it is not long agone since I receaued a letter from you (NLS MS 5087 fols. 103–104)

(87) Madame $. I haue yesterday resaued letters from my brother (NLS MS 5155 fol. 18)

(88) Richt honorable lord $ $ and most affectionit feather, I haue recevit thrie of ȝoŭr Lordships letters (NRS GD124/15/34/6)

(89) Rycht worshipfull Lack of subiect worthie of your worships merit hes been (NLS MS 5155 fols. 49–50)

Given their similarity, translations are not provided for each of these formulae. This approach is maintained throughout the remainder of Chapter 6, except where a term is especially obscure, to avoid unnecessary repetition.

The StEr categorisation both builds on and refines previous scholarly definitions of address form, including for example:

> ‘the form of address used in the salutation at the beginning of a letter’ (Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 1995, 541).

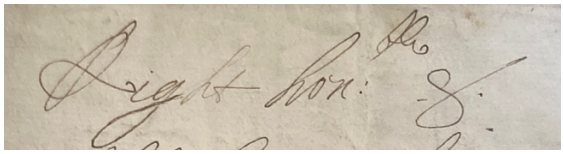
> ‘By address formulae I mean the salutational forms used at the beginning of a letter’ (Nevala 2003, 147)

> ‘those used to address the recipient directly either at the beginning or in the body of a letter…or on the back of a letter’ (Nevala 2004, 272)

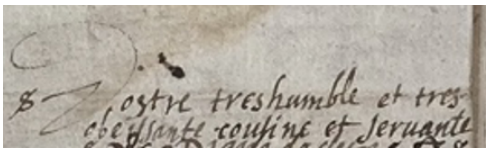
Further complicating matters, scholars have employed the term ‘salutation’ (Daybell 2012, 91), to encompass what this thesis treats as two separate elements: the address form and the salutation proper. Beal’s (2008) definition of ‘salutation’ likewise spans both categories. The approach adopted here instead draws on Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg’s (1995, 541) narrower conception, focusing specifically on address forms that occur within the letter opening, rather than those appearing in the body or in the external superscription (cf. Nevala 2004, 272), and explicitly excluding the salutation.

Treating address forms as a distinct analytic category enables systematic comparison across variables such as frequency, formality, and diachronic variation. In cases of joint authorship, where additional sender(s) contribute extra forms of address, these are likewise categorised as address forms.

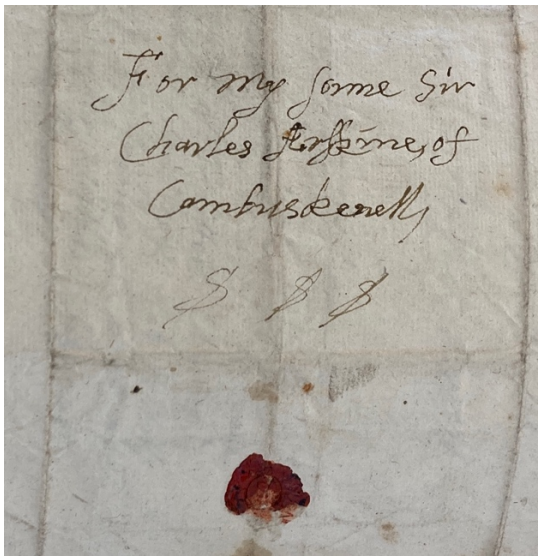
As demonstrated in Examples (87–88), some StEr address forms include not only alphabetic characters but also a distinct symbol, transcribed here using the dollar sign (*$*).[134] A survey of the StEr manuscripts indicates that approximately one quarter contain one or more such symbols, typically located in the opening and closing sections, or on the address leaves.[135] Although these characters vary in form, they most frequently they appear as an S-shape, as illustrated in the three examples shown in Figure 6-1.



Opening formula: Alexander Erskine to Marie Stewart, NLS MS 5155 fol. 16r, 24 July 1638



Closing formula: Diane de Clére to Marie Stewart, NLS MS 5087 fol. 87, undated



Superscription: Marie Stewart to Charles Erskine, NLS MS 5088 fol. 81v, 17 October 1643

Figure 6-1: Epistolary formulae incorporating symbols

[134] Another Unicode character which resembles the fermesse is Ꞩ: LATIN CAPITAL LETTER S WITH OBLIQUE STROKE (U+A7A9) (Unicode Consortium 2024). However, many widely used fonts including Arial, Calibri and Times New Roman do not display the Ꞩ symbol correctly. Therefore, this project selected the dollar sign to represent the fermesse as it is compatible with most fonts.

[135] My thanks to Professor Alison Wiggins, who initially drew my attention to these symbols and for explaining their significance.

Originating in France, the intriguing S-shaped sign illustrated in these examples is commonly referred to in modern scholarship as the *fermesse* (sometimes *closed-S*). It has been described as

> …an intersected or slashed capital letter *S*, somewhat like the italic dollar sign *$*. It is occasionally found, either singly or in a sequence *($ $ $ $*), in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century manuscripts, notably poetical texts, to indicate a pause or division in the text or a conclusion to it. It is also sometimes found written on the address leaves of early modern letters, especially by women, possibly as a mark of affection (Beal 2008, 's fermé').

An early twentieth-century survey of the symbol uncovered scores of examples, not only in manuscripts but also on bookbindings, armour, jewellery, ceramics, tokens, seals, sculptures, and textiles (Hobson 1935, 115).

Scholars of early modern correspondence also note the symbol, suggesting that it may have represented 'fidelity in love' (Wolfe 2013). Senders who embedded the fermesse within their epistolary formulae therefore appear to have been signalling affection and loyalty. Although the symbol is a distinctive feature of the StEr correspondence, the practice was not unique to this CoP. Chapter 7 examines the fermesse in greater depth, discussing its origins and analysing its use within the StEr CoP. For present purposes, this chapter focuses primarily on the linguistic components of openings, closings, and superscriptions, while noting that several of these formulae incorporate the fermesse.

6.1.2 The Subscription

As with address forms, the term subscription has been variously defined. Among scholars of early modern correspondence, it may refer either to the closing formula preceding the signature or to the closing formula including the signature. For example:

> 'Subscription formulae […] are used to close a letter' (Nevala 2003, 147)

> 'subscription, the writer's identification at the bottom of the letter.' (Nevalainen 2001, 213)

> 'at the end of texts such as letters, when the writer adds some (often formulaic) wording such as 'Yours sincerely' followed by a signature.' (Beal 2008, 'subscribe')

Early modern letter-writing manuals also provided guidance on closing formulae, advising they should include expressions of humility or affection, often accompanied by prayers or blessings (Day 1568, 25–27). Many such closings consist of two parts: an initial leave-taking phrase and a subsequent address form reflecting 'the image the writer has of him/herself in the relationship with the recipient' (Nevala 2003, 147). Examples (90–94) from the StEr corpus illustrate closings that follow this pattern:

(90) I doe then recomend it to your cair, as I shall euer remaine your most affectionatt humble seruent
[I do then recommend it to your care, as I shall ever remain your most affectionate humble servant] (NRS GD40/2/13/34)

(91) bot not haueing farther nouels for the present I rest your lordships most affectionet and obedient soone
[but not having further news for the present I rest your Lordship's most affectionate and obedient son] (NRS GD124/15/35/)

(92) ȝe shall nott haiŭe a freind mor villing than ȝoŭr loŭing Cŭsing and gossŭp
[you shall not have a friend more willing than your loving cousin and friend/ally] (NLS Adv.MS 33.1.1.v.no.119)

(93) I recommend my lord, yoŭr Ladyship and this whole pŭrpose to the Lordis Grace and shall euir continŭe yoŭr Ladyships trŭe seruant
[I recommend my Lord, your Ladyship and this whole purpose to the Lord's grace and shall ever continue your Ladyship's true servant] NLS MS 5070 fol. 10)

(94) the peace of the blissit sprit be with yow for euir yowr ladyships eternall humbill seruand
[the peace of the blessed spirit be with you for ever, your Ladyship's eternal humble servant] (NLS MS 5070 fol. 1)

Examples (90–92) consist either of a verb phrase (*I remain, I rest*) or a comparative construction (*more willing than*), followed by an address referring to the sender (underlined in the examples) (*your servant*, *your son*). By contrast, examples (93) and (94) consist of a commendation (*I recommend*) or a blessing (*peace be with you*), followed by an address referring to the sender (also underlined) (*your Ladyship's servant*).

Following Nevala (2003, 147) and Nevalainen (2001, 213), subscriptions are defined here as the forms of address referring to the sender that appear immediately before the signature. However, in the present study, the term also encompasses any symbols occurring in the immediate vicinity of those address forms. The StEr subscriptions were compared with those analysed in Nevala (2003, 147–48; 2004), then tagged using TEI encoding.

6.1.3 The Superscription

The *superscription*, typically identifying the intended recipient, appeared on the exterior of the folded letter, though in drafts or copies it could occur elsewhere. In the StEr corpus, for both single-sheet and bifolium manuscripts, superscriptions appear on the folio verso, forming the portion of text first visible to bearer and recipient. Scholars define it variously as:

> 'the address written on the outside of a letter' (Beal 2008, 'superscript')

> 'the superscription provided details of the recipient (often including name and title) and sometimes the location of where the letter was to be delivered.' (Daybell 2012, 72)

> 'typically found on the outer-facing address leaf […] and might even have contained instructions or reminders about delivery, such as 'post haste' (Williams 2013a)

The content and form of superscriptions varied according to privacy needs, recipient location, bearer identity, and distance. Day (1568, 30–34) advised that superscriptions should correspond to the recipient's social status and include their 'solemne and honourable titles.' Fulwood (1568) similarly instructed that they be written on the reverse after sealing and include the addressee's office and dwelling place, if known (Daybell 2012, 72). Mid-sixteenth-century French guides such as Bourlier's *Le Stile et Manière* (1553, 9) encouraged the inclusion of kinship terms (Bengough-Smith 2023, 62), whereas de la Serre's *The Secretary in Fashion* (1640) later discouraged such familiarity (Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 1995, 542). This shift may account for Nevala's (2004, 287) finding that close relationships show the greatest divergence between address forms and superscriptions in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century correspondence.

Within the StEr corpus, some superscriptions consist solely of titles (e.g., 'to the Ladie of Mar', from Elizabeth of Bohemia to Marie Stewart, NLS MS 5087 fols. 103–104, 2 August 1625), while others include names and kinship relations (e.g., 'For my sonne Charles Erskine *$ $ $*', from Marie Stewart, NLS MS 5088 fols. 82–83, 1639x1640). Certain examples specify a location (e.g., 'To ye Rycht worshipfull Sir Charles Erskine for ye present In orleans', from Kinloch, NLS MS 5155 fol. 49), while others explicitly acknowledge uncertainty (e.g., 'To my most honored lady and mother The Countes of Mar Elder at Stirling or allua', from Thomas Hamilton to Marie Stewart, NLS MS 5070 fols. 36–37, 13 May 1636). These patterns align with Daybell's (2006a, 55) observation that Tudor women's letters similarly alternated between minimal and elaborate superscriptions.

As outlined in Section 2.2.1, a range of conveyancing methods was available at this time. Given that properties were not numbered in the early modern period, correspondents relied on landmarks or the bearer's personal knowledge for delivery. It is therefore unsurprising that no StEr superscriptions include street or house names. However, several superscriptions contain multiple text areas on the verso (forming the address leaf in these cases), making it difficult to determine which elements constituted the superscription and which do not. Figure 6-2 and Figure 6-3 illustrate such cases:

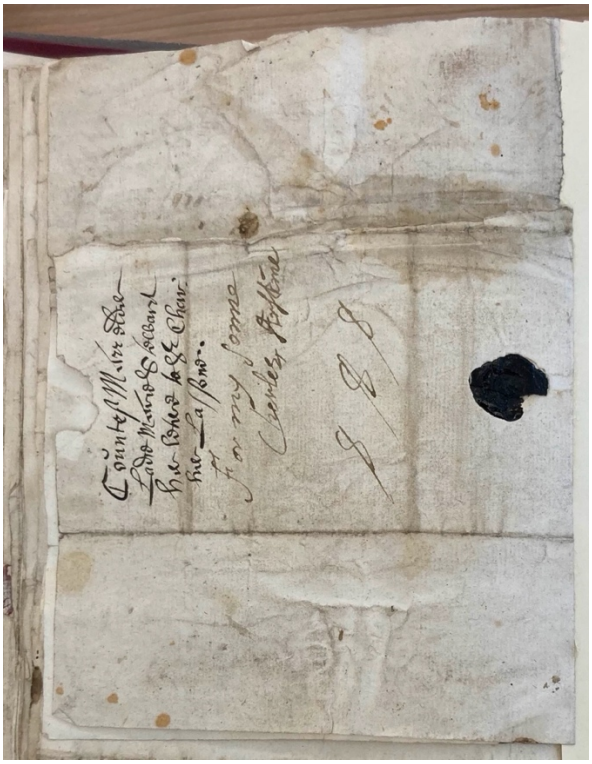


Figure 6-2 : Superscription with endorsement (Marie Stewart, countess of Mar to Sir Charles Erskine, NLS MS 5070 fols. 45–46, 9 November 1639)

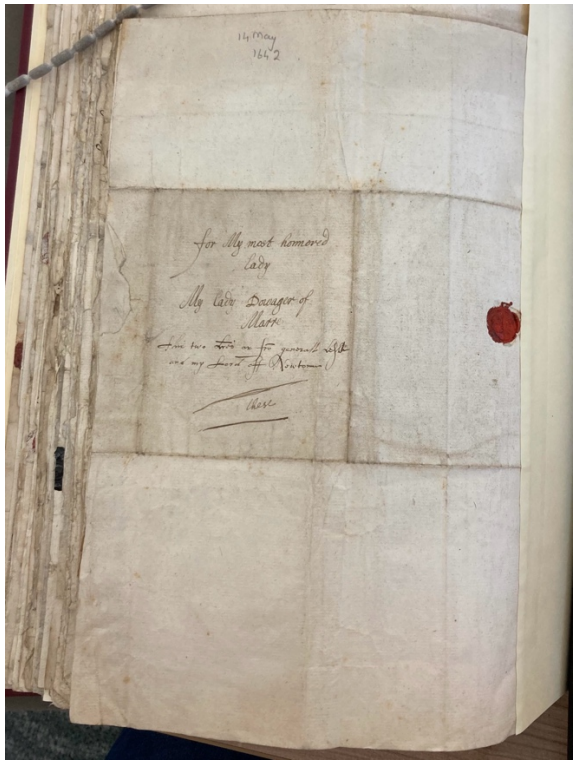


Figure 6-3: Superscription with endorsement (Alexander Leslie, 1st earl of Leven to Marie Stewart, countess of Mar, NLS MS 5070 fols. 88–89, 14 May 1642)

Transcription:		**Transcription:**	
		[archivist's marks]	14 May 1642
[superscription]	For my sonne Charles Aerskine $ $ $	[superscription]	for My most honnored lady My lady Dowager of Marre these
[contemporary endorsement]	Coŭntes Marr elder Ladie Marie Stewart her leter to S[ir] Char[les] her La[dyships] sone.	[contemporary endorsement]	thir two l[ettres] ar fro[m] generall Leslie and my Lord off Newtoune

The transcriptions accompanying Figure 6-2 and 6-3 illustrate how each instance was interpreted. In Figure 6-2, two distinct areas of text, both in ink but in different hands, are visible: the superscription and an endorsement, the latter recording information about the correspondents and positioned directly above the former. Figure 6-3 displays four separate textual components: the superscription, an endorsement written below it and the inscribed word, 'these', situated between two lines, which is also interpreted as part of the superscription. A date, '14 May 1642' was later pencilled in the upper margin by archivists.

In this way, the StEr superscriptions were identified by analysing handwriting, layout, and textual content in combination. Superscriptions are defined here as any text (and accompanying symbols) referring to the recipient and their location, along with any delivery instructions that would have appeared on the address leaf when the letter was originally prepared for dispatch. This definition therefore excludes any contemporary marginalia or later archival annotations.

6.2 Quantitative Overview of the Epistolary Formulae

Of the 183 letters in StErCor2, 178 open with an address form, 181 close with a subscription and 163 include a superscription, as shown in Table 6-1.

Table 6-1: Total counts of epistolary formulae in StErCor2

Address Forms	Subscriptions	Superscriptions
181 in 178 letters	183 in 181 letters	163 in 163 letters

Three letters contain two address forms, resulting in a total of 181 examples across the corpus, seven of which are followed by a salutation: a pattern discussed further in Section 6.3. Five additional letters open with a slightly different type of formula, all variations of *Please your Ladyship/Lordship*. These occur in letters sent from Thomas Hope to Marie Stewart ('Pleass your ladyship', NLS MS 5070 fols. 17–18, 3 March 1635; 'Pleass yoŭr Ladyship', fol. 42, 10 May 1639; 'Pleis ȝour Ladyship', fol. 83, 25 November 1640;) and from John Rollock to Thomas Hope ('Pleas ȝour Lordship', NLS MS 5070 fols. 86–87, 28 December 1641; fols. 90–91, 23 May 1642).

Although these expressions still contain a term of address (*Ladyship* or *Lordship*), phrases such as 'Please it your…' or 'May it please you…', belong to the 'Notification' element in Richardson's (1984) Chancery model, typically positioned after the address form and salutation

(Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 1995, 562). Originally intended to inform the recipient of some matter, these expressions had, by the seventeenth century, become so conventionalised that they had largely lose their semantic element of notification (Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 1995, 562). By this stage, letters beginning with such formulae were common, as evidenced by comparable examples in CEEC-400 (e.g., 'May it please your Grace', 'Please your Honour', and 'Pleas itt your moste noble Grace' [2020]) and in ScotsCorr (e.g., 'Please zour /L/, May it please your lop :', 'Please your Sacred Matie~ :' [2007]). Moreover, other letters in ScotsCorr omit opening formulae altogether, a feature also observed in English correspondence (Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 1995, 561–62; Nevalainen 2001, 208).

With regard to closing formulae, two jointly sent letters to Stewart (from George Baird and Ewan Dunmure and John Leslie and Anna Erskine), include two subscriptions each, giving a total of 183 subscriptions across 181 letters. Two Scots letters lack a subscription entirely. The first, from Henry Dow to John Erskine (NLS MS 5070 fols. 13–14, June 1634), is unsigned, unsealed, and lacks a superscription. Instead, the address leaf bears an endorsement reading 'Hanri Dow letters to my Lord of Mar'. Material clues like these strongly suggest that the manuscript is a secretarial copy rather than an original dispatch (Daybell 2012, 25).[136]

The second unsubscribed letter, from Marie Stewart to George Norvell (Thomas Hope's attendant), concerns financial transactions involving her son Arthur (NLS MS 5070 fols. 65–66, 20 June 1640). Here, Stewart's signature is not preceded by any formulae of leave-taking. The opening address, 'Mr George', combines two politeness strategies: the use of the given name signals Norvell's lower social rank, while the addition of 'Mr' conveys a degree of respect, as the title was typically reserved for esquires or gentlemen (Nevalainen and Raumolin Brunberg 1995, 550, 557). The superscription, 'for Mr george Norvell servitour to his maiesties advocat', further specifies his role and ensures accurate delivery. The material and visual aspects of this letter are discussed in Section 7.1.

Superscriptions occur less frequently than the other two types of formulae, appearing 163 times across 163 letters. In addition to cases where only copies of letters survive, several other factors may account for their absence in the other twenty manuscripts. Some letters omit external address details yet include subscriptions and signatures, implying that they were enclosed within a

[136] The material evidence indicating that Dow's letter to John Erskine (NLS MS 5070 fols. 13–14) is a copy contrasts with that of his only other letter in StErCor2. This second letter, addressed to Marie Stewart, countess of Mar (NLS MS 5070 fols. 15–16), includes a subscription, a signature, and a superscription. The creases on the address leaf further show that it was closed using a tuck-and-seal method, and a remnant of red wax seal still adheres to NLS MS 5070 fol. 16v: both clues which indicate it was sealed for dispatch.

packet containing multiple letters from the same sender to the same recipient.[137] Five of Marie Stewart's letters to her son Charles (NLS MS 5070 fol. 51 and fol. 58; NLS MS 5088 fol. 78 and fol. 79; NLS MS 5155 fol. 19), together with a note from Stewart's daughter, Marie Erskine, to her mother (NLS MS 5155 fol. 11), conform to this pattern.

Although the five letters from Stewart to Charles show no remnants of seals or tearing, their crease patterns indicate that they were originally folded into tuck-and-seal packets in preparation for dispatch (Figure 6-4). To create such packets, the top and bottom edges of the letter were folded inwards (often in thirds), then the sides were folded to form flaps that tucked into one another, creating a secure, self-locking envelope that could be sealed with wax or a wafer (Dambrogio and Starza Smith 2025, 338–43).

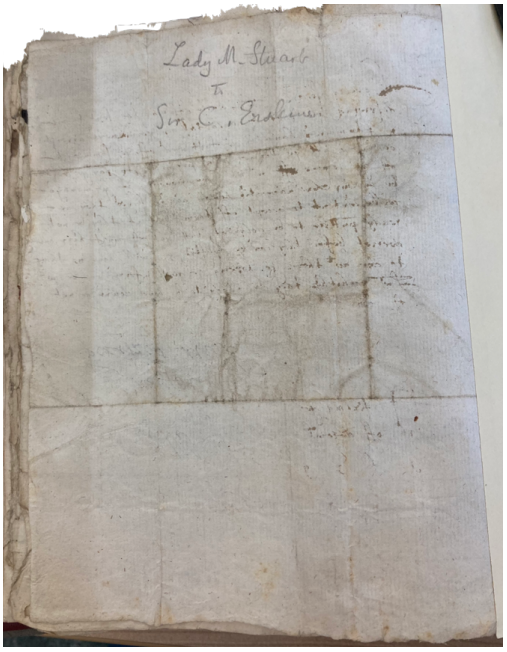


Figure 6-4: Tuck-and-seal folding pattern (Marie Stewart, countess of Mar to Sir Charles Erskine, NLS MS 5070 fol. 51v, 16 December 1639)



Figure 6-5: Filing folding pattern (Marie Erskine, countess of Marischal to Marie Stewart, countess of Mar, NLS MS 5155 fol. 11v, 24 July 1635)

By contrast, Marie Erskine's letter displays a distinct folding pattern consistent with filing (Figure 6-5). Standard filing practice involved folding the sheet into a long rectangular form and adding an endorsement along the top margin; the folded papers were then tied together with string so that the endorsements remained visible for convenient reference (Daybell 2012, 218–19). The letter also shows faint signs of a square-fold configuration, visible in lighter crease marks. Both the filing folds and the square-fold pattern differ markedly from the tuck-and-seal format illustrated in Figure 6-4.

[137] The method of grouping letters to send together whilst one functioned as a contextual covering note was common practice at this time (Scott and Wiggins 2020).

An overview of the three types of epistolary formulae in StErCor2 is presented below, with structurally and semantically similar expressions grouped into collated sets. For French letters, these expressions have been translated into PDE to allow comparisons with those in Scots and English. The method of collating similar formulae follows established practice in studies of historical formulaic language (Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 1995, 592). Unlike larger-scale projects such as Evans (2020) and Kopaczyk (2013), which relied on automated spelling normalisation, all regularisation in this study was conducted manually, reflecting the relatively modest size of StErCor2 (61k tokens).

Formulae were extracted using AntConc and transferred into Microsoft Excel for collation. Original spellings are generally retained, especially where orthographic variation signals distinct language varieties. This includes the retention of Scots forms and characters such as yogh and tittle (e.g., *ȝour/your; loŭing/loving*). Other contrasts retained in the collated forms include *richt/right, affectionit/affectioned, and honorabill/honourable*. Where multiple variants occur, a few representative examples are provided within each collated entry. As noted in Section 6.1.1, this chapter concentrates on linguistic components; therefore, while individual transcriptions of formulae preserve symbols, these visual elements are excluded from the collated sets.

The collation of formulae reflects the sociolinguistic factors considered in the variation analysis. In particular, kinship is prioritised, so expressions containing kinship terms are grouped separately from those that do not. Formulae using *friend* or *servant* are also highlighted, as are those containing honorifics. Formulae are further grouped according to shared grammatical and adjectival structures and extended and reduced forms are compared. Elements enclosed in brackets indicate that they are not included in every iteration within that set of formulae.

This process of manual collation enabled the identification of recurring formulaic patterns across the corpus while also highlighting expressions that depart from more conventional forms. Grammatical templates are provided for each of the sets, informed by Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (1995) and Jucker (2020). While they do not follow exact parsing rules, the templates are designed to describe the overall structure of each set and to distinguish parts of speech: for example, ‘Earl’ is labelled as a substantive title noun and ‘of Mar’ as a territorial title prepositional phrase. Conjunctions are not labelled. The collated sets are presented in Table 6-2 (Address forms), Table 6-3 (Subscriptions) and Table 6-4 (Superscriptions) where the following abbreviations apply: Kinship Term (KT), Possessive (Poss.), Intensifying (Int.), Evaluative (Ev.), determiner (d), preposition (pr), Noun (N), Adjective (Aj), Adverb (Av), and Phrase (P).

Table 6-2: Collated address forms by recipient sex with grammatical templates

Formulae type	Template	
Female recipients: 4 individuals, 49 address forms		**Count**
No KT: standalone honorific	Madam(e) **Honorific N**	34
KT: extended honorific	Madame (my) (and) (most) (dear/louing) cousin/mother/sister **Honorific N + (Poss. d) + (Int. Av) + (Ev. Aj) + Kinship N**	5
No KT: honorific	Richt/Right honourable **Honorific AjP**	4
KT: no honorific	(My) (dear) (louing) sister/daughter/dochter **(Poss. d) + (Ev. Aj) + Kinship N**	3
No KT: extended honorific	(Mast) good/deare/deir Madam(e) **(Int. Av) + Ev. Aj + Honorific N**	3
Male recipients: 15 individuals, 132 address forms		
No KT: honorific	My Lord **Honorific NP**	42
KT *father*: extended with honorific	Richt/Right honourable (Lordship) (most/very) louing/affectionate father/feather **Honorific AjP + (Honorific N) + (Int. Av) + Ev. Aj + Kinship N**	26
KT: extended, no honorific	(My) (honourable) (deir) (louing) sonne/brother **(Poss. d) + (Ev. Aj[s]) + Kinship N**	19
No KT: honorific *Right honourable/worshipful*	Richt/Right honourable/worshipful (& my very good Lord) **Honorific AjP (+ Poss. d + Int. Av + Ev. Aj + Honorific N)**	13
No KT: honorific or occupation	My (very) (noble/honourable/good/dear) lord/knight **Poss. d + (Int. Av) + (Ev. Aj[s]) + Honorific N OR Occupational N**	13
KT *cousin*: extended with honorific	(My) (honourable/honoured) (good) (Lord) (loŭing/louing) Cŭsing **(Poss. d) + (Ev. Aj[s]) + (Honorific N) + (Ev. Aj) + Kinship N**	6
No KT: standalone honorific	Sir/Monsieur **Honorific N**	5
KT: standalone vocative	Cŭsing/Son **Kinship N**	2
No KT: proper name	Mr George/Charles **(Title) + Proper N**	2
No KT: *friend*	Loving/My noble Friend **(Poss. d) + Ev. Aj + Friend N**	2
No KT: other	weilbelouit **N**	1
	My deir heart **Poss. d + Ev. Aj + Term of Endearment N**	1
	Grand Total	**181**

Table 6-3: Collated subscriptions by sender's sex with grammatical templates

Formulae type	Template	
Female senders: 48 subscriptions		**Count**
KT: extended with honorific	ȝoŭr/Your (Ladyships/Lordships) (most) (very) (humble) (louing) (affectionate) (obeydenit) (faithful) (to kind) mother/cŭsing/cousin/niece/sister/dochter (seruant/serwand) (in her own right/at pouer) **Poss. d + (Honorific N) + (Int. Av) + (Ev. Aj[s]) + Kinship N + (Servant N) + (Av PP)**	28
No KT: extended with honorific and *friend*	ȝour/Your (Ladyships/Lordships/Grace's) (most) (very) (assurat/assured) (good) (affectionat) frend(is) **Poss. d + (Honorific N) + (Int. Av) + Ev. Aj(s) + Friend N**	11
No KT: extended with honorific and *servant*	Zour/Your (Ladyships/Lordships) (most) (affectionatt) humble (and) (lowng) servant/seruent (at pouer) **Poss. d + (Honorific N) + (Int. Av) + Ev. Aj(s) + Servant N + (Av PP)**	6
KT: *friend*	Your most affectionat frend and cousen **Poss. d + Int. Av + Friend N + Kinship N**	2
No KT: other	Your most affetionat cumer to doe yow seruis **Poss. d + Int. Av + Ev. Aj + Service P**	1
Male senders: 133 subscriptions		
KT: extended with honorific (and *servant*)	ȝoŭr/Your (Ladyships/Lordships) (most) (loŭing/Loving) (hŭmble) (obedient) (affectionet) (faithful) (unfortunate) (grievit) father/brother/cŭsing/soone (gossŭp/seruant/serŭantt)/(to ȝoŭr serŭant/to serŭe ȝoŭ/to love and serve you) **Poss. d + (Honorific N) + (Int. Av) + (Ev. Aj[s]) + Kinship N + (Gossip/Servant N) + (Service P)**	72
No KT: extended with honorific and *servant*	ȝoŭr/Your/I am hir (maiesties/lordships/ladyships/worships) (most/uerie) (eternall) (affectionat) (trŭe) (obedient) (obligit) (readie) (hŭmble/humble) (faithful/fidell) (awin man) seruantt/serŭand/seruitour (euer to be comanded ffra/to be commandit/to power) (& daly oratir) **Poss. d + (Honorific N) + (Int. Av) + (Ev. Aj[s]) + Servant N + (VP) + (Service P)**	56
No KT: *friend*	ȝour/Your (Ladyships) (affectionat) friend(is) (to serve yow) **Poss. d + (Honorific N) + (Ev. Aj) + Friend N + (Service Phrase)**	2
No KT: other	ȝowr Ladyships anser most humblie I desire **Poss. d + Honorific N + N + Int. Av + Av VP**	1
	Yours entirely eternally: **Poss. Pronoun. + Av + Av**	1
Unconfirmed: 2 subscriptions		
KT: *servant*	Your very humble cousin and servant **Poss. d + Int. Av + Aj + Kinship N + Servant N**	1
No KT: *service*	Zowr ladyships to serve yow In all hŭmiltie **Poss. d + Honorific N + Service VP + PP**	1
	Grand Total	**183**

Table 6-4: Collated superscriptions by recipient's sex with grammatical templates

Formulae type	Template	
Female recipients: 40 superscriptions		**Count**
No KT: extended, honorific, substantive title	(To/For) (my/our) (ane) (most/very/werie/truelie/trewlie) (rycht/right) (honorabill/noble/honnored) (and) (most/werie) (hir) (gude/gŭid/singowlar/speciall/worthie/Christian) (Lady) (Countess/Coŭntes) (Doŭager/Dowager) (of Mar) (elder) **(pr) + (Poss. d) + (d) + (Int. Av) + (Honorific AjP) + (Int. Av) + (Poss. d) + (Ev. Aj) + (Substantive Title N) + (Status Marking Aj) + (Territorial Title PP) + (Distinguishing Aj)**	22
KT: extended, honorific, substantive title	To (my [most] honored/honorit) (good/gŭid) (the right honorabill) (the) (Lady/Ladie) (and) mother/dochter the (Countess/Ladie) (of Mar/Bandeth) (at Stirling or allua) **pr + (Poss. d [Int. Av] + Ev. Aj) + (Ev. Aj) + (Honorific AjP) + (d) + (Substantive Title N) + Kinship N + (d + Substantive Title N) + (Territorial Title PP) + (Location PP)**	9
KT: honorific, honorific, substantive title	To (my daughter) Madame (Madame) (my cousin) The Countess (of Mar/Eglinton) (my sister) **pr + (Poss d. + Kinship N) + Honorific N(s) + (Poss. d + Kinship N) + (d + Substantive Title N) + Territorial Title PP + (Poss d. + Kinship N)**	4
No KT: honorific, substantive title	To Madame (Madame) the Countess of Mar **pr + Honorific N(s) + d + Substantive Title N + Territorial Title PP**	3
No KT: substantive title	To the Ladie (of) Mar **pr + d + Substantive Title N + (P) + Territorial Title N**	2
Male recipients: 123 superscriptions		
No KT: extended, honorific, occupation	To/for (the richt) (my) (verie) (most) (honorable/honorabill/honorett) (nobell) (speciall) (my verrye/uerie good) (good) Lord (and maister) (the erlle of Mar/Rothes/Mortoune/buchone) (hie tresŭar of scottland/Lord advocatt) (of Cragehall) **pr + (Poss. d) + (Int. Av) + (Honorific AjP) + (Ev. Aj[s]) + (Poss. d + Int. Av + Ev. Aj) + Substantive Title N + (Occupational N) + (d + Substantive Title N + Territorial Title PP) + (Occupational N) + (Territorial Title PP)**	41
KT: extended, honorific, substantive title, occupation	To (the) (my) (richt/right) (very) (honorable/honorabill) (good) Lord/Lordship (and) (his) (most/wery) (Loŭing/loving) (affectionit) (cŭsing/cousing/father/feather) the erlle of buchane/Mar/morton (lord hegh Threasaurer of Scotland) **pr + (d) + (Poss. d) + (Honorific [Int. Av] AjP) + (Ev. Aj[s]) + Substantive Title N + (Poss. d) + (Int. Av) + (Ev. Aj) + (Kinship N) + d + Substantive Title N + Territorial Title PP + (Occupational N)**	38
KT: extended, title, proper names, occupation/location	To/for my (much honored) (loveing) sone/cŭsing (Mr) Given + family names (attending his maiestie in his bed challmer/carver to his sacred Maiestie) (of Cambuskyneth/Bandeathe) (at Edenbroch) **pr + (Poss. d) (Int. Av) + (Ev. Aj) + Kinship N + (Title) + Proper Ns + (Occupational NP) + (Territorial Title PP) (Location PP)**	17
No KT: extended, honorific, proper names, occupation	For/to (the/ye richt/right honorabill) (rycht worshipfull) (Sir) given + family names (of Alva/Cambuskenneth) (In orleans) (knight/knycht) **pr + (Honorific AvP/N) + (Substantive Title) + Proper Ns + (Territorial Title PP) + (Location PP) + (Occupational N)**	13

Table 6-4: Collated superscriptions by recipient's sex with grammatical templates

Formulae type	Template	
No KT: honorific, substantive title	To the Lord/Earl of Mar(re) **pr + d + Substantive Title N + Territorial Title PP**	8
Male recipients continued		
No KT: *friend*, occupation	To/For my (honorable/good) (louing) friend Mr (given name) family name (one of his Majesthies bed chamber/commissair of Dumblain) **pr + Poss. d + (Ev. Aj[s]) + *friend* N + Title + (Proper N[s]) + (Occupational N)**	2
No KT: title, proper names, occupation	for (Mr) Given Name + Family Name seruitour (to the right honorabill the Erle of Mar/to his maiesties advocat) **pr + Title + (Proper N[s]) + (Occupational N)**	2
No KT: title, proper name	A Monsieur Monsieur De Hamiltoun [To Monsieur Hamilton] **pr + Title + Proper N**	1
No KT: other	vostre fidel Equier deliuered vous baisse les mains [your faithful squire humbly kisses your hands] **Poss. d + Ev. Aj + Occupational N + Adverbial VP**	1
		Grand Total 163

The collated sets in Tables 6-2–6-4 illustrate the recurrent patterns found in the corpus' epistolary formulae, revealing the interplay between structural and functional formulaicity. Table 6-2 shows that address forms in letter openings to male and female recipients display distinctive but overlapping formulaic tendencies. Female recipients were most often addressed with forms including the honorific noun *Madame* (42 of 49; 86%), sometimes combined with kinship terms such as 'mother' or 'soeur' [sister] (5 of 49; 10%). By contrast, male recipients were predominantly addressed through rank-marked and deferential titles such as *My Lord* (42 of 132; 32%) and 'Richt honorabill' (37 of 132; 28%), often expanded with evaluative or relational modifiers (e.g., 'good', 'affectionit', 'louing'). Address forms directed to men also frequently emphasised relational bonds (53 of 132: 40%), for example through kinship terms such as 'sonne' [son], 'feather' [father]). Across both sexes, this amounts to 61 of 181 address forms (34%) containing kinship terms. This distribution points to a high degree of structural formulaicity: recurrent, morphologically variable patterns organised around core tokens (*My Lord, Madame*), alongside functional variation reflecting gendered norms of respect, intimacy, and hierarchy.

Similarly, Table 6-3 demonstrates that subscriptions were relatively stable across male and female senders. Both groups relied heavily on deferential constructions centred on service-related expressions such as *your (most humble/obedient/affectionate) servant*. Of 183 total subscriptions, 106 (58%) contain orthographic variants of the nouns *servant* (84), *servitor* (15) or *service* (1), and the verb *serve* (6).[138] Senders of both sexes also incorporated kinship identifiers such as *mother* and *son*: women in 30 of 48 subscriptions (63%) and men in 73 of 133 (55%) alongside affective role-specifiers such as 'gossip' and 'cumer' (see Section 6.5.2).

Table 6-4 outlines the conventions used for superscriptions across the corpus. All but three of these formulae begin with the prepositions *to* or *for*, as in: 'My very honorabill Lady The Cowntesse off Mar'; 'Madame ✚ Madame La comtesse De Mar ma sœur *$ $ $*' [Madame ✚ Madame the Countess of Mar my sister *$ $ $*]; and 'vostre fidel Equier vous baisse les mains' [your faithful squire humbly kisses your hands]. This last, exceptional instance, penned by James Graham (Montrose), lacks explicit reference to sender and is discussed in Section 6.6.

The remaining examples typically follow a fixed syntactic pattern combining stacked evaluative modifiers (e.g., 'most', 'rycht', 'very', 'nobell', 'honorabell', 'gŭid'), a kinship or social

[138] The spellings found for *servant* which appear in the subscriptions are: 'saruante', 'servant', 'servantt', 'seruant', 'seruante', 'seruantt', 'serŭants', 'serŭantt', 'servand', 'serrvand', 'seruand', 'serŭand', 'seruent', 'serwand', 'seruitenis'. For *servitor* they are 'servitor', 'seruitour', 'serviteŭr', 'seruiteur', 'serwitor', and for *serve* and *service*: 'serue'; 'seruis'.

role (e.g., ‘mother’, ‘father’, ‘dochter’, ‘frend’), and the recipient’s substantive title (e.g., ‘The Coŭntese of Mar’, ‘The erle of Mortoun’). Occasionally a location was added (e.g., ‘at Stirling’, ‘Att Edenbroch’, ‘Edinburgh’] or a professional occupation (e.g., ‘attending his maiestie in his bed challmer’, ‘My Lord Advocatt’). Longer and more elaborate superscriptions such as ‘To the right honowrable and my most singowlar good ladie the cowntes of mare’ (Margaret Feilding to Marie Stewart, NLS MS 5070 fols. 30–31, 17 January 1636) signalled deference and high social rank through cumulative modifiers and honorifics (Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 1995, 557). By contrast, shorter forms such as ‘For my sonne Charles Erskine. *$ $ $*’ (Marie Stewart to Charles Erskine, NLS MS 5070 fols. 59-60, 17 January 1640) occur in more intimate contexts, indexing kinship and familiarity.

Kin-based designations appear in 68 out of 163 total superscriptions (42%): 13 of 40 addressed to women (33%) and 55 out of 123 addressed to men (45%). Their frequent use alongside formal titles underscores how superscriptions pragmatically balanced deference and intimacy according to the correspondents’ relationship.

The high incidence of complex formulae with multiple elements of humility, affection, and obligation demonstrates that the StEr correspondents shared an epistolary repertoire shaped by convention while remaining responsive to social positioning and relationship management. The following analytical sections develop these findings, beginning with a focused discussion of salutations.

6.3 Salutations

The majority of the StEr address forms are not followed by a salutation. Only seven out of 181 (4%) contain both, as shown in the examples below, where the salutation is underlined:

(95) My lord. <u>My veray hairthie commadations rememberit</u>
(Marie Stewart to William Douglas, MS 80 fol. 53, 3 February 1604)

(96) Right honorabill . *$*. <u>Thes haueing first presented my humble seruice to yowr Lordship</u>
(Alexander Erskine to John Leslie, MS 5155 fol. 16, 24 July 1638)

(97) Madam <u>my humble service presintted</u>
(John Forbes to Marie Stewart, NRS GD124/15/95, 2 January 1633)

(98) Madame <u>Unto ȝowr good ladyships humblie meanes and shoves I ȝowr Ladyships pŭr servitor</u>
(John Allisone to Marie Stewart, NRS GD124/17/629, 1633)

(99) Madam <u>my humbill dewtie being rememberit</u>
(David Murray to Marie Stewart, NLS MS 5070 fol. 1, 20 October 1604)

(100) Madam maist hummble seruice Rememberit
(J Lantie to Marie Stewart, NLS MS 5070 fols. 4–5, 10 March 1623)

(101) Richt honorable Lord $ and most Loving father, my hummle deŭtie being rememberit
(Henry Erskine to John Erskine, NRS GD124/15/34/2, 17 July 1617)

Examples (95–101) correspond to those letters identified by Davis (1965, 235, as quoted in Nevalainen 2001, 206) as following French models, incorporating either a commendatory formula, 'my veray hairthie commadations rememberit' (ex. 95) or an expression of humility, 'my humble service presintted' (ex. 97), after the initial address. However, only two examples (96) and (101), employ the form that Davis (1965, 235) found most typical in French-influenced openings: an expression beginning 'Right' (or in these two cases, the Scots, 'Richt') plus an adjective and noun, such as 'honourable Lord'. The remaining examples use simpler forms: *My Lord* or *Madam(e)*, choices discussed further in Section 6.4

The seven salutations identified here align with several of Day's (1568) examples for familiar and special letters. For instance, (ex. 95) corresponds to 'After my harty commendations vnto you' (Day 1568, 13); (exs. 96–98) to 'All humble loyaltie and seruice protested' (Day 1568, 59); and (exs. 99–101) to 'My humble dutie remembred, good father' (Day 1568, 59; see also Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 1995, 561–62; Tanskanen 2003, 180). Comparable salutatory formulae also appear in ScotsCorr (2007), such as 'My heartlie commendatiounes remembred', 'I commend my humile seruice to zour grace', and 'my most louing deutie remimberit'.

In the sixteenth-century, some manuals such as Fulwood (1568, 1–2), insisted that the salutation or 'recommendation' was essential, which may help explain their more consistent inclusion in earlier letters (Nevalainen 2001, 209). However, the widespread omission of formal salutations in the StEr letters reflects the conventions of family and friendly correspondence from c.1570 onwards (Tanskanen 2003, 182). Although Day (1568) continued to include sample salutations, he noted that English writers had largely ceased using them, unlike earlier Latinist models: a trend confirmed in Woolley's 1675 manual (Tanskanen 2003, 179). The fact that 96% of the StEr letters (176 of 183) lack salutations suggests that their writers no longer adhered to the *ars dictaminis*' rhetorical model of letter structure (Magnusson 1999, 61). This finding supports broader evidence that epistolary organisation became increasingly flexible over time (Nevalainen 2001, 221; Whyman 2009, 17; 22), a development that has received little, if any, focused attention in studies of Scottish correspondence.

The inclusion of salutations in these seven letters, unlike the majority of the StErCor2 corpus, likely relates to their content. Examples (95–98; 100) are either entirely or partially petitionary in nature. Although these five exchanges represent different relative social statuses, the senders appear to have conformed to the expectations of the supplicatory genre, which was typically more formalised than FAMILIAR or BUSINESS letters (Daybell 2006b, 4). Petitionary letters were generally expected to follow prescribed structures outlined in contemporary letter-writing manuals, but writers without such guides often copied and circulated model letters to build collections of exemplars (Daybell 2006b, 6). Indeed, Allisone's salutation appears in other contemporary petitions, including supplications to the Kirk in the 1630s (Nairne 1830).[139]

Both Allisone and Forbes opened their letters with salutations that entextualise interactions between social inferiors and superiors (exs. 97–98). Their use of negatively polite forms, including the verb 'humble' and the adverb 'humblie', indexes deference and hierarchy. In contrast, as a higher-status petitioner, Marie Stewart used a positively polite formulae: 'my veray hairthie commadations rememberit' (ex. 95) that aligns with the type that Day (1568, 23) suggested for letters sent by a superior to an inferior, reflecting her elite position in society.

In her letter to William Douglas (Morton), Stewart began by explaining her husband's absence yet referred to the tenants on whose behalf she wrote as 'my pŭre tennentis in carnwath mwre' [my poor tenants in Carnwath moor] (MS 80 fol. 53, 1604), assuming responsibility for them despite women's legal inability to hold property independently. Her use of the 'supposal and assurance' linguistic script (Magnusson 2004, 59–63) is evident in the I-centred expressions included in this letter such as 'I will maist effectualie requeist ȝour Lordship to sie this berar obteine redres' [I will most effectually request your Lordship see this bearer obtains redress] and 'sa far as I can lerne ȝour Lordship may imediatlie gif comman to ȝour officer to poynd thame' [so far as I can learn your Lordship may immediately command your officer to poind them].[140] The first clause carries strong modality through the elided imperative construction: [your Lordship [must] see this bearer obtain redress] (PDE translation), while the second reflects her awareness of events and access to reliable information.

---

[139] The opening formula used by Allisone, 'Madame Unto ȝowr good ladyship's humblie meanes and shoves I ȝowr Ladyship's pŭr servitor' (NRS GD124/17/629), also appears in the letter, Petition of the Lesser Barons to the Parliament, held Aug. 1560, reproduced in William Robertson's *The History of Scotland, During the Reigns of Queen Mary and King James VI* (1811, 378). It was also used in seven supplicatory letters printed in the Bannatyne Club edition of *A Relation of Proceedings concerning the Affairs of the Kirk of Scotland from August 1637 to July 1638* by John, earl of Rothes (1830), and in a letter in John Stuart's edition of *The Miscellany of the Spalding Club* (1841).

[140] Poind: seize, impound, or levy a fine (*DSL* 4.0 'Poind v.').

Her confidence continued in ‘Not douting bot ȝour Lordship […] will sie this berar satisfeit according to resoŭn and not to gif him occasioŭn any way to complene or deburss any man expenssis’ [Not doubting but your Lordship […] will see this bearer satisfied according to reason and not to give him occasion any way to complain or disburse any man [for] expenses] (MS 80 fol. 53, 1604), an assertion that presumes compliance.[141] Stewart closed with expressions from a third script identified by Magnusson (2004, 80–82), ‘pleasures and courtesy’, offering reciprocity while simultaneously anticipating a favour: ‘ȝour Lordship will find my lord my husband his maister very redy and willing to requyt ȝour Lordship or ony of ȝouris with ye lyik and gate pleasour as occasioun sall offer’ [your Lordship will find my Lord, my husband, his master very ready and willing to requite your Lordship or any of yours with the same and give pleasure as occasion shall offer]. Her confident assumption that her husband would be ‘redy and willing’ to give support to Douglas highlights the trust that John Erskine (Mar elder) placed in her, as she confidently presumed his willingness to honour her promise. Stewart also offered personal support ‘quharin I can be stedabill to ȝour Lordship I sall remaine very willing’ [wherein I can be of service to your Lordship I shall remain very willing] and continued her strategy of positive politeness through her subscription, ‘ȝour Lordships very assurat freynd’ [your Lordship’s very assured friend].

By contrast, Alexander Erskine’s letter to his brother-in-law John Leslie, earl of Rothes, written on behalf of his brother James, adopts a blend of humility and assertiveness. His opening salutation, ‘haueing first presented my humble seruice’ (ex. 96) and the verb ‘intreting’ (ex. 102) expressed deference through negative politeness, yet Example 102 shows that his tone quickly shifted to the ‘supposal and assurance’ mode:

> (102) thes haueing first presented my humble seruice to yowr Lordship ar for to accompany my brothers letter, intreting, that yowr Lordship vill rightly consider what it may preuindes hime not to haue thes monnys furnished to him at this time, my Lord, I know, it standes hime no lese them the macking, or maring of his fortune, so that I am confident yowr Lordship vill at this time make vs of your accustumat goodness, and bee loath to loos a shipe being reddy to enter the porte.
>
> [these, having first presented my humble service to your Lordship, accompany my brother’s letter, intreating that your Lordship will rightly consider what it may hinder him not to have this money furnished to him at this time. My Lord, I know this will result in no less than the making or marring of his fortune, so that I am confident your Lordship will at this time make use of your accustomed goodness, and be loath to lose a ship being ready to enter the port] (NLS MS 5155 fols. 16–18, 24 July 1638)

[141] ‘Deburss any man for expenses’: that the bearer would not have to make restitutory payment of expenses (*DSL* 4.0 ‘Deburs v.’)

Here, the imperative ‘yowr Lordship vill rightly consider’ conveys strong modality, underscored by the auxiliary ‘vill’ [will] and intensified by the adverb ‘rightly’, implying only one response is acceptable.[142] He supported this request with evidence from his own experience, expressed through the I-phrases ‘I know’ and ‘I am confident’ which mark epistemic certainty and moral appeal (ex. 102). Alexander thus tempered deference with moral persuasion, framing Leslie’s response as an obligation. His subscription, ‘yowr Lordships most affectionat brother and humble seruant’, combines positive politeness (by referencing their kinship: ‘affectionat brother’) with negative politeness (by describing himself as Leslie’s ‘humble seruant’).

Conversely, Forbes and Allisone, writing from lower social positions and employing entirely deferential salutations (exs. 97–98), also used deferential subscriptions: ‘ȝour Ladyships humble serrvand & daly oratir’ [your Ladyship’s humble servant & daily orator] (Forbes, NRS GD124/15/95, 2 January 1633) and ‘ȝowr Ladyships anser most humblie I desire’ [your Ladyship’s answer most humbly I desire] (Allisone, NRS GD124/17/629, 1633).[143] In both cases, the aim was to emphasise humility and service. Yet Allisone’s phrase ‘humbly I desire’ conveyed boulomaic modality, suggesting both expectation and humility: an assertive nuance discussed in Section 5.4.

In terms of superscriptions, as a copy letter, Allisone’s lacks one, but Forbes, Alexander, and Stewart all used elaborate honorifics denoting negative politeness: ‘To my very honorabill good Lady My Lady Conntess off Mar’ (Forbes); ‘To the right honorabill the Erle of Rothes’ (Alexander); and ‘To the Richt Nobell and My very guid lord The erle of Morton’ (Stewart). Long and deferential superscriptions such as Stewart’s were common even among equals in elite circles (Nevala 2004, 281), suggesting her phrasing reflected respect for William Douglas (Morton)’s rank rather than personal inferiority.

The final two salutations, by Henry Erskine (ex. 101) and Lantie (ex. 100), introduce low-to-high status epistolary exchanges. Henry’s case is unusual: it is the only one of sixteen extant letters to his father that includes a salutation, though it contained no request for assistance (as did other examples he sent during this time) and served primarily as a news report. By contrast, Lantie likely began with a deferential salutation due to the greater social distance between himself and the Countess. Yet his tone soon shifted as he provided confident advice on estate management. Evidently he acted as a land agent for the family, and the first section of the letter demonstrates his familiarity with their holdings at Bog and Newton and his expertise with legal procedures. For

[142] Rightly: ‘In accordance with justice or what is morally right; with rectitude or propriety; virtuously’ (*OED*, ‘Rightly (adv.)’).

[143] Orato(u)r: ‘A person who offers up prayers for one’ (*DSL* 4.0 ‘Orator n.1’).

example, he mentions the significance of 'teindis' [tithes] and the 'buik of improbatioune' [book of improbation]: a legal tool used to challenge rights or documents.[144]

However, midway through, Lantie reintroduced deference through the compliment 'As ȝour Ladyships gude name and commendatioune deseruis perpetuall memorie and prais' [As your Ladyship's good name and commendation deserves perpetual memory and praise] thereby transitioning into a supplicatory tone as he petitioned repayment for past service. This rhetorical move aligns with the 'humility and entreaty' script, marking his request as potentially 'trouble-making' or face-threatening for the Countess (Magnusson 2004, 58–59). He first sought to engage her sympathies while simultaneously absolving her of responsibility, stating 'altho I haue beine euill done to me for my seruice ȝour Ladyship is not to be blamit' [although I have had evil done to me for my service, your Ladyship is not to be blamed]. He then signalled his uncertainty that his request would be fulfilled by employing the low-modality verb *might* in 'I spak ȝour Ladyship yat I mycht haue thrie hunderiet merkis' [I spoke to your Ladyship that I might have three hundred merks] (NLS MS 5070 fols. 4–5, 10 March 1623).

Lantie continued to mitigate his request by offering excuses for Stewart's apparent failure to honour an earlier promise, explaining that, 'ȝour Ladyships effaris being so wechtie and mony hes omittit ye same' [your Ladyship's affairs being so weighty and many has omitted the same'). His negative politeness persisted as he entreated her: 'liking ȝour Ladyship favor yis my respect request' [if it pleases your Ladyship, favour this my respectful request].[145] In the postscript he made a further plea, asking Stewart to attend to an unfulfilled promise made by her eldest son, James Erskine, to his 'gudfayir' [father-in-law]. Here again, he employed the 'humility and entreaty' script, appealing to Stewart's compassion by observing that 'ye want yerof hes done him greit harme' [the want thereof has done him great harm], suggesting that her son's failure to act had cause the man significant hardship.

These examples demonstrate that although formal salutations are rare in the StEr letters, those that occur were shaped by genre, social hierarchy, and rhetorical purpose. Most appeared in petitionary contexts, where writers drew on formulaic sequences of humility and deference, or assurance to navigate relationships and enhance the persuasive force of their appeals.

---

[144] Teindis: To assess or take a tithe (*DSL* 4.0 'Teind v.'); Improbatiounn: 'an action to annul a deed' on the grounds that it is false. (*DSL* 4.0 'Improbatioun n.').

[145] '*Likis me* etc […] it pleases or suits me, I am content'. *Like* could be used within, for example, the 'deferential courtesy phr. *(gif it) likis (lyk)* or *likit ȝow, ȝour grace* etc. (sc. to learn something, to attend to or hear one).' *DSL* 4.0 ('Like v.1').

The next four sections consider the dominance of conventional address forms, the role of titles and honorifics in marking hierarchy, the deployment of kinship language, the use of affective or non-conventional openings, and visual features such as symbols and spacing.

6.4 Conventional Formulae

Of the forty-nine letters Marie Stewart received, forty-six open with an address form. As noted in Section 6.2, the remaining three, all from Thomas Hope, omit an opening address and begin directly with a notification. The most notable feature is the predominance of *Madame*, which appears as a standalone address in thirty-three of these letters (72%). Elsewhere in the corpus, *Madame* is used once, directed to Elizabeth of Bohemia, and it occurs in eight further, more elaborate formula: seven directed to Stewart and one to Anna Livingstone (Table 6-2).

A wide range of correspondents within the CoP: male and female, familial and non-familial, and representing varied social positions, used *Madame* when writing to Stewart in business, familiar, and petitionary contexts. These correspondents included her children, their spouses, cousins, employees, working folk, and nobles.[146] This distribution aligns with seventeenth-century English letter-writing practices, in which 'Madame' had become a standardised form across different contexts, drawing on the models of du Bosque (1638) and de la Serre (1640) (Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 1995, 569; 576; 581; 587; Daybell 2012, 72). The form also appears frequently in ScotsCorr (2007) for Scots letters dated 1600–1699, and Akkerman's (2011–) edition likewise confirms its widespread use in correspondence addressed to Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia.

Within the eight examples of extended *Madame* formulae are five which contain the kinship terms *cousin, mother,* or *sister*. These five include other elements such as the possessive determiner 'my', the intensifying adverb 'most', and the adjectives 'louing' or 'deare'. When paired with a neutral address such as *Madame*, such positive politeness strategies enabled correspondents to express both deference and familiarity (Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (1995, 556). While the three remaining expanded *Madame* formulae (all of which were directed to

[146] The full list of StEr CoP members who used the standalone formula *Madame* to address Marie Stewart are: Charles Erskine (Alva-Bandeath); Arthur Erskine (Scotscraig); Alexander Erskine; Anna Erskine (Rothes); John Leslie, (Rothes); Thomas Hamilton (Binning); John Lyon (Kinghorn); Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia; Louis Stuart (Kirkhill); David Murray (Gorthy); Alexander Henderson; Alexander Leslie (Leven); John Wallace; Daniel Andersone; I. Reade; J. Lantie; John Forbes; John Allisone; George Baird and Ewan Dunmure; Committee of Estates members and C.S.

Stewart) likewise incorporate adjectives and intensifying adverbs, they do not include kinship terms. Although the adjectives in the examples: 'Good Madame' (Elizabeth of Bohemia), 'Deare Madame' (Marion Douglas), and 'Mast deir madame' (Margaret Feilding) appear evaluative, in fact, 'good' and 'dear' had largely undergone semantic bleaching by the seventeenth century, to the point where 'Good Madame' functioned in English letters as a 'conventional epithet for the nobility' (Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 1995, 558–59, 587). The neutrality of these formulae may have prompted some writers to employ intensifying adverbs to express stronger positive politeness, as in Feilding's addition of 'mast' [most]. As discussed in Section 5.5, Feilding's letter is highly affective, expressing the 'honowr and hapines' [honour and happiness] she felt upon receiving a long-awaited letter from Stewart: 'niwer had I any sens I com heir that was mor wylcwme to me' [never had I any since I came here that was more welcome to me] (NLS MS 5070 fols. 30–31, 17 January 1636).

As noted in Section 6.1.1, many of the StEr formulae include the fermesse symbol. In Alexander's case, he chose to add it to the opening addresses of his four StEr letters to his mother, for example, 'Madame $' (NLS MS 5155 fols. 14-15, 24 July 1638). Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg's (1995, 581) observe that letter-writers often conveyed affection or deference elsewhere when the address itself was neutral (e.g., *Madame* or *Sir*) and this may explain Alexander's use of the symbol. These examples demonstrate a member of the CoP employing an extralinguistic pragmatic device to infuse otherwise neutral or deferential forms with an additional layer of intimacy.

Despite its prominence in openings, Madame is comparatively rare in superscriptions. Only two superscriptions in the corpus employ it, both in French. Catherine de Balsac addressed Stewart with the superscription 'A ma fille Madam la Contesse de Mar' [To my daughter Madame the Countess of Mar'), while Henrietta Stuart superscribed her letter to Anna Livingstone 'A Madame ma Cousine Madame La Contesse Deglintoun' [To Madame my cousin Madame the Countess of Eglinton]. In both cases, the interior formulae are shorter and more intimate: de Balsac opened 'Ma fille' [My daughter] and subscribed 'Votre tres affectionanne mere' [Your very affectionate mother], while Henrietta opened 'Madame ma chere Cousine' [Madame my dear cousin] and subscribed 'Vostre tres affeccionee et fidelle Cousine' [Your very affectionate and faithful cousin]. These combination of possessives (*my, your*), intensifying adverbs (*very*), evaluative adjectives (*affectionate, dear, faithful*), and kinship terms (*daughter, mother*), index familial closeness. Henrietta's opening is, however, marginally more formal because it begins with

Madame. This difference may relate to the wider semantic range of *cousin* in the early modern period, a notion discussed further in Section 6.5.1.

The inclusion of substantive titles in superscriptions, as in these *Madame*-based examples, is characteristic of the wider corpus. Senders typically ensured that the external formulae met public-facing expectations of propriety and deference (Nevala 2004, 287). Illustrative examples include:

> (103) To the truelie noble and most Christian Lady My Lady the countesse of Mar These (Alexander Henderson to Marie Stewart, countess of Mar, NLS MS 5155 fols. 5–6, 26 June 1631)
>
> (104) To the most Noble and our most especiall gude Lady My Lady Countess of Mar (George Baird and Ewan Dunmure to Marie Stewart, countess of Mar, NLS MS 5070 fol. 11, 9 August 1632)
>
> (105) For my very Honorabill good Lord The Earlle of Mortune thes (John Erskine, 3rd earl of Mar to William Douglas, 7th earl of Morton, NLS MS 80 fol. 57, 13 January 1643)
>
> (106) To the Earle of Mar (Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia to John Erskine, 2nd earl of Mar, NRS GD124/15/57/4, 20 September 1625)

Extended superscriptions such as those in Examples 103 and 104 may appear excessively elaborate to modern readers, yet they reflect the high value placed upon accurate articulation of title and status (Starza Smith 2013). Correct titling signalled appropriate respect, reinforced the perceived importance of the communication, and lent it the authority associated with the recipient (Starza Smith 2013). In the StEr corpus, all but two of the thirty-eight superscriptions addressed to Marie Stewart include her substantive title of *Countess*. Moreover, following the death of her husband, some superscriptions marked her change in status through the addition of *dowager* or *elder*, as in this example directed to her from Alexander Leslie (Leven): 'for My most honnored lady My lady Dowager of Marre these' (NLS MS 5070 fols. 88–89, 14 May 1642).

Exceptions to this pattern of extended superscriptions occur in the two letters sent to Stewart by Elizabeth of Bohemia, who instead used the simplified form: 'To the Ladie (of) Marr' (NLS MS 5087 fols. 103–104, 2 August 1625; NRS GD1/44/8, 30 November 1625). Elizabeth also used simplified superscriptions when writing to Stewart's husband, directing all nine of letters to him as 'To the Lord [or Earl] of Marr' as illustrated in Example 105 (NRS GD124/15/57/1–9, dating 1623–1627). Elizabeth's consistent use of this reduced form may index her own higher rank relative to the Mar couple.

6.4.1 Honorifics in Address Forms

As with forms used for female recipients, address forms for male recipients also cluster around a single dominant type: *My Lord*. This highly conventional form for addressing noblemen signalled formality (Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 1995, 570; Wiggins 2017, 71). As with *Madame*, *My Lord* was employed within the StEr CoP by both men and women, across kin and non-kin relationships, and by correspondents representing a wide range of social positions. It appears in letters sent by the royal correspondent Elizabeth of Bohemia as well as those written by family servants.

The address form occurs in letters to John Erskine (Mar elder), and to his sons John (Mar younger) and James (Buchan). Erskine himself used *My Lord* in eight letters to William Douglas (Morton), in non-kinship-based openings such as *My (very) honorable good lord*. Such formulae were common among status peers and are comparable to *Honored Cosen* (Nevala 2004, 281). Alexander and Henry Erskine similarly used the simple, negatively polite *My Lord*, alongside longer and more elaborate variants, in five and one letters respectively.

Another neutral male address form, *Sir*, found in English letters directed to gentry such as baronets or knights (Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 1995), appears in five StEr letters: four in Scots and one in French, in the form *Monsieur*. Like *My Lord*, *Sir* was used by both men and women, addressed to both kin and non-kin recipients, and appears in upward, downward, and lateral exchanges. In low-to-high interactions, for example, the middling correspondents G. Johnston and George Norvell used *Sir* when addressing the gentry correspondent Charles Erskine. Among status peers, Thomas Hope (gentry) likewise addressed his son-in-law Charles as 'Sir', while the noblewoman Henrietta Stuart (Huntly) used 'Monsieur' when addressing a fellow noble, James Hamilton (Hamilton). In a downward exchange, Marie Stewart used 'Sir' when writing to John Murray who, although later created Earl of Annandale, held only the rank of knight at the time the letter was sent in 1614 (MacDonald 2004).

Other opening address forms in the corpus cluster around hierarchical titles such as *Right honourable* and *Right noble*. In letters to Marie Stewart, Henry Dow used the Scots form 'Richt honorabill' (which he also used to address to John Erskine), while John Wallace and Louis Stuart (Kirkhill) employed the anglicised 'Right honorable'. Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (1995, 558) note the use of these deferential forms in English letters directed to nobles, and comparable patterns emerge among Scottish correspondents outwith the StEr CoP. For example, Elizabeth

Melville used ‘rycht nobill’ and ‘rycht honorabill’ in superscriptions to noble recipients (Reid-Baxter 2021, 43; 54).

Within the StEr corpus, three further male recipients were addressed using *Right Honourable* as an opening formula. Charles Erskine was addressed as ‘Richt honerabill’ in seven letters from John Rollock and one from G. Johnston. Katherine Clifton (Lennox) used the same form when addressing William Douglas (Morton), and Alexander Erskine addressed John Leslie (Rothes) as ‘Right honorabill . *$*.’, appending a fermesse symbol to the formula. These examples demonstrate that the StEr CoP used *Right Honourable* for both nobles such as Douglas and Leslie and for gentry-ranked individuals such as Charles Erskine.

Charles Erskine was also addressed by the alternative, *Right worshipful*, noted by Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (1995, 558; 578) to be appropriate for members of the landed gentry in English correspondence. In the StEr corpus it appears in Scots as ‘Rycht worshipful’, used by Kinloch when addressing Charles. As a younger son of the Earl of Mar, Charles was a knight and member of the landed gentry, making this form of address fitting for him.

6.4.2 Honorifics in the Body of Letters

Beyond epistolary formulae, StEr correspondents also used honorifics within the body of letters to convey deference in low-to-high interactions, a practice that accords with findings from English correspondence (Daybell 2006a, 189; Williams 2013a; Wiggins 2017, 65; Evans 2020, 97; 135). The technique is clearly visible in PETITIONS within the corpus. In two PETITIONS addressed to Marie Stewart, Alexander Erskine repeatedly used *your Ladyship*, the conventional form for a woman of her rank (Wiggins 2013b), resorting to the pronoun ‘yow’ only once (NLS MS 5155 fols. 14–15, 24 July 1638; fol. 18, 16 August 1638). He adopted the same strategy in his PETITION to John Leslie, using ‘yowr Lordship’ (NLS MS 5155 fol. 16, 24 July 1638), and Marie Stewart employed ‘ȝour Lordship’ in her scribal letter to William Douglas (NLS MS 80 fol. 53, 3 February 1604; Section 5.4.) Although such honorifics served as formulaic indicators of deference, writers in the StEr corpus typically abbreviated them, for example, ‘your La/’,’ your Laps/’, ‘ȝor L’,’ yr l/’, thereby saving time and space rather than writing the full title.

Correspondents also relied on this deferential technique in non-petitionary contexts. Stewart’s daughters, Marie and Anna, consistently displayed filial respect by referring to their mother as *your Ladyship* within the main text of their letters (NLS MS 5155 fol. 30, 24 July 1635; NLS MS 5070 fols. 32–33, 14 February 1636). Similarly, both John Rollock and John Schawe

avoided pronominal forms when writing to their employers Thomas Hope (Craighall), John Erskine (Mar elder), and Charles Erskine (Alva-Bandeath), opting instead for honorifics. By contrast, when writing to a fellow servant, Schawe, Henry Dow abandoned this deferential strategy and addressed him simply with the pronoun 'you'.

6.5 Kinship Formulae

Alongside honorifics, kinship terminology appears frequently across all three types of epistolary formulae in the corpus (Section 6.2). As noted above, Catherine de Balsac addressed her daughter as 'Ma fille', and other members of Marie Stewart's birth family likewise referenced their relational roles. Her siblings Esmé and Gabrielle respectively addressed her as 'Madame ma soeur' [Madame my sister] and 'Ma chere Soeur *$*' [My dear sister']. They subscribed their letters 'Votre tres fidelle frere & seruiteur' [Your very faithful brother and servant] and 'Uotre tres humble et plus obeissante sœur et seruante' [Your very humble and most obedient sister and servant'), and superscribed them 'A Madame *$* Madame La Contesse de Mar ma sœur *$*' [To Madame *$* Madame The Countess of Mar my sister *$*] and 'Madame ✚ Madame La comtesse De Mar ma sœur *$ $ $*' [Madame ✚ Madame the Countess of Mar my sister *$ $ $*] (NLS MS 5070 fol. 2, 16 May 1605; fol. 3, 28 January 1617). Notably, both correspondents also included fermesse symbols, and in Gabrielle's case, the Christian cross in the formulae, demonstrating that Scottish and French CoP members alike incorporated such symbols across all three kinds of epistolary formulae.

Section 6.2 also noted that *servant* formulae such as those found in Esmé and Gabrielle's subscriptions occur frequently, both in the closings of the StEr letters and in other contemporary correspondence. However, several CoP members expressed willingness to assist by adding the alternative phrase *at power*, signalling that they would endeavour to provide service to the best of their ability. This expression appears, for instance, in Henrietta's subscription to James Hamilton: 'Vostre plus affecionee niepie a san pouuoir' [Your most affectionate niece at her power]; in Louis Stuart's letter to Marie Stewart: 'ʒoŭr Ladyships humble servant to power' (NLS MS 5070 fols. 21–22, 9 March 1635); and in Marion Douglas' subscription:' Zour Ladyships most humble and lowng servant at pouer' (NLS MS 5070 fols. 69-70, 27 June 1640).[147] Comparable formulae also appear

[147] At power: At (all)(one's)(gudly etc.) power, to the best of one's ability. Common in subscriptions to letters in the 16th and 17th c. (*DSL* 4.0 'Power v.' sense 9b.(2)).

widely in other early modern Scottish and English correspondence (ScotsCorr 2007; CEEC-400 2020).[148]

Parents and children also marked filial relationships. Stewart opened sixteen of nineteen extant letters to her son Charles with 'Loueing sonne' (with spelling variation) and once with 'My deir sonne'. Her subscriptions to him include 'your louing mother' eleven times and 'your affectionatt mother' seven times: forms which appear to index closeness through the combination of premodifier and kinship term. However, in English letters the formulaic type *your (truly) loving mother* was highly conventional (Nevala 2003, 158), and Wiggins (2017, 82) cautions against reading such formulae as transparent indicators of relational stance, urging instead attention to how writers expressed their relationship in the main body of the letter. As noted in Section 5.3, Stewart regularly voiced concern for Charles and wrote to him with marked candour; these traits suggest a genuine closeness not necessarily captured by the formulae itself. This candour surfaces again in her subscription 'your to kind mother' (NLS MS 5070 fols. 47-48, 15 November 1639), a deliberately impolite sign-off composed during a period of tension over contractual negotiations, which wryly subverted her more conventional forms of maternal self-fashioning.

Stewart's fourteen extant superscriptions to Charles all adhere to predictable external formulae of the type 'for my son Charles Erskine (at location) *$ $ $*', with some noting his whereabouts (e.g., 'Edenbroch', 'Cambuskeneth', 'Bandethe'). The contrast between these formal exterior formulae and the more intimate interior address forms aligns with a disparity noted in other early modern epistolary corpora (Nevala 2004, 287; Williams 2013a). Only one superscription to Charles includes any evaluative element (underlined): 'for my <u>loveing</u> sonne Charles Erskine off Bandeathe' (NLS MS 5070 fols. 67–68, 27 June 1640). Yet beneath each block of superscription text appear three inscribed fermesse symbols. It may be that the symbols carry the affective force not verbally encoded in the words of the formula. Section 7.7 considers this symbolism in further detail.

In keeping with Stewart's own practice, the StEr children also drew on kinship terms in the formulae they used in letters to their parents. Marie Erskine addressed her mother as 'Madame and most louing mother' and signed off as 'your ladyships most obeydenit dochter' (NLS MS 5155 fol. 11, 24 July 1635), while her sister Anna styled herself 'your Ladyships Obedient Dochter and seruant' (NLS MS 5070 fols. 32–33, 14 February 1636). This subscription was also conventional in

[148] In both ScotsCorr (2007) and CEEC-400 (2020), the formula 'to/at (my/his/her) power' (with spelling variation) appear in subscriptions from both male and female correspondents.

English correspondence (Wiggins 2017, 82), where the adjective 'obedient' was frequently used by children signing off letters to parents (Williams 2013a). No extant correspondence from the Erskine daughters to their father survives, precluding direct comparison. It is, however, possible to compare the letters sent to the Earl and Countess by their sons, though as Section 1.3.5 noted, the numbers are uneven, and not all sons are represented on both sides. For the Countess, the corpus contains letters from Alexander (4), Arthur (3), and Charles (1); for the earl, it contains letters from Alexander (16), Henry (16), and James (1).

With these caveats in mind, comparison across the son-to-parent letters suggests that age may have influenced address form choices. All of the letters sent to Marie Stewart were written when her sons were in their mid-twenties or older. In these letters, Alexander, Arthur, and Charles consistently addressed their mother as *Madame*. Unlike their sister Marie, they relied solely on this standalone form, and their sister Anna did likewise when addressing their mother.

A similar age pattern emerges in the letters sent to John Erskine. In seven of the thirty-three StEr letters sent to their father, the sons used the reduced, negatively polite form *My Lord* (five by Alexander, three of which incorporate the fermesse; one by Henry; and one by James). Significantly, all of these letters were written when the sons were at least nineteen years old; James was twenty-seven when he sent his sole surviving letter to his father.

By contrast, the remaining twenty-six letters were written by Alexander and Henry when they were considerably younger: between the ages of twelve and sixteen. In these letters, both sons used substantially more elaborate formulae, all beginning with the title-based honorific *Right honourable*, which by this period had become a specification reserved for members of the nobility (Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 1995, 558). These openings combine intensifying adverbs, adjectives, and, at times, fermesse symbols, and also include the kinship term *father*. Alexander used the formula 'Right honourable and loving father' (with spelling variation) eleven times, including fermesses in one example. Henry varied his adjectives and intensifying adverbs, producing combinations such as 'Richt honorable lord *$* and most Loveing father' (NRS GD124/15/34/4, 22 August 1617); 'Right honorabill Lord and wery affectioned feather' (NRS GD124/15/34/10, 28 December 1618).

Scholars have identified a general seventeenth-century tendency for children to employ positive politeness strategies and comparatively simple address forms when writing to parents (Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 1995, 569; Nevala 2003, 160–61). However, Nevala (2003, 158; 161) notes an exception: when sons addressed fathers and daughters addressed mothers,

children tended to use more deferential formulae, particularly for high-status parents. Alexander and Henry's choices partially align with this pattern. They maintained the same base, *Right honourable*, but softened the formality of the title by adding the kinship term *father*, alongside adjectives, intensifying adverbs, and in some cases, fermesses. Alexander's addition of the fermesse to several of his *My Lord* address forms further reinforces this tendency. This mirrors the CoP practice of elaborating *Madame* with linguistic and symbolic elements to create formulae that sounded warmer, more familiar, or more affectively engaged.

Taken together, the surviving letters suggest that age and parental gender shaped address practices. The expanded formulae incorporating *father* are confined to letters written during Alexander and Henry's early teenage years, whereas the more reduced forms, *Madame* and *My Lord*, occur in letters written when the sons were older. At the same time, only the father was addressed through formulae explicitly invoking the parent-child relationship. Had letters from Henry and Alexander to their mother survived from their younger years, it is possible that they too would have employed expanded formulae incorporating the kinship term *mother*.

Yet, notwithstanding the differences observed in the opening formulae, the subscriptions and superscriptions in the son-to-parent letters exhibit greater consistency as Examples (107–119) illustrate.

Son-to-mother subscriptions:

(107) yoŭr ladyships obedint sone (Charles, NLS MS 5070 fols. 54-55, 5 January 1640)

(108) your Ladyships most I son and servantt till death (Arthur, NLS MS 5155 fols. 22-23, 15 October 1639)

(109) your Ladyships most obedient and affectionat sone (Alexander, NLS MS 5155 fols. 12–13, 17 September 1635)

Son-to-father subscriptions:

(110) your lordships most obedient and affectionet soone (Alexander, NRS GD124/15/35/12, 5 Aug 1623)

(111) Yoŭr Lordships most hŭmble and obediante Sone (Henry, NRS GD124/15/34/1, 5 June 1617)

(112) Yoŭr lordships most obedient sone and hŭmble serviteŭr (Henry, NRS GD124/15/34/8, 9 September 1618)

(113) your lordships most affectioned soon to serue you (James, NRS GD124/15/51, 13 March 1622)

Son-to-mother superscriptions:

(114) To the right honorabill my deare Mother the Countesse of Mar (Alexander, NLS MS 5155 fols. 12–13, 17 September 1635)

(115) for the trewlie Nobill and most worthie Ladie My Ladie Countes dowager of Mar (Arthur, NLS MS 5155 fols. 22-23, 15 October 1639)

(116) for my Honorad lady and mother the Coŭntes doŭager of Mare thes *$ $ $* (Charles, NLS MS 5070 fols. 54-55, 5 January 1640)

Son-to-father superscriptions:

(117) To the right honorable and my louing father the Erle of Mar (Alexander, NRS GD124/15/35/13, 4 Sep 1623)

(118) To the richt honorable Lord and his most affectionit feather, My lord the Erle of Mar (Henry, NRS GD124/15/34/7, 23 May 1618)

(119) To my most honorabill good lord and Loowing father The Erle of Mar lord hegh Threasaurer of Scotland Thess (Henry, NRS GD124/15/58, 1 March 1624)

The subscriptions reveal a shared pattern where the sons typically referred to themselves as either *your Ladyship's* or *your Lordship's son*, with additional adjectives such as *obedient, affectionate, loving, humble*, plus other elements including the intensifier *most*, a variant of the servant-form, and, in one instance from Arthur to Stewart, the avowal 'till death' (ex. 108).

The superscriptions display similarly structured sequences. Each described the recipients as *Right honourable, Honoured,* or *truly noble* (exs. 114–119). The kinship terms *mother* or *father* also appeared in thirty of the thirty-eight superscriptions (two of six addressed to Stewart and twenty-eight of thirty-two to John Erskine). Superscriptions to Stewart included evaluative sequences such as *my dear* (ex. 114) and *most worthy* (ex. 115), while those to John Erskine frequently incorporated *very* or *most* combined with *loving* or *affectionate* (exs. 117-119). In all exterior formulae, the recipient's official title is included: *The Countess of Mar, My Lady, Countess Dowager of Mar, My Lord, the Earl of Mar*, and in one case, *The Earl of Mar, Lord High Treasurer of Scotland* (ex. 119).

The formulae in the son-to-parent letters also index linguistic stance through their spelling selections. Henry, for example, consistently mixed Scots and English forms (*richt/right; honorabill/honorable; affectionit/affectioned; father/feather*). By contrast, Alexander, Arthur, and Charles largely favoured anglicised spellings with occasional exceptions: for example, Alexander's Scots spelling of 'honorabil[le]' and Arthur's and Charles' use of the tittle, as seen in Charles' 'Coŭntes doŭager' (NLS MS 5070 fols. 54-55, 5 January 1640). Overall, these patterns reflect their

broader linguistic repertoires: whereas Alexander's letters were almost entirely anglicised, the other three men display a blended Scots-English profile (Elder 2022, 82–94; Section 3.2).

6.5.1 Extended Kinship Terms: Cousin

Thus far, the discussion of kinship terms has focused primarily on formulae used in letters exchanged between individuals who were related by blood. However, early modern kinship terminology often carried broader and more flexible meaning where extended and spiritual kinship underpinned networks of patronage and assistance (Ewan and Nugent 2008, 6). Terms such as *brother*, *sister*, and *cousin* were used not only for biological connections but also to denote close ties within other social groups. Such labels functioned as expressions of camaraderie and mutual support, helping to construct kinship that extended beyond the household and family and into wider networks of alliance and obligation.

Within the StEr corpus, sibling terms are only applied to literal siblings, but other kinship terms appear in extended senses. For example, as Section 3.1 noted, Henrietta styled both her husband and herself as the recipient's nephew and niece in her letter to James Hamilton, although her husband and Hamilton were in fact cousins once removed (see footnote, p.86).

Another frequently occurring extended kinship term is *cousin* which could denote uncle–nephew relations, close friends, or members of a CoP engaged in reciprocal service and trust (Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 1995, 573; Conde-Silvestre 2016, 59–60). Section 6.4 noted that Henrietta Stuart addressed Anna Livingstone as 'Cousine', although Anna was actually the sister of Henrietta's son-in-law, who was married to her daughter, Elizabeth Gordon (Paul 1908, V:446–47). Yet by addressing Anna with this kinship term, Henrietta positioned her within a wider relational and patronage network. Similarly, the formula 'Madame ma cousine' was used to address Marie Stewart by Diane de Clére and [L] de Balsac, whose precise relationships to Stewart are unclear but likely derived from their shared Balsac kinship network (d'Hozier 1738, 217–18; Table 1-2). Extended usage also appears in Margaret Feilding's letter, where she styled herself in subscription as Stewart's *cousin*: 'yowr ledyships most hwmbell serwand and affectionate cwssing' (NLS MS 5070 fols. 30–31, 17 January 1636).

Alongside these extended uses, *cousin* also appears in contexts grounded in consanguinity. The only instance of its use for a literal first cousin in the corpus occurs in John Erskine (Mar elder)'s letter to John Murray (Annandale) (MacDonald 2004). More commonly, however, the term was applied to more distant relations. For example, *Honored Cosen*, a form conventionally

signalling equality of status (Nevala 2004, 28), was used by John Erskine (Mar younger) in addressing his step-brother Charles Erskine (NLS MS 5088 fols. 40–41, sent after 1634): although styled *cousin*, the two men shared the same father. Thomas Erskine (Kellie) addressed his nephew James Erskine (Buchan) as *cousin*, employing the superscription 'To the rycht honorabill verrye good lord & loving Cousing the erll of buchane theis' and the subscription 'your lordshipe's affectionet Cousing & servand' (NLS MS 5070 fols. 8–9, 1 May 1627).

Elizabeth of Bohemia's subscriptions to John Erskine and Marie Stewart also demonstrate a CoP member selecting *cousin* where a blood relationship existed.[149] When writing to John Erskine, to whom she was not related, she consistently styled herself 'Your most affectionat frend'. By contrast, when writing to Marie Stewart, to whom she was distantly connected, she styled herself 'Your most affectionat frend and cousen'. The addition of 'cousen' in the latter case is striking, Elizabeth explicitly marked a relational connection with Stewart that she did not extend to Erskine. She did this even though, as Section 3.1 noted, Elizabeth's father, James VI had been foster-brother to John Erskine. This suggests that Elizabeth attributed a distinctive social and affective position to Marie.

One correspondent who consistently used *cousin* to address his recipient was John Erskine (Mar elder) in his letters to William Douglas (Morton), whose grandfather was first cousin to Erskine's father (Sizer 2004). Erskine styled him 'cŭsing', and his letters provide further illustration of the combined use of kinship and hierarchical marking observed in the son-to-father formulae. In one example he opened 'My lord and loŭing Cŭsing' and closed 'ȝoŭr lordships loŭing Cŭsing to ȝoŭr serŭant' (NLS MS 80 fol. 40, 10 October 1608), combining assurance (*loving*) with deference (*My Lord, Your Lordship*) and humility (*your servant*). Similarly, another letter opened 'My honorable good Lord and loŭing Cŭsing' and closed 'ȝoŭr lordships Cŭsing and serŭantt' (NLS MS 80 fol. 48, 14 May 1631). His superscriptions likewise paired positive and negative politeness strategies, for example, 'To my honorable good Lord and Loŭing Cŭsing the erlle of mortoŭn' (NLS MS 80 fol. 43, 28 August 1627) and 'To my honorable good lord and Loŭing Cŭsing the erlle of morton Lord hieh tresŭrar of scottland' (NLS MS 80 fol. 48, 14 May 1631).

[149] The shelfmarks of Queen Elizabeth of Bohemia's letters to Marie Stewart, countess of Mar are: NLS MS 5087 fols. 103–104, 2 August 1625 and NRS GD1/44/8, 30 November 1625. Those she addressed to John Erskine, 2nd earl of Mar are all preserved in the NRS with the shelfmarks, GD124/15/57/1, 4 October 1623; GD124/15/57/2, 12 June 1625; GD124/15/57/3, 7 August 1625; GD124/15/57/4, 20 September 1625; GD124/15/57/5, 20 November 1625; GD124/15/57/7, 28 November 1626; GD124/15/57/8, 22 November 1631; and GD124/15/57/9, 24/06/1637.

The latter explicitly named Douglas' office, Lord High Treasurer of Scotland, a post held by Erskine from 1615 to 1630 and by Douglas from 1630 to 1636 (Goodare 2004; Sizer 2004). The corpus contains six letters sent by Erskine to Douglas after the latter's appointment, five of which include superscriptions naming Douglas' new office.[150] While such lengthy formulae might appear over-deferential, they were standard among the upper ranks (Nevala 2004, 281). As Nevala (2004, 288) notes, the superscription's fundamental purpose was accurate direction of correspondence; names and titles therefore had to be precisely specified. Erskine's formulae reveal both respect for Douglas' altered status and practical concern for unambiguous delivery.

The StEr corpus also reveals extended kinship usage in the practice of assigning kinship terms to children's marital partners and to parents-in-law, reflecting another pattern widely observed in early modern correspondence (Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 1995, 571–72). Marie Stewart, for example, addressed her daughter-in-law Mary Hope as 'Louing Dochter', subscribed as 'your affectionatt mother', and superscribed 'For my good Dochter the Ladie Bandeth, *$ $ $*' (NLS MS 5070 fols. 63–64, 17 June 1640). These selections closely mirror the formulae she used in letters to Charles, Mary Hope's husband.

Thomas Hope likewise used kinship terms in a pair of letters to his son and son-in-law though his selections varied according to the recipient. While he addressed his son Alexander simply as 'Sone', he used a more elaborate formula for Charles: 'My honorabill and deir Sone'. His closings also diverged: to Alexander he signed off as 'your loving and grievit fayer', whereas to Charles he closed 'your loving & affectionat fayer to serve yow' (NLS MS 5070 fols. 84–85, 17 February 1641; fols. 96–97, 9 October 1643). In his letter to Charles, Hope combined positive politeness markers signalling closeness (the pronominals 'My' and 'your'; adjectives such as 'deir, 'loving', 'affectionat'; and the kinship terms 'Sone', 'fayer') with more formal elements ('honorabill' and the deferential servant formulae 'to serve yow').

These choices align with other conventional usage in the corpus and suggest that Hope and Charles were on good terms, and that Hope wished to convey an appropriate level of respect to his son-in-law's social station. His simplified address 'Sone' and the self-description 'grievit' [afflicted or distressed] in his letter to Alexander can be explained by the letter's content, which concerned actions of Alexander's that had caused him distress (Section 5.3).[151] Much like Marie Stewart's adaptation of the sign-off 'your too kind mother' to signal displeasure towards her son

[150] These letters are NLS MS 80 fols. 47–51, dating 1631 to 1634. A sixth letter, NLS MS 80 fol. 52, 9 August 1634 has no superscription.

[151] Grievit: To vex, afflict, distress; to affect with sorrow or displeasure (*DSL* 4.0 'Greve v.').

at a particular moment, Hope's use of the affective adjective 'grievit' underscores his emotional stance, leaving Alexander with the image of his aggrieved father.

Joint letters, such as the one sent by Anna Erskine and her husband John Leslie (Rothes) to Marie Stewart, also illustrate the use of kinship terminology by correspondents related through marriage: Leslie superscribed the letter 'To my honored Ladie & mother The Countess off Marre these' (NLS MS 5070 fols. 32–33, 14 February 1636). Another son-in-law, John Lyon (Kinghorn), followed similar conventions in his four letters to Stewart, closing as 'Yoŭr Ladyships obedient sone and servant' and superscribing 'To my honorit gŭid Lady and Mother The Countess Doŭager off Mar' (NLS MS 5070 fols. 52–53, 30 December 1639). Lyon's inclusion of the title 'Dowager' accurately reflected Stewart's widowhood, the letter having been written five years after her husband's death.

6.5.2 Extended Kinship Terms: Friend, Gossip, and Cumer

In the same way that the early modern concept of *cousin* differs from its modern usage, other relational terms in the StEr formulae also diverge from contemporary meanings. Two distinct examples appear in the paired letters sent to John Murray (Annandale) by Marie Stewart and her husband. As Section 5.3 noted, Stewart's letter, is courteous and stylised, its apology largely performative. She closed as 'your most affetionat cumer to doe yow seruis' (NLS Adv.MS 33.1.1 v fol. 118, [10 October 1614]) using 'cumer', an early modern Scottish term for a godmother or close female associate (*DSL* 4.0 'Cummer n.2').[152]

By contrast, Erskine's letter is more prosaic, chiefly requesting that Murray procure him a Russian goshawk for hunting partridges: 'remember of a mŭscoŭia goshalk for me that is a good pertrikar' [remember a Muscovy goshawk for me that is a good partridger].[153] He closed '3oŭr loŭing Cŭsing and gossŭp'.[154] To a modern reader 'gossip' may appear pejorative or gendered, yet in the early modern period it had a broader semantic range. Its core meaning was 'godparent', but in England it also referred to women attending childbirth, and in Scotland to close male social or political associates (Dawson 2005, 38–40). In this context, Erskine's usage framed Murray

[152] Cummer, Cummar: A godmother (in relation to the parents and other godparents); a female intimate; a woman gossip (*DSL* 4.0 'Cummer n.2').

[153] Muscovia: Muscovy, also, by extension, Russia (*DSL* 4.0 'Muscovia n.').

[154] Gossop, Gossep: A godfather or godmother in relation to a child, its parents or each other: a fellow-sponsor (*DSL* 4.0 'Gossop n.').

simultaneously as kin and as a trusted political ally within Jacobean court culture, while Stewart, as his wife, correspondingly positioned herself within Murray's kinship network.

Friend likewise functioned as a relational marker denoting spiritual kinship, patronage, political affinity, and trust networks. Within the StEr corpus, for example, Stewart's use of the formulaic sequence 'My noble frend' in addressing Robert Ker in her FAMILIAR letter did not necessarily signal personal friendship in a modern sense. Rather, it represents a conventional formula employed by social superiors when addressing inferiors (Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 1995, 578). The meaning of Stewart's self-description as Ker's *humble servant* in her subscription 'your most affectionatt humble seruent' is similarly complex. In adopting this formula, Stewart was conforming to performative courtesy conventions rather than expressing literal subordination.

Outwith the StEr CoP, contemporary correspondents also used the term *friend* across a range of contexts, including familiar, business, and petitionary letters. For example, Bess of Hardwick styled both herself and her recipient as *friends* within her epistolary formulae, signing one letter to the Sheriff of Staffordshire concerning a tenant eviction as 'Yo^{r} very Loving frend' and addressing the superscription 'To my very Loving frend Mr Bagott Sheriff of Staffordshyer' (Wiggins 2017, 56–57). By deploying 'loving friend', a marker of positive politeness, correspondents positioned themselves as equals, frequently employing the phrase within the 'supposal and assurance' type linguistic script (Wiggins 2017, 66). Here, Bess used 'friend' in the same way that Stewart did: to signal courteous amity and mutual respect rather than genuine intimacy.

A further example appears within the StEr corpus in Stewart's PETITION to William Douglas, which Section 5.4 noted also followed the 'supposal and assurance' script. In this letter she styled herself '3our Lordships very assurat freynd' (NLS MS 80 fol. 53, 3 February 1604). Williams (2013a) notes that the adjective 'assured' appeared frequently in subscriptions between friends of equal standing. Stewart used a similar formula in writing to Thomas Hope, describing herself as 'your Lordships affectionnatt friend' (NLS MS 5155 fols. 30-31, 22 November 1640). In that letter she reluctantly sought Hope's assistance in supporting her proposed terms for a contractual agreement she regarded as financially unjust: 'Now when necessitie compellethe me, I am forced to haue my recourse to your helpe' [Now when necessity compels me, I am forced to have recourse to your help]. Using emotive language to express the strength of her feelings, she sought to persuade Hope, and thereby Charles, to adopt her position. Her rhetoric is highly charged and appeals to sympathy, presenting herself as vulnerable to their actions and referring to her age,

infirmity, and the possibility of her imminent death. Yet the overall stance remains one of assurance, conveyed through confident assertions of both her own intentions: 'I haue resolved to mak offer' [I have resolved to make offer], and her expectation of compliance: 'I am perswadit, your Lordship […] may atteane payment' [I am persuaded your Lordship […] may obtain payment]; 'the doeing off yis will shaw my sonnes goodwill to me, which […] wilbe a more spiedie reliefe to hym' [The doing of this will show my son's goodwill to me which […] will be a quicker relief to him]; I 'expectis your answeare' [expect your answer] (NLS MS 5155 fols. 30-31, 22 November 1640).

Another CoP member who adopted a similar approach was Katherine Clifton (Lennox). In writing to William Douglas to inform him that she and her son had authorised a third party to collect her son's royal pension, and to request that Douglas facilitate the process, she used requestive strategies characteristic of the 'supposal and assurance' script. For instance, she used flattery and expressed firm expectations that Douglas would act as required, as in 'I doubt noth bot your Grace oŭt of yoŭr honerable disposition and love to him will be so cairfŭll that his pension be ansrit and payit' [I do not doubt that, due to your honourable disposition and love for him, your Grace will be very careful that his pension will be answered and paid] and 'Nocht doŭbting bot your Grace will be cairfull that the samyn may be satisffied' [Not doubting that your Grace will be careful that the same may be satisfied] (NLS MS 80 fol. 22, 29 October 1630). She also promised reciprocation: 'I shall eaŭer be reddy to reqŭyte your Grace's loue' [I shall ever be ready to requite your Grace's love]. Her subscription, 'Your Grace's assured good frend', continued this assured stance, mirroring Stewart's petitionary strategy.

Contrasting uses of *friend* formulae also appear in two letters concerning the requisitioning of horses for the Covenanting army. The first, from George Stirling (Keir) to John Rollock, appears to answer a query about Charles Erskine's expected contribution. Stirling responded by saying that Charles 'would not be wanting in what concernes him to doe in this shire for putting out horse as fals him for the troupe' [would not fail to do his duty for this shire, for supplying horses for the troop]. He asked Rollock to encourage Charles to join his troop in order to prompt wider compliance. Stirling's formulae placed the interaction firmly on the positive-politeness end of the scale. He used *friend* in all three positions, addressing Rollock as 'Louing Freind', signing off as 'ȝour freind', and superscribing For 'My louing Freind Mr Iohn Rolocke commissair of Dumblain These' (NLS MS 5155 fols. 24-25, 27 June 1640). These formulae construct an assured, collegial footing. Yet Stirling's higher social rank suggests that the stance is strategic. By presenting Rollock

as an equal, he may have been signalling respect for Rollock's role within Stewart's household, and thus adopting an affiliative, cooperative posture.

The second letter, a joint communication from the Committee of Estates to Stewart, offers a contrasting deployment of the formula (see ex. 42). Only the subscription contains the term *friend*: 'Your Ladyships affectionat freindis to serve yow' (NLS MS 5070 fols. 75-76, 27 July 1640). The opening 'Madame' and the superscription 'To our very honorable Lady Dame Mary Coŭntese of Marre' mark distance and formality, yet the subscription blends positive politeness (*affectionate, friends*) with negative politeness (*to serve you*).

The letter's tone is otherwise authoritative. The Committee responded to Stewart's complaint with 'we can not censure [Keir] without heiring or citacioun' [we cannot censure [Keir] without hearing or citation] and advised her 'So wishing your Ladyship to strayne yourselff for the furtherance of this present expeditioun cheirfullie' [So wishing your Ladyship to cheerfully compel yourself for the furtherance of this present expedition].[155] Although framed as a wish, this functions as a reprimand and an implicit directive. Their use of *friends* signals that, despite Stewart's high status as Dowager Countess of Mar, the Committee members, as parliament's representatives, occupied the superior institutional position. The *servant* formula maintains decorum, but the overall stance is assured rather than deferential (Section 6.7 explores how the layout of the letter further supports this stance).

6.6 Affective and Unconventional Epistolary Formulae

A small number of formulae departed from convention in affective or playful ways. In several cases, the correspondents appeared to adjust their formulaic selections in line with the tone or emotional content of the letter. As Section 5.4 noted, both Lantie and Forbes closed their letters by promising to act as 'daily orators' [prayer-givers] for Marie Stewart, styling themselves as 'ȝour Ladyships most humble servitor and daylie orator' (NLS MS 5070 fols. 4–5, 10 March 1623), and 'ȝour Ladyships humble serrvand & daly oratir' (NRS GD124/15/95, 2 January 1633). These formulae combine the conventional servant role with an additional, explicitly devotional identity.

Stewart herself also employed an unusually affective formula in her letter to her son Charles, dated 9 November 1639, addressing him as 'My deir heart'. This expression parallels Bess of

[155] Strayne: To constrain, force, compel. Also to restrain, control (*DSL* 4.0 'Strenȝe v.1').

Hardwick addressing her spouse as ‘my deare harte’ during periods of marital harmony (Wiggins 2017, 40; 71–72). With the exception of one letter in which Stewart used his given name ‘Charles’ (NLS MS 5070 fols. 73-74, 29 June 1640) all her other opening addresses to him referenced their kinship, making ‘My deir heart’ distinct. In this message, Stewart expressed anxiety for Charles’ wellbeing: ‘the sair day ye had did troubell me much, I will be glaid to heare from yow with the first occasion’ [the difficult day you had troubled me [very] much, I will be glad to hear from you on the first occasion [as soon as is possible for you]) (NLS MS 5070 fols. 45–46, 9 November 1639). Her final remarks reinforced this concern, praying that God would ‘send me good newis of my deir berne’ [send me good news of my dear child] (Section 5.3). When set alongside the content of Stewart’s letter, the use of this distinct address form suggests a similarly strong emotional attachment.

Thomas Hope (Craighall) also appeared to adapt epistolary formulae to express his emotional stance. As Section 6.5.1 noted, in a letter addressing distressing behaviour on his son Alexander’s part, he subscribed himself ‘your loving and grievit fayer’ (NLS MS 5070 fols. 84–85, 17 February 1641) signalling his sorrow and disappointment. The choice of ‘grievit’ functions as an explicit affective marker, aligning the subscription with the tenor of the letter body.

A similar strategy was employed by Thomas Hamilton (Binning) in his letter to his mother-in-law Marie Stewart. Hamilton described the anxiety caused by the substantial debt he had incurred while trying to recover her late daughter Katherine’s jewels (Section 3.3), noting that ‘yow may Imayin that the want of such a soume doeth ly heauy upon me but I must beare that with the other misfortouns that hath bifalne me’ [you may imagine that the want of such a sum lies heavy on me, but I must bear that with the other misfortunes that have befallen me]. He subscribed the letter ‘your Ladyships unfortunate sonne and humble seruante’ (NLS MS 5070 fols. 36–37, 13 May 1636). By styling himself ‘unfortunate’, Hamilton reinforced the emotional stance already established in the letter body, using formulae to frame his narrative of hardship and to elicit sympathy from Stewart.

Other examples of unconventional formulae also stand apart. One is John Schawe’s opening ‘weilbelouit’, addressed to Henry Dow (NRS GD124/15/33/1, 5 June 1617): both men were employees of the StEr family. This form represents a reduced version of the standard chancery sequence *(right) trusty and (right) well-beloved* which was used for addressees across the social hierarchy (Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 1995, 545; Evans 2020, 77). As he drew his letter to a close, Schawe wryly asked Dow to ‘remimber me to all our bourd, bot espetiallie to the gentiluemens tabil uhich uill not mise me in your throng’ [remember me to all our company but

especially to the gentlemen's table which will not miss me in your crowd], a humorous aside that implies an amicable relationship and shared social context.[156] He then concluded with the unadorned sign-off, 'your seruand'. Together, the reduced address form and subscription point to a deliberately plain style that avoids excessive formality while still signalling mutual goodwill and ongoing readiness to assist.

Most of these unusual formulae occur in isolation within a letter. In Schawe's letter, for example, only the opening address is unconventional: the subscription and superscription conform to broader StEr practice. The same pattern holds across the other examples discussed above. One letter, however, is distinguished because its formulae not only align closely with the tone of the message but also all are distinct within the corpus. Moreover, all three appear in French, while the letter body alternates between English and French. This letter was sent by James Graham (Montrose) to an unnamed knighted recipient, whom he addressed as 'Mon tres cher chevalier' [My very dear knight] (see p.66). Both the subscription and superscription also depart from corpus norms, adopting an elevated, courtly register consistent with the letter's style, as illustrated in this extract from the closing section (ex. 120):

> (120) it is deseired by your freinds here, that yow would be so curteous as to interceed with madame vôstre mere, that our nymphe may not be taken from us […] that makes me give your honor the troble of this de la part de toutte la famille, to entreat, that we may enioye mistress Katharines company awhile longer, now pray Knight acquitte your self hansomly. And obtain me this favor which will I assure yow be most oblidgeing to
>
> vostre entièrement eternellement
>
> Montrose
>
> [it is desired by your friends here, that you would be so courteous as to intercede with Madame, your mother, that our nymphe may not be taken from us […] [and] that makes me give your honour the trouble of this, to entreat on behalf of all the family, that we may enjoy Mistress Katherine's company awhile longer. Now pray, Knight, acquit yourself handsomely and obtain me this favour which, I assure you, will be most obliging to
>
> yours entirely and eternally
>
> Montrose] (NLS MS 5155 fols. 3–4, 10 October undated [aft. 1625])

In keeping with the address form 'Mon tres cher chevalier', the highly stylised subscription, 'vostre entièrement eternellement' reinforces the courtly style of the letter. The superscription, 'vostre

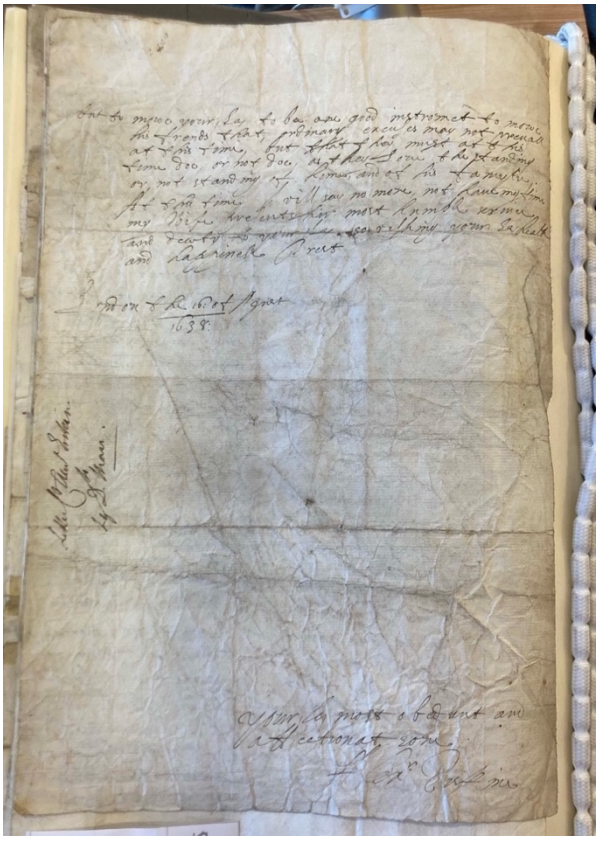
[156] Bourd: The company seated at a table. ('Burd n.1' sense 2.c).

fidel Equier vous baisse les mains' [your faithful squire humbly kisses your hands] likewise extends this performance, staging a conventional gesture of deference through the written formula. As Evans (2020, 22–23; 40) has noted, early modern correspondents sometimes described or enacted ritualised acts such as hand-kissing in their letter-writing practices. In this instance, Montrose's formulae aligns closely with the hybrid English–French text, contributing to a playful, courtly persona that draws on literary and aristocratic tropes. The letter therefore stands out within the StEr corpus as an example in which all three formulaic positions work together to support a deliberately poetic and theatrical epistolary persona.

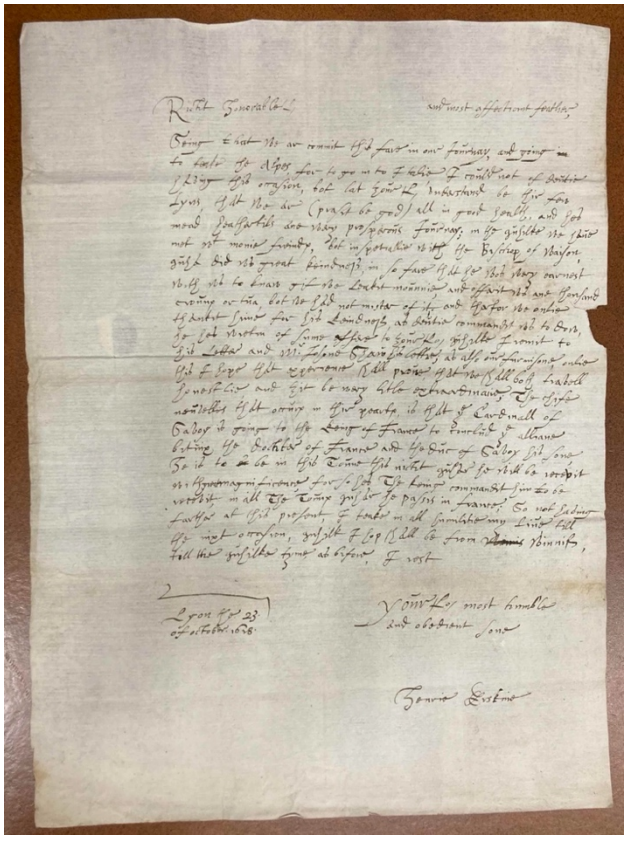
6.7 Politeness Expressed Visually in Epistolary Formulae

As Section 1.1 noted, alongside symbolic marking, CoP members used blank space as a pragmatic resource. Following practices taught in contemporary letter-writing manuals, the CoP members demonstrate an awareness of how to manipulate space in epistolary opening, closing and superscription sections (Daybell 2012, 91–92). Within the StEr corpus, nineteen different senders employed significant spacing across fifty-two letters. Forty-eight letters contain notable space only in the closing section, four display significant space only in the opening section, and three include spacing in both. Moreover, several correspondents combine spacing with symbolic marking. As noted above, Alexander used the fermesse symbol in his four *Madame* forms addressed to his mother and in four of his sixteen opening addresses to his father. Henry included the fermesse in ten of sixteen opening addresses to their father, and Charles employed the symbol in his single extant superscription to his mother (ex. 116; Section 7.7). In addition, in fourteen of the forty-one StEr letters that Alexander and Henry sent to their parents, they incorporated deliberate spacing in their subscriptions whenever the letter's length allowed. This visual indexing of respect aligns with practices observed in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English correspondence sent by children to parents (Daybell 2012, 93–94; Wiggins 2017, 188) and reflects broader Scottish tendencies continuing into the later seventeenth century (Meurman-Solin 2013).

Figure 6-6 illustrates two examples. The first, on the left, is Alexander's PETITION to his mother (Section 5.4) in which he left a large blank area at the end of the folio and positioned his subscription and signature at the very bottom. The second, a letter from Henry to his father (categorised as FAMILIAR/TRAVEL), contains a smaller blank area that is nevertheless significant when compared with the rest of the layout and with Henry's other letters to his father.



Col. Alexander Erskine to Marie Stewart, countess of Mar, NLS MS 5155 fol. 18v, 16 August 1638



Sir Henry Erskine to Marie Stewart, countess of Mar, NRS GD124/15/34/9, 23 October 1618

Figure 6-6: Significant space in Alexander and Henry Erskine's subscriptions

Given that the leftmost letter in Figure 6-6 was a PETITION seeking Stewart's support, the use of space is appropriate, aligning with Daybell's (2012, 92) observations on English petitions. Alexander appears to have used spacing to underscore deference and obedience as part of his requestive strategy. However, more broadly, the presence or absence of space in the sons' letters correlates more closely with physical constraints than with genre or rhetorical aim. The evidence suggests that they used spacing whenever the layout permitted it.

Beyond Alexander and Henry, other CoP members also employed spacing as indicated in Figure 6-7's seven further examples.

Significant space in openings and closings

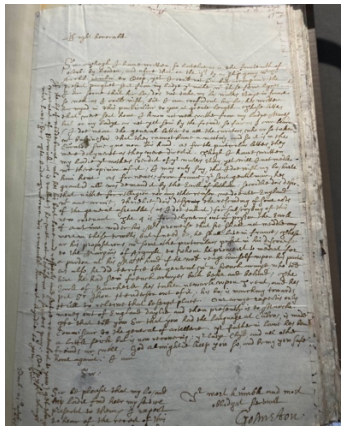


Image i: G. Johnston to Charles Erskine (Alva-Bandeath), NLS MS 5155 fol. 47r, 21–23 October 1643.

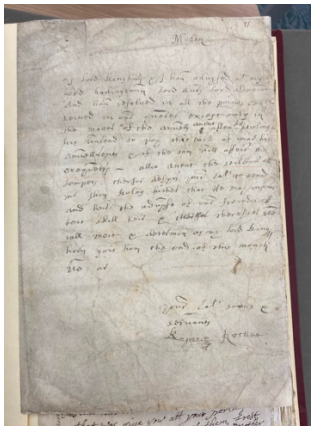
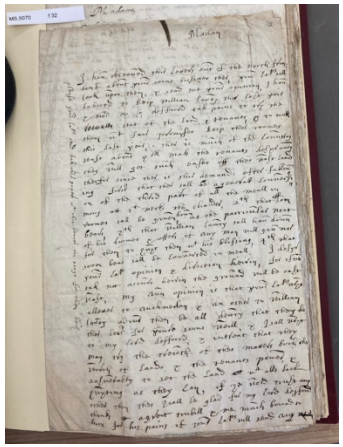
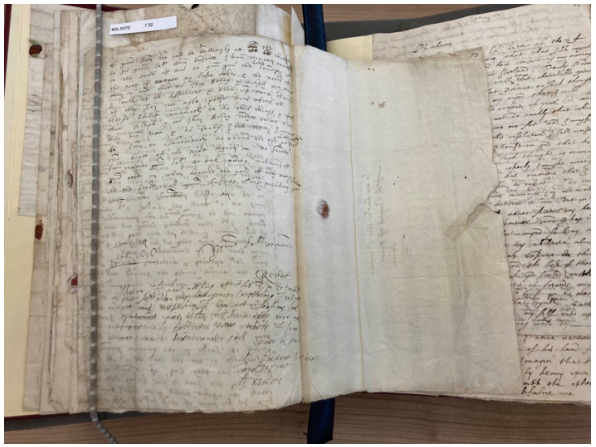


Image ii: John Lyon (Kinghorn) and John Leslie (Rothes) to Marie Stewart, NLS MS 5070 fol. 71r, 27 June 1640.





Images iii & iv: John Leslie (Rothes) and Anna Erskine (Rothes) to Marie Stewart, NLS MS 5070 fols. 32r–33r, 14 February 1636.

Significant space in opening only

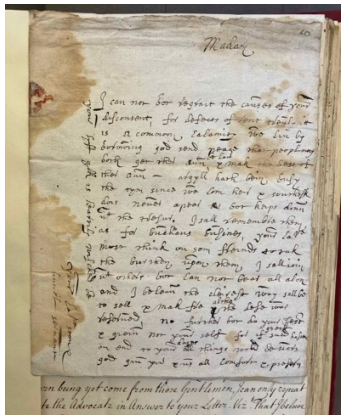


Image v: John Leslie (Rothes) to Marie Stewart, NLS MS 5088 fol. 60r, undated

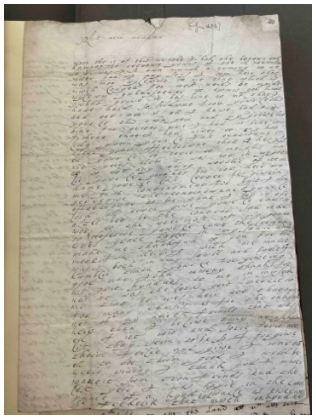


Image vi: Margaret Feilding (Hamilton) to Marie Stewart, NLS MS 5070 fols. 30r and detail of fol. 31r, 17 January 1636.

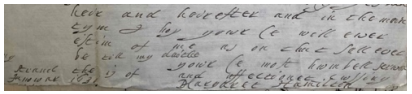


Image vii

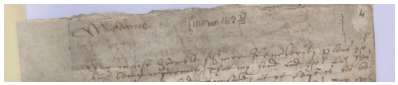


Image viii

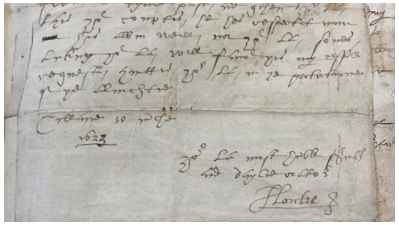


Image ix

J. Lantie to Marie Stewart, details of NLS MS 5070 fol. 4r and fol. 5r, 10 March 1623

Significant space in opening and closing

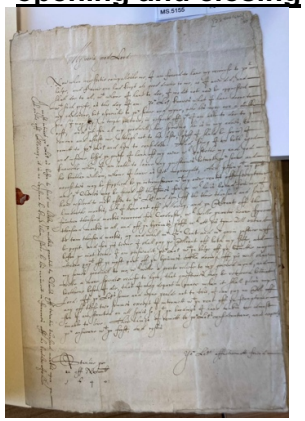


Image x: Marie Stewart to Thomas Hope (Craighall), NLS MS 5155 fols. 30-31, 22 November 1640.

Figure 6-7: Significant space in openings and closings

Writing to the gentry-ranked Charles Erskine, the middling-ranked G. Johnston (a servant of Charles sister, Katherine) left a blank space between the address and the start of the main text: 'Right honorable [space] Sir: Thogh I haue written, so latelie', and then left space before the subscription:

> I am
> Sir:
> [space]
> Your most hŭmble and most oblidgit servand (Figure 6-7: Image i).

The practice of placing an additional address form (here *Sir*) on a separate line between the body of the letter and the subscription was a mid-seventeenth-century innovation (Daybell 2012, 91) and occurs six times in StErCor2, although space constraints sometimes prevented writers from leaving a full blank line between the additional address form and the subscription.[157]

John Leslie (Rothes) also used spacing in three self-penned letters to his mother-in-law Marie Stewart. Two were joint letters: one with John Lyon (Kinghorn) (Figure 6-7: Image ii) and one with Anna Erskine (Figure 6-7: Images iii–iv). The third was Leslie's individually sent letter (Figure 6-7: Image v). In each case, a large blank area appears between 'Madam' and the main text, a layout consistent with Scottish examples observed by Meurman-Solin (2013).[158] In the joint letters, further gaps precede the subscriptions: '[space] ȝour Ladyships soons & serŭants' (Figure 6-7: Image ii) and '[space] Yoŭr Ladyships serŭand' (Figure 6-7: Image iv). Daybell (2012, 93) observes that in joint letters the placement of signatures reflected the writers' status, with lower-ranked signatories placed lower on the page. In the example with John Lyon (Kinghorn) (Figure 6-7: Image ii), the signatures 'Kingorne' and 'Rothes' appear on the same line, indicating equal rank. In John Leslie (Rothes)'s individual letter, he ran out of room and continued in the left margin, explaining the absence of spacing after the subscription (Figure 6-7: Image v). Several other StEr correspondents likewise used margins when space was exhausted, another practice

[157] The six StErCor2 examples occur in letters sent to Marie Stewart, countess of Mar, by I. Reade (NLS MS 5088 fols. 50–51, undated); by George Baird and Ewan Dunmure (NLS MS 5070 fol. 11, 9 August 1632); and by Colonel Alexander Erskine (NLS MS 5155 fol. 8, 31 July 1631). Other instances occur in letters sent to William Douglas, 7th earl of Morton by Katherine Clifton, 2nd Baroness Clifton, duchess of Lennox (NLS MS 80 fol. 21, undated, possibly 1 January 1630); to John Erskine, 2nd earl of Mar, from James Erskine, 6th earl of Buchan (NRS GD124/15/51, 13 March 1622); and to Sir Charles Erskine by John Erskine, 3rd earl of Mar (NLS MS 5088 fols. 40–41, After 1634).

[158] Meurman-Solin (2013) included three examples of Scottish letters in which the opening address form, 'Madame' or 'Dear Madam' was separated from the subsequent text by blank space, although the size of the space differed between the examples. Meurman-Solin 2013, Letters 10, 18, and 24.)

noted by Daybell (2012, 100).[159] Leslie also omitted a signature, ending the letter only 'yoŭr ladyshipe's soone & humbl seruant'.

Although Margaret Feilding included space in her letter opening: 'Mast deir madame [space] wpon the i5 of this mwnthe' (Figure 6-7: Image vi), she was nonetheless unable to insert a gap before her subscription. Since her letter is so densely written, the subscription and signature, 'yowr ledyships most hwmbell serwand and affectionate cwssing Margaret Hamilton', appear cramped at the foot of fol. 31r (Figure 6-7: Image vii). Lantie's letter illustrates the difficulty of interpreting spacing intention: the opening contains approximately three lines of blank space (tagged in the corpus as significant), whereas the closing gap is under two lines and is not tagged (Figure 6-7: Images viii–ix).

Marie Stewart's letter to Thomas Hope includes significant spacing in both opening and closing sections (Figure 6-7: Image x). As the only confirmed scribal example among these letters, it is unclear whether the spacing originated with Stewart, the amanuensis, or both. Like Leslie's letter, it is unsigned, which might imply a secretarial copy. However, a subsequent letter from Hope confirms receipt of the unsigned original:

> (121) I receaved ȝo[ur] Ladyships letter, bot much moir indisposit after the reiding thairof, quhilk I tak to be the style of one very far discontented, but salbe loth to imput it to ȝour Ladyship seing the letter hes not ȝour ladyships subscriptioun to it, & no resemblance to the goodnes of ȝour ladyships iust & pious desyres.
>
> [I received your Ladyship's letter, but [I am] much more indisposed after the reading thereof, which I take to be the style of one very far discontented, but shall be loath to imput it to your Ladyship seeing [that] the letter does not have your Ladyship's subscription on it, and no resemblance to the goodness of your Ladyship's just and pious desires] (NLS MS 5070 fol. 83, 25 November 1640).

Stewart's original letter to Hope indeed expressed discontent. Together with her son Charles, she was attempting to resolve financial matters relating to annualrents, land and his marriage contract, and felt pressured by both men. As she lamented: 'I am straited all sydis so, y[at] ye burdings I haue makis me almost ŭnable to live' [I am oppressed [on] all sides so that the burdens I have make me almost unable to live] (NLS MS 5155 fols. 30–31, 22 November 1640).[160]

---

[159] Some examples where writers turned the page to complete the letter in the margin include letters sent by Marie Stewart, countess of Mar to Sir Charles Erskine (NLS MS 5088 fol. 78, 15 December c.1639; fols. 76–77, 31 December 1639), to Sir Thomas Hope (NLS MS 5155 fols. 30-31, 22 November 1640); by Sir Arthur Erskine of Scotscraig to Marie Stewart, countess of Mar (NLS MS 5155 fols. 44-45, 19 May 1643); and by G. Johnston to Sir Charles Erskine (NLS MS 5155 fols. 47–48, 21–23 October 1643).

[160] Straited: Afflicted, oppressed. (*DSL* 4.0 'Straited ppl. adj.').

Nevertheless, it seems unlikely that either Stewart or Leslie intentionally omitted their signatures. In both cases, the omission was probably accidental.

Spacing could also signal meaning through its deliberate absence as confirmed in a notable example of the Committee of Estates' letter to Stewart. Section 6.5.2 argued that the senders sought to convey their authority through their subscription formula, and this is reinforced by the spacial layout (Figure 6-8).

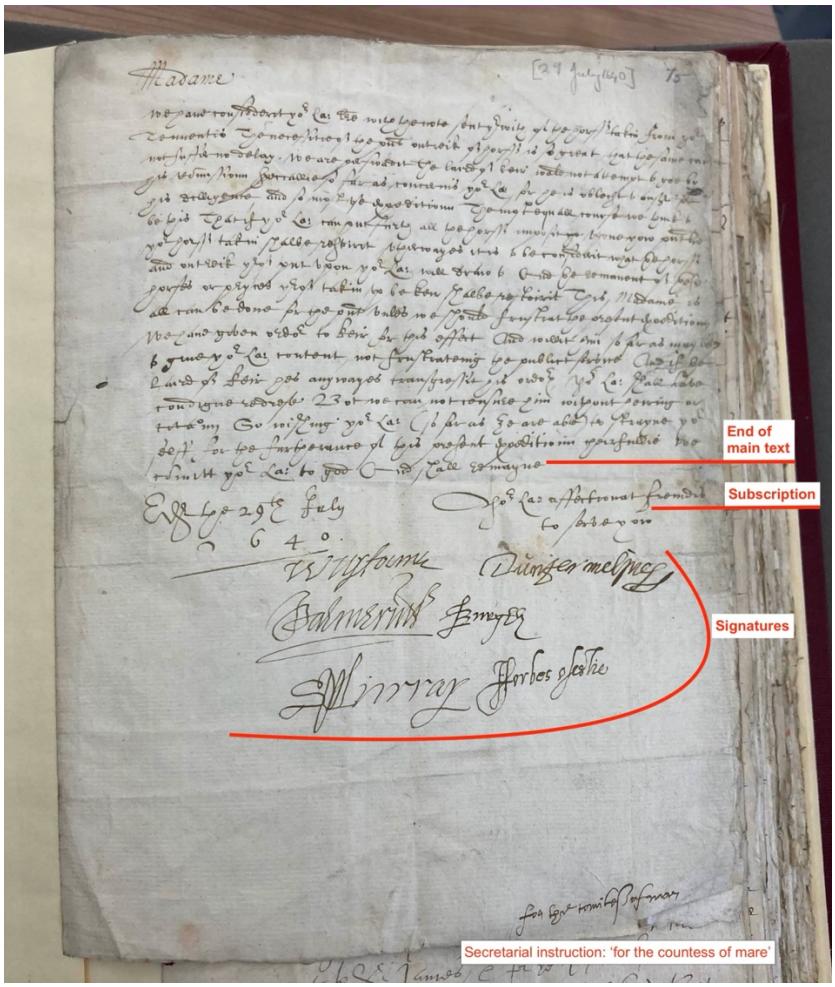


Figure 6-8: Layout used to signify authority (Committee of Estates to Marie Stewart, countess of Mar, NLS MS 5070 fols. 75-76, 27 July 1640)

Figure 6-8 shows the main text, subscription, and signatures positioned closely together with very little space left between them, and a large blank area reserved beneath the signatures. Daybell (2012, 93) notes that leaving space below the signatures signified superior status and authority. The layout therefore demonstrates the senders' awareness of how to adapt not only linguistic formulae but also material features of the letter to assert their institutional authority.

6.8 Epistolary Formulaic Language: Discussion of Findings

Across StErCor2, members of the StEr CoP adapted epistolary formulaic language to index multiple facets of their relationships, often combining hierarchy, intimacy, and convention within a single expression. Their practices closely align with patterns attested in contemporary English correspondence and other Scottish sources, with many constructions reflecting widely shared early modern norms.

Madame emerges as the dominant and socially appropriate address for a Scottish noblewoman such as Marie Stewart, paralleling usage among English counterparts. Honorifics were widely employed: *Right Honourable* appeared in low-to-high exchanges with nobles and, in one instance, for the gentry-ranked Charles Erskine. The conventional masculine honorific, *My Lord*, served for a Scottish nobleman such as John Erskine in the same way as it did for English noblemen. For gentry-level recipients, *Sir* appears occasionally, and *Right Worshipful* was employed for Charles Erskine. Honorifics also recur within letter bodies, particularly in petitionary contexts and low-to-high interactions, where correspondents avoided pronominal address to maintain deference.

All three types of epistolary formulaic language (address forms, subscriptions, superscriptions) occur in both reduced and extended forms. *Madame*, in particular, frequently appears as a standalone address. In extended constructions the intensifying adverbs *most, very* and *right*, well attested in English epistolary formulae (Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 1995, 557), also occur in these Scottish examples, alongside evaluative adjectives such as *loving, affectionate,* and *humble*. Many formulae combine positive- and negative-politeness strategies within a single expression.

In line with wider scholarship, a clear contrast emerges between the formality of superscriptions, which index social correctness and foreground titles, and the more affective interior formulae, which make greater use of possessives, evaluative adjectives, and kinship markers. Titles in superscriptions were particularly significant, reflecting the superscription's dual function as a politeness device and as a practical aid to correct delivery.

Kinship terms appear frequently across the corpus, with the sibling-sibling, parent-child and child-parent formulae broadly following patterns attested in English correspondence. The Erskine sons' address forms to their parents appear to have been shaped primarily by age. In their early teens, Alexander and Henry employed complex, multi-element formulae containing the kinship term *father*; by adulthood, however, sons addressed their father using the reduced form *My Lord*.

Likewise, the surviving letters sent to their mother, all written when the sons were in their mid-twenties or older, use the unembellished form *Madame*. Although these pattern partly accord with contemporary English practice, in which sons were more likely to use negative politeness strategies when addressing their high-ranking fathers, the StEr sons' formulae combine positive and negative strategies. Some also incorporate symbols which, as Chapter 7 will argue, may constitute an additional positive politeness strategy.

The epistolary formulaic language also reveals a mismatch between modern and early modern semantic fields. *Cousin* was used expansively to denote not only blood relations but also affinal kin, political allies, and status peers. Such extended usage highlights the distinction between formulaic convention and relational stance: *cousin* often expressed desired alignment, affinity, or parity rather than close consanguinity. Kinship terms were also applied to in-laws, illustrating the flexibility of the kinship lexicon and its role in networks of obligation and affection. *Gossip* carried a specifically EModS meaning as a masculine term of political camaraderie, distinct from English usage. Likewise, *friend* did not necessarily denote personal intimacy in the formulae but more often signalled parity of status and a stance of assurance or confidence on the part of the correspondent.

Finally, the examination of Stewart's own epistolary practice reveals a tension between formulaic convention and relational stance. While formulae often project conventional decorum, the body of her letters, particularly those to her son, frequently conveys stronger affective investment by means of her candid voice. At times, Stewart and other CoP members modified formulaic language through intensifying adverbs or evaluative adjectives to reflect emotional states, demonstrating that affective modulation was an available and meaningful resource within the CoP's shared epistolary repertoire.

Alongside these linguistic strategies, CoP members also deployed material and visual features, such as layout, spacing, and non-alphabetic symbols, as complementary resources for managing politeness, deference, and intimacy. While this chapter has focused on epistolary formulaic language in its textual forms, Chapter 7 turns to symbols as a further component of the StEr CoP's shared repertoire. By examining extratextual signs, and in particular the fermesse, the next chapter explores how visual and material conventions worked alongside language to maintain relationships, express affiliation, and negotiate meaning within the StEr CoP.

Chapter 7 Symbols

This chapter addresses Research Question 2c: how did members of the StEr CoP use the formulaic language of symbols in their correspondence to construct and negotiate relationships, exert mutual influence, and reflect sociolinguistic identities? The chapter begins by outlining the material and visual features commonly found in early modern letters (Section 7.1), surveys extratextual pen marks in the StEr corpus and distinguishes these from symbols (Section 7.2), and then analyses three individual symbols which appear in the StEr letters: the hexagram, the cross, and a monogram (Section 7.3). The remainder of the chapter focuses on the fermesse, a symbol recurring across the letters: its origins and meanings (Section 7.4), identification process (Section 7.5), and a quantitative distribution (Section 7.6), are followed by qualitative analyses of its function and significance (Sections 7.7–7.10). This chapter concludes with a summary and discussion of key findings (Section 7.11).

7.1 The Material and Visual Features of Early Modern Letters

This thesis focuses on symbols as the third component of the StEr CoP's shared repertoire for three reasons. First, scholarship on the material and visual features of early modern letters confirm that these elements have an equivalent capacity to linguistic features to carry meaning (Wiggins 2017, 9–11, Evans 2020, 23; Smith 2020, 12; Dambrogio and Smith 2025). Second, the StEr manuscripts contain numerous non-alphanumeric symbols which, given this thesis' close engagement with the primary sources, merit investigation. Third, this thesis argues that the correspondents' symbolic practices reflect shared conventions and reciprocal influence, paralleling the patterns identified for religious and epistolary formulaic language.

The reasons are considered in turn, beginning with the capacity for the letters' material and visual features to carry meaning. To illustrate the multimodal potential of the StEr letters, two manuscripts with contrasting visual and material characteristics are compared. The first example is the letter sent by Diane de Clére to Marie Stewart, in which she addressed her relative as 'Madame ma cousine' (NLS MS 5087 fol. 87, undated [1592–1644]).[161] Of Stewart's forty-seven extant received letters, forty-one were written in Scots and one in English; the remaining five,

[161] Although the letter is undated, the superscription to 'Madame la comtesse de mare' indicates it was written after Stewart's marriage in 1592 and therefore before her death in 1644.

including de Clére's, were in French.[162] These five letters were sent by close family members who shared French as their native language, which likely accounts for their linguistic choice.

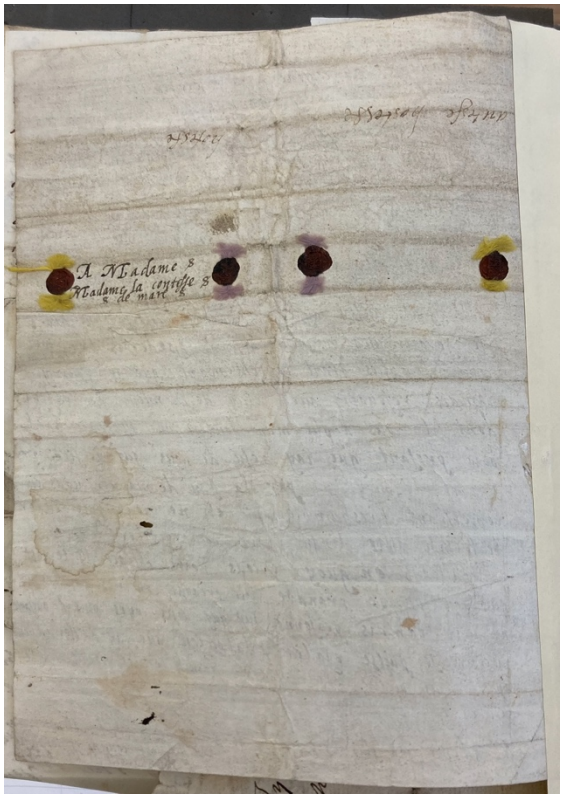


Image i: fol. 87v

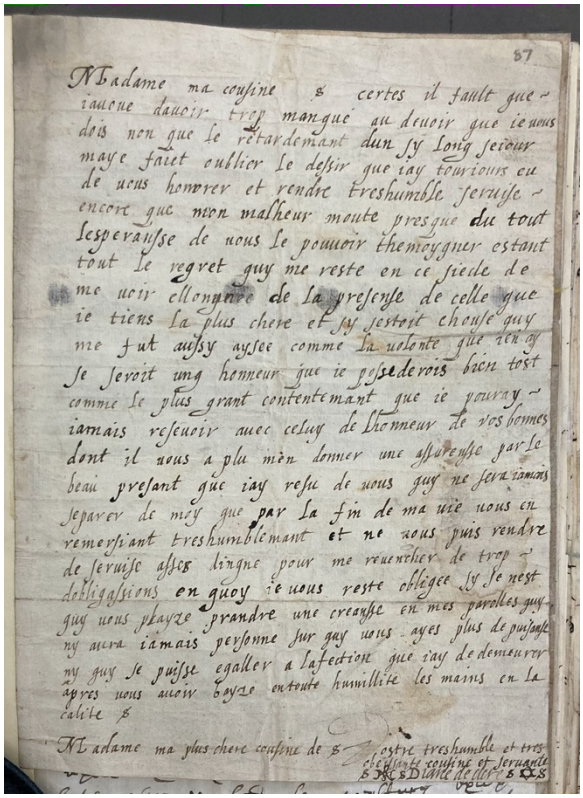


Image ii: fol. 87r

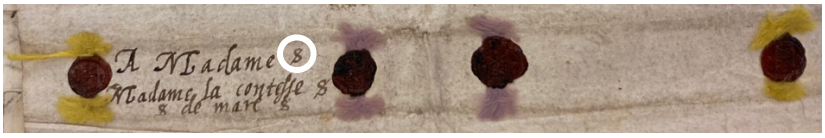


Image iii: fol. 87 detail of address leaf

Figure 7-1: Accordion folded letter sent by Diane de Clére to Marie Stewart, countess of Mar NLS MS 5087 fol. 87, undated.

Figure 7-1: Image i shows the verso leaf of de Clére's letter with multiple, equally-spaced horizontal creases. These accordion folds demonstrate how the paper would have been concertinaed into a miniature packet measuring approximately 12mm x 127mm (Dambrogio and Starza Smith 2025, 124). This was bound with two colours of silk floss (likely yellow or gold and lilac or pink, though fading makes this uncertain) and secured with four red wax seals (Figure 7-1: Image iii). Rather than being standard features of early modern letters, this compact form and refined locking mechanism marked letters as elite, private communications (Wolfe 2013).

[162] The five French specimens were sent to Stewart from Diane de Clére, her sister, Gabrielle, her brother, Esmé, her mother Catherine, and her relative [L] de Balsac.

The careful layout and neat italic script of the main text (Figure 7-1: Image ii) would further identify the sender as an educated writer who sought to indicate respect through the time and effort invested in producing a polished manuscript in their own hand (Daybell 2012, 86). While penning your own letters could be regarded as menial in the fifteenth century, by the seventeenth-century, when this letter was likely written, humanist values framed it as courteous, capable of signalling intimacy and respect precisely because it involved 'manual labour' (Daybell 2012, 86).

Additional meaning would also be derived from the symbols incorporated throughout the letter. Section 6.1.1 noted that the StEr letters contain multiple examples of the fermesse symbol and provided a definition. In this letter several appear after the address form, in the closing, and in the superscription (one encircled in white, Figure 7-1: Image iii). In particular, the elaborate inscriptions flanking the sender's name reflect a desire for self-representation through a distinctive signatory design (Williams 2013a). The significance of these symbols is discussed in detail in Section 7.3.

Together, these material and visual features communicated respect and refinement, qualities reinforced linguistically within text. Writing to her cousin Stewart, de Clére employed formal constructions which contain lexical choices signifying self-effacing loyalty (e.g., *failed, duty, owe, honour, humble, indebted and humility*) and fond attachment (*dear, kissed and affection*), as illustrated in Examples (122–127):

(122) certes il faut que – iavoue davoir trop manqué au devoir que ie vous dois
[I must certainly confess to having failed too much in the duty I owe to you] (NLS MS 5087 fol. 87, ll. 1–3)

(123) oublier le dessir que iay touriours eu de vous honorer et rendre treshumble seruise
[forgeting the desire I have always had to honour you and to render you my most humble service] (NLS MS 5087 fol. 87, ll. 4–5)

(124) me voir ellongnee de la presense de celle que ie tiens la plus chere
[to find myself far away from the presence of the one I hold most dear] (NLS MS 5087 fol. 87, ll. 9.10)

(125) le beau presant…quy ne sera iamais separer de moy que par la fin de ma uie
[the beautiful present…from which I will never be parted until the end of my life] (NLS MS 5087 fol. 87, ll. 15–17)

(126) remersiant tres humblemant et ne vous puis rendre de seruise asses dingne pour me reuencher de trop – dobligassions en quoy ie vous reste obligee sy se nest

> [I cannot render you enough of a dignified service for very many obligations in which I remain indebted to you] (NLS MS 5087 fol. 87, ll. 18–20)
>
> (127) ny quy se puisse agaller a lafection…vous avoir bayze entoute humillite les mains en la calite
> [nor who can equal the affection…I have kissed your hands in humility] (NLS MS 5087 fol. 87, l. 24)

In contrast to Diane's gracious personal letter is another StEr letter, sent by Stewart to George Norvell, steward to Thomas Hope (Craighall) (NLS MS 5070, fols. 65–66, 20 June 1640). The packet creasing reveals a different construction: the routine tuck-and-seal method commonly used in this period (Figure 7-2: Image i).

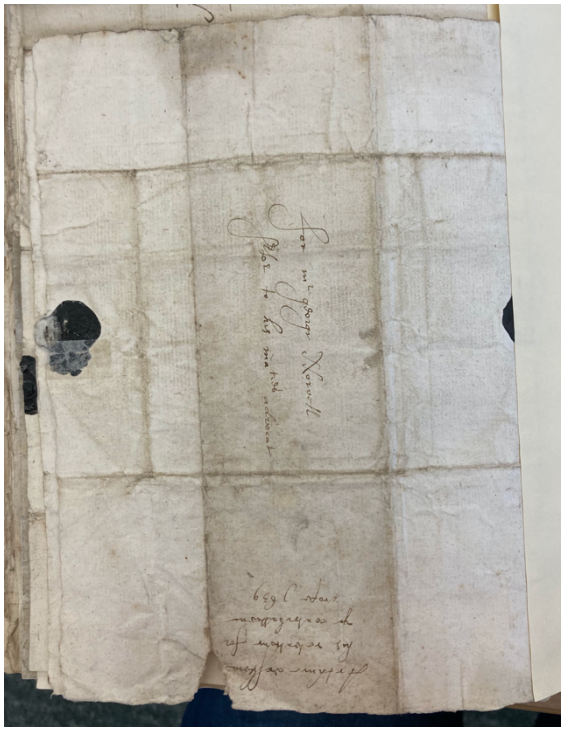


Image i: fol. 66v

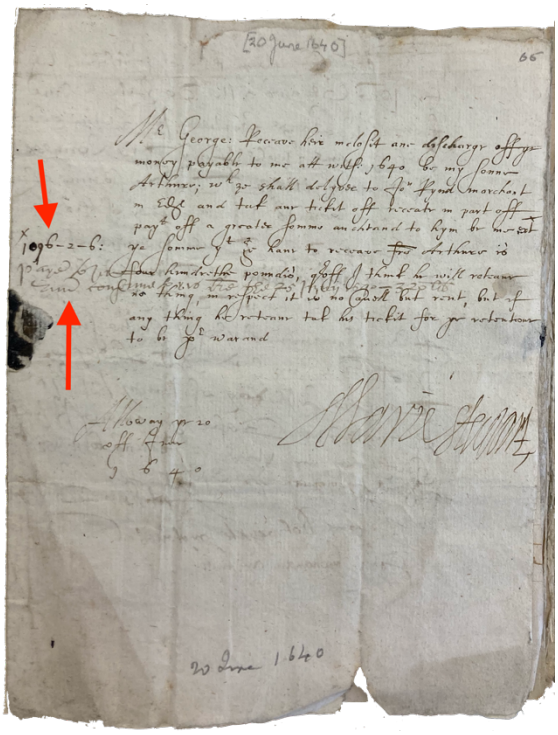


Image ii: fol. 65r

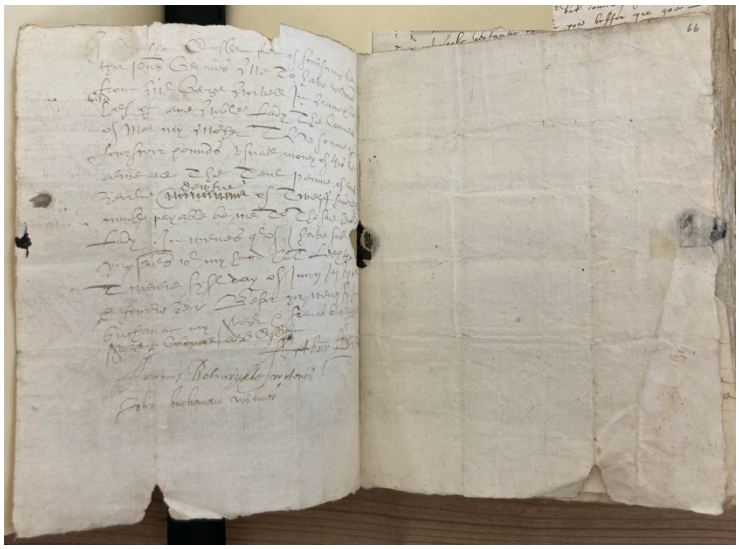


Image iii: fols. 65v–66r: Discharge

Figure 7-2: Tuck-and-seal folded letter sent by Marie Stewart, countess of Mar to George Norvell, NLS MS 5070 fols. 65–66, 20 June 1640

The absence of silk floss and the use of a single black wax seal, signalling family mourning, would also have suggested a more prosaic communication.[163] On opening the letter, the recipient would observe that, although Stewart had signed it, the main text was written by a scribe in

[163] The death of Lady Anne Erskine, countess of Rothes on 2 May 1640 may explain the black seal (Wells 2004).

secretary script (Figure 7-2: Image ii). Collectively, these material clues would not have prompted the same individualised epistolary reception as de Clére's holograph letter.

Nevertheless, like de Clére's letter, the material features of this document corresponded to its textual content. Here, however, legal vocabulary rather than courtly phrasing signals a business function, as Examples (128) –(133) illustrate:

(128) Receave heir inclosit ane discharge
[Receive here enclosed a discharge] (NLS MS 5070, fol. 65r l. 1)

(129) money payable to me
[money payable to me] (NLS MS 5070, fol. 65r l. 2)

(130) if any thing he reteane tak his tickit for ye retentione to be your warand
[if he retains anything take his ticket for the retention to be your warrant] (NLS MS 5070, fol. 65r ll. 8–10)

(131) be thir present Grans Me to have receued
[be these present, grant me to have received] (NLS MS 5070, fol. 65v ll. 1–2)

(132) money of this realme
[money of this realm] (NLS MS 5070, fol. 65v l. 6)

(133) In wenies qhuerof I have subscrivit yir presens
[In witness whereof I have subscribed [signed] these present] (NLS MS 5070, fol. 65v ll. 10–11)

The formulaic legal phrases, referring to sums of money (exs. 129, 132), the witnessing of signatures (ex. 133), and terms such as *discharge, warrant, ticket,* and *retention*, demonstrate that this is a formal document. The letter contains no opening formulae; the entire inner left-hand leaf (NLS MS 5070, fol. 65v) consists of a legal discharge written and signed by two witnesses (

Figure 7-2: Image iii).[164]

These contrasting letters, one sent by de Clére, the other by Stewart, illustrate the range of choices available to StEr correspondents in crafting a persona suited to the context of a given letter. Such decisions not only facilitated self-fashioning but also shaped the recipient's experience. As Section 6.7 noted, the CoP's engagement with the broader repertoire of early modern epistolary literacy is also visible in their use of *mise-en-page* to signal deference (Gibson 1997, 4). Further evidence for this is found in the letter sent by Marion Douglas (Drum) to Stewart,

[164] Discharge: A deed which cancelled an obligation to repay a debt (*DSL* 4.0 'Discharge n.').

in which a large space between the end of the main text and the closing visually communicates her esteem for the Countess (Figure 7-3).

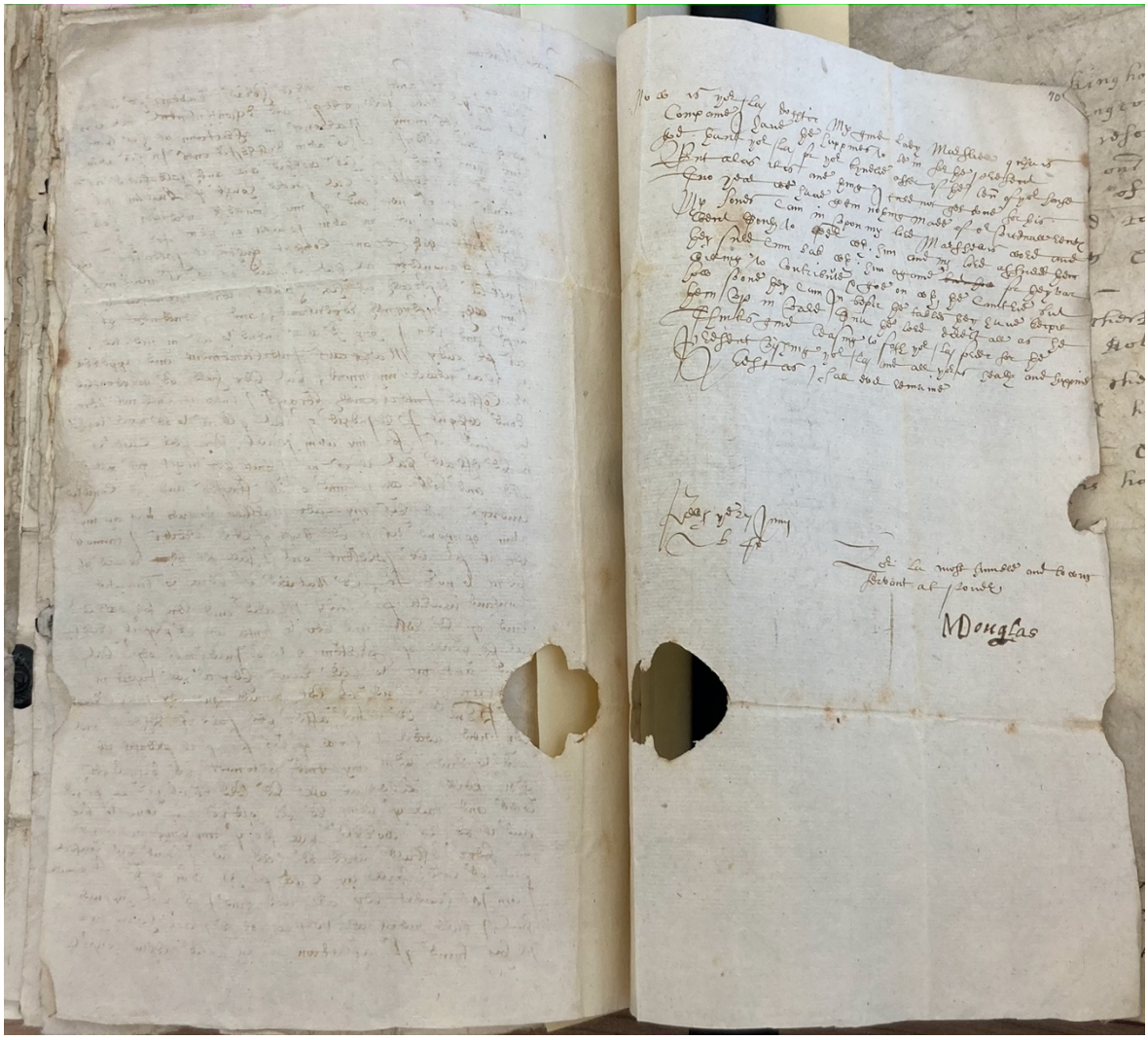


Figure 7-3: Marion Douglas, Lady Drum to Marie Stewart, countess of Mar, NLS MS 5070 fols. 69v–70r, 27 June 1640.

These examples confirm that, like other early modern correspondents, the StEr CoP members used the material and visual features of their letters to convey additional meaning, carefully choosing whether to employ an amanuensis, which script to use, how to arrange the text, and which letter-locking method to apply.

Yet, as noted in Sections 2.2.3 and 2.4.3, the visual feature of the fermesse, present in de Cléré's letter and other StEr examples, has received comparatively little scholarly attention (Figure 7-1: Image iii). Studying these symbols requires accurate identification, a process complicated by the variety of pen marks added to letters. The next section, 7.2, addresses these challenges in detail.

7.2 Extratextual Pen Marks in the StEr Letters

As noted in Section 4.3.5, the StEr letters contain a variety of abbreviations, which are relatively identifiable because they typically appear within the line of text, replacing individual letters or entire words. By contrast, pen marks that do not function as abbreviations are more difficult to classify. Some, such as the lines scored on address leaves, are simple in form, while others, including swirls and cross-hatching, are more elaborate and decorative (Starza Smith 2013). Both types appear in the StEr letters, as illustrated in the superscriptions of a pair of letters sent by Thomas Hope (Figure 7-4):

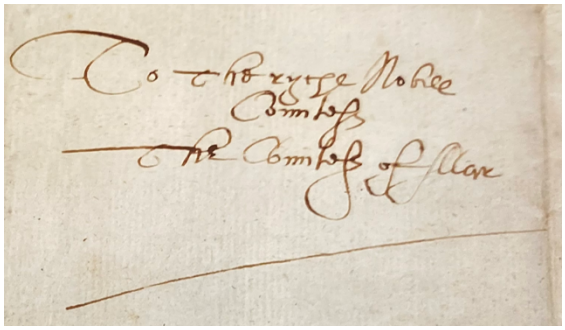


Image i: Thomas Hope (Craighall) to Marie Stewart (Mar), NLS MS 5070 fol. 18v, 3 March 1635

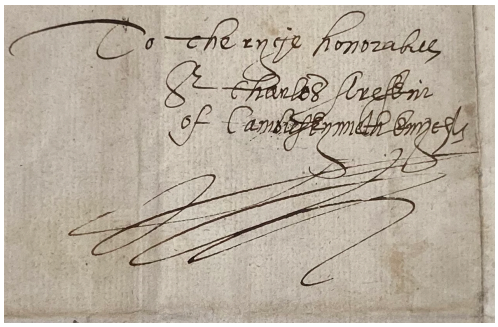


Image ii: Thomas Hope (Craighall) to Charles Erskine (Alva-Bandeath), NLS MS 5070 fol. 97v, 9 October 1643

Figure 7-4: Sir Thomas Hope's decorated superscriptions

In Figure 7-4: Image i, the writer marked the end of the superscription with a neat diagonal line, while in Image ii a more complex, swirling pattern served the same function.

Alongside decorated superscriptions, flourished signatures were common in this period, offering writers an 'opportunity for self-fashioning' through personalised, visual motifs (Williams 2013a). Several StEr correspondents demonstrate this practice, as shown by the signatures reproduced in Figure 7-5:

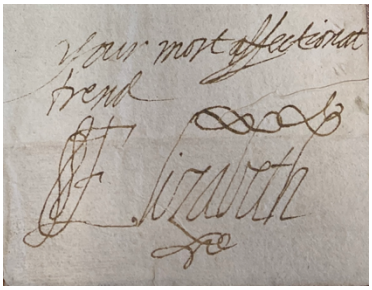


Image i: Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia to John Erskine (Mar elder), NRS GD124/15/57/4 leaf 1r, 20 September [1625]

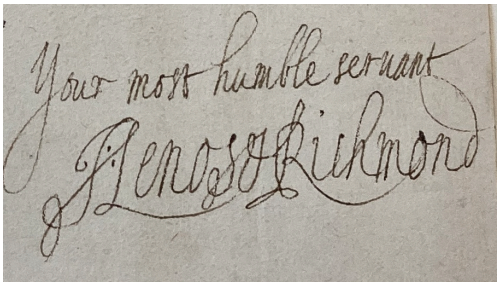


Image ii: James Stuart (Richmond-Lennox) to William Douglas (Morton), NLS MS 80 fol. 20 leaf 1r, 1 March 1631

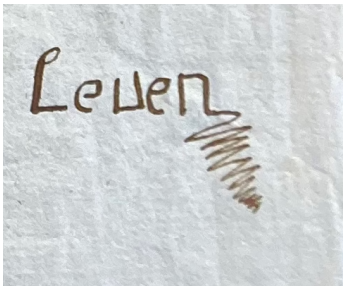


Image iii: Alexander Leslie (Leven) to Marie Stewart (Mar), NLS MS 5070 fol. 88, 14 May 1642

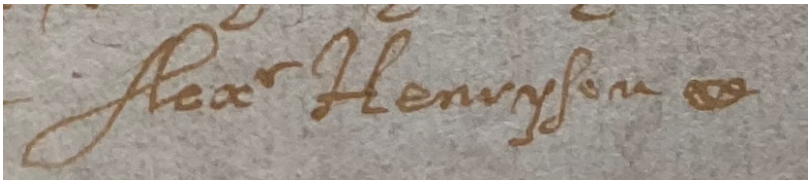


Image iv: Alexander Henderson to Marie Stewart (Mar), NLS MS 5155 fol. 5, 26 June 1631

Figure 7-5: Embellished StEr signatures

Starting clockwise from the top left of Figure 7-5, Image i shows the signature of Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia, whose carefully executed intertwining curves in her letter to John Erskine exemplify the early modern writer's use of elite calligraphic training to convey deference to the addressee (Daybell 2016, 56–58). The signature of James Stuart (Richmond-Lennox) is similarly ornate, suggesting a comparable desire to express identity graphically (Figure 7-5: Image ii). A related impulse may be seen in Alexander Leslie (Leven)'s signature, though his emphatic, jagged underlining contrasts with Stuart's more fluid style (Figure 7-5: Image iii). Finally, Alexander Henderson's signature is accompanied by a looped mark which, although spatially separate, is no less distinctive in its design (Figure 7-5: Image iv).

The examples in Figure 7-4 and Figure 7-5 confirm that StEr writers engaged in the early modern practice of embellishing their letters with a variety of calligraphic pen strokes. However, unlike other paratextual features, the symbols in the StEr materials are more formalised. Typically, they are a 'written character or mark used to represent something; a letter, figure, or sign conventionally standing for some object, process.' (*OED* 2025). Sections 7.3–7.5 examine the

symbols found in the StEr letters, unpacking their meanings and outlining the challenges involved in their identification and classification.

7.3 The Cross, the Hexagram, and a Monogram

Two of the most recognisable symbols in the StEr letters are the cross and the star, both of which retain symbolic significance today. In Gabrielle Stuart's letter to her sister, Marie Stewart, a cross appears immediately after the first 'Madame' in the superscription (Figure 7-6).

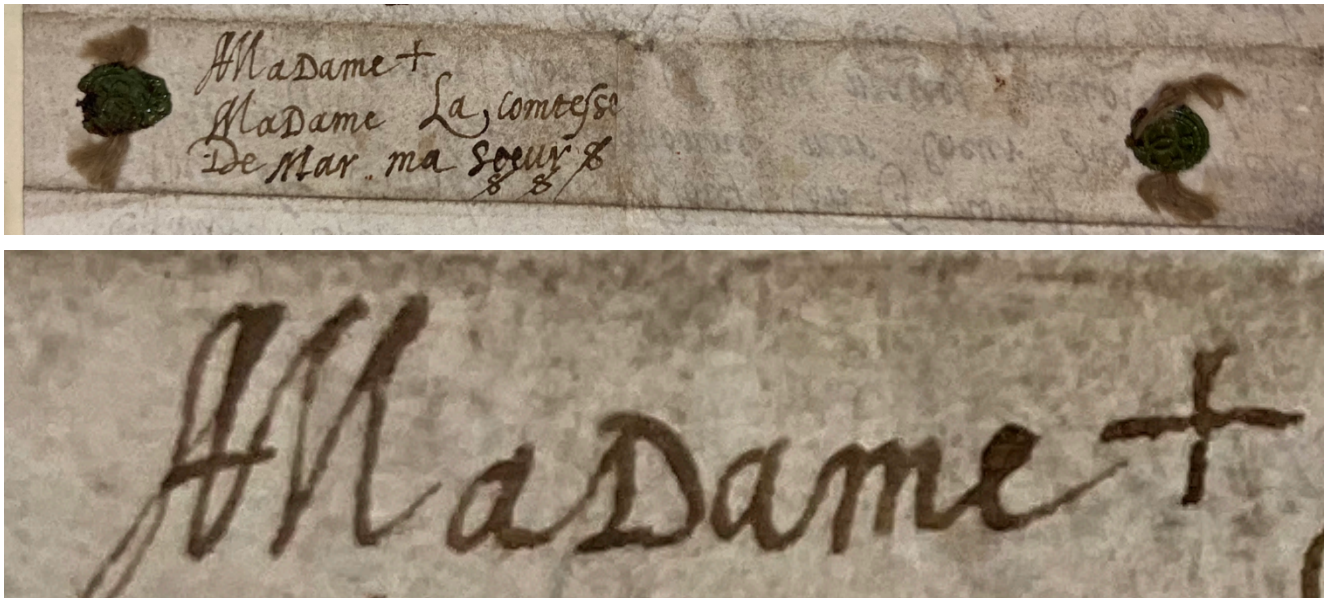


Figure 7-6: Details of superscription with cross symbol (Lady Gabrielle Stuart to Marie Stewart, countess of Mar, NLS MS 5070 fol. 3v, 28 January 1617).

A second cross appears in another letter addressed to Marie Stewart, this time positioned at the top of the letter near the address form, 'Madame': (Figure 7-7).

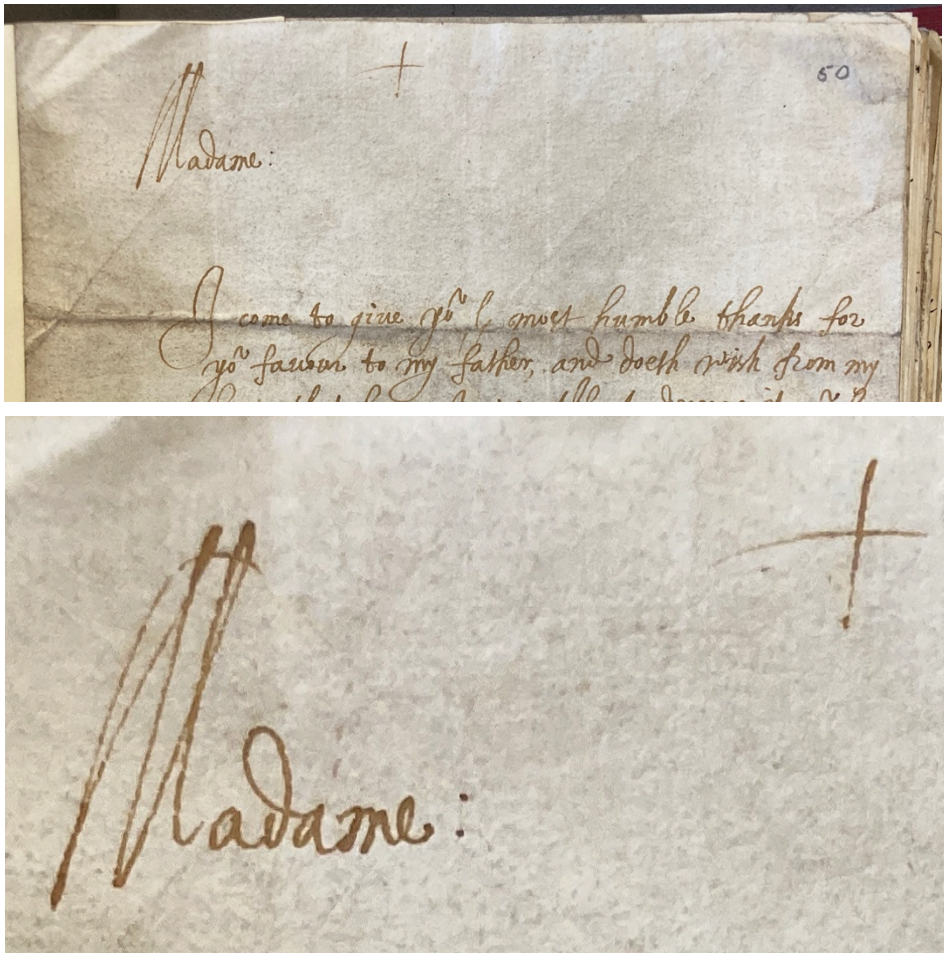


Figure 7-7: Detail of address form with cross symbol (I. Reade to Marie Stewart, countess of Mar, NLS MS 5088 fol. 50r, undated).

This letter, written in EModS and signed 'Ireade', concerns a monetary debt owed by Reade's father to the Countess and her son, Arthur. The writer's identity remains uncertain and is therefore categorised in StErCor2 as of unknown age and sex. However, on the basis of the letter's language (EModE) and references to the possibility of travelling to Scotland, the writer may have been based in England.

The letter is rich deferential language, exemplifying a 'humility and entreaty' script (Magnusson 2004, 59), as reflected in expressions such as:

> (134) I come to giue your ladyship most humble thanks for your fauour to my father
> [I come to give your Ladyship most humble thanks for your favour to my father]
>
> (135) doeth wish from my hart that hee or I were able to deserue it
> [do wish from my heard that he or I were able to deserve it]
>
> (136) your ladyship doeth show your honorable and I noble disposition in it
> [your Ladyship shows your honourable and truly noble disposition in it]

(137) I wish Madame it were in my power to giue such testimony as I desyre to your ladyship how sensible I am not only of these your fauours to my father, but lykewayes of those it pleased your ladyship show me

[I wish it was in my power, Madam, to give such testimony as I desire to your Ladyship how sensible I am, not only of these your favours to my father, but likewise of those it pleased your Ladyship [to] show me]

(138) Madame I must acknowledge it as a very greate fauour from your ladyship and will press if euer I be able to deserue it

[Madam I must acknowledge it as a very great favour from your Ladyship and will press if ever I am able to deserve it]

(139) I most humbly kiss your ladyships hands

[I most humbly kiss your Ladyship's hands] (NLS MS 5088 fols 50–51, undated)

Here, self-deprecating phrases ('most humble', 'I wish Madame it were in my power', 'if euer I be able to deserue it', 'most humbly') coexist with flattery ('your honorable and I noble disposition') and acknowledgements of past favours ('your fauours to my father', 'those it pleased your ladyship show me', 'a very greate fauour'). By invoking Marie Stewart's elevated status, Reade seemed to reinforce expectations that she would extend grace and favour to those of lower social rank, just as the petitioners, Forbes and Allisone, had done (Section 5.4). Such expectations were not unfounded: the Countess was known for her generosity, as evidenced by the charitable donations recorded in her household account book (Sharpe 1815; Section 3.1).

Yet, in contrast to these submissive expressions, the letter also draws on the 'supposal and assurance' script, characterised as 'trouble-taking' for the recipient (Magnusson 2004, 63). This more assertive stance is visible in nine I-centred constructions: 'I were able to deserue', 'I hope your ladyship shall not', 'I wish Madame it were in my power', 'as I desyre', 'how sensible I am', 'I had the honour', 'I must […] and will press', 'I be able to deserue it', 'I am […] ready', which foreground Reade's agency and intentions (Magnusson 2004, 63). At the same time, the conditional phrasing, 'if my father can procure it', distances the writer from direct responsibility for repayment. Further expressions likewise signal Reades' confidence that the request will be granted:

(140) be what my father heth tould me […] that yow wilbe pleased (if my father can procure it) out of that consideration to accept of the principall soume of which he standeth engaged to your ladyship and your sone Arthur

> [by what my father has told me […] that you will be pleased (if my father can procure it) out of that consideration, to accept of the principal sum, which he stands engaged [owes] to your Ladyship and your son Arthur]
>
> (141) so expecting to heare from your ladyship
> [so expecting to hear from your Ladyship] (NLS MS 5088 fols 50–51, undated)

The statement in Example (140) refers to the Countess' agreement to accept repayment of the 'principall soume' only, that is, the original amount borrowed, 'as distinguished from any subsidiary interest' (*DSL* 4.0 'Principal n.1' sense 7). Although this claim is mediated through Reade's report of their father's words, it nevertheless functions strategically, reminding the Countess of her prior consent and thereby reducing the perceived obligation and strengthening the appeal for leniency. The letter concludes with a directive (ex. 141) that explicitly instructs the Countess to reply.

Although Reade's letter contains no overt religious language, the cross placed in the header may signal shared faith, a function Dossena (2013, 47) identifies as particularly salient in Scottish correspondence. Indeed, Dossena noted two examples of petitioning letters in which:

> explicit reference is made to the Kirk as a metonymy of the writer's beliefs and values of the social network – i.e., the community of (religious) practice – to which both the recipient and the applicant belong (2013, 56).

As emphasised in Chapter 5, references to religious identity acted as a form of social cohesion, functioning as in-group markers that signalled mutual affiliation. If Reade were Presbyterian, the cross may also invoke the doctrine of spiritual equality under God, thereby legitimising the petition despite the writer's lower social rank.

The star that appears in Diane de Cléré's letter to Marie Stewart has six points and is therefore a *hexagram* (Figure 7-1).[165] Figure 7-8 shows a detail of de Cléré's signature in which the hexagram is underlined on the right. (The surrounding background and text above have been digitally removed to enhance visibility.)

[165] Hexagram: 'a figure formed by two intersecting equilateral triangles, each side of the one being parallel to a side of the other, and the six angular points coinciding with those of a hexagon.' (*OED*, 'Hexagram (n.)').

The symbol is transcribed here, and in StErCor2 as ✡ (STAR OF DAVID, (U+2721) Unicode Consortium 2024). This black and white glyph version of the symbol has a limited coverage in fonts and must be formatted in Wingdings.



Image adapted from NLS MS 5087 fol. 87r

Figure 7-8: Diane de Cléré's signature with monogram, hexagram and fermesses

Unlike the hexagram, the symbol underlined on the left in de Cléré's signature (Figure 7-8) proved more difficult to identify with neither print nor digital searches yielding conclusive results. The mark was therefore analysed using Google Lens, a visual search tool that applies image-recognition technology to identify comparable objects. When a cropped image was submitted, the tool suggested handwritten monograms as plausible matches, indicating that the mark may represent intertwined initials.

Indeed, elements resembling the letters <D> and <C> can be discerned within the inscription (traced in black):  , corresponding to the initials of de Cléré's given and family names. The <C> may also form part of a reversed second <D> (traced in black):  , further reinforcing the name *de Cléré*. This construction mirrors the stylised monogram of Henry II and Diane de Poitiers, in which a line bisects two interwoven letter <D>s to form an <H>. The use of idiosyncratic symbols or ciphers with private or semi-private meaning was not uncommon among elite female writers and was often intelligible only to select recipients (Daybell 2006a, 95).[166]

It is unknown whether further letters by de Cléré survive, and in the absence of comparative examples the symbol's precise meaning cannot be confirmed. Nevertheless, as a skilled and experienced letter-writer, de Cléré could reasonably assume that her recipients were conversant with such forms of visual self-representation. This thesis therefore argues that the mark functioned as a graphic codification of her name; accordingly, it is transcribed in StErCor2 as DdC and tagged as a monogram (Section 4.3.7).

[166] In this context, cipher may refer to either 'a secret or disguised manner of writing' or 'an intertexture of letters, esp. the initials of a name' (*OED*, s.v. 'cipher (n.)')

By contrast, more extensive evidence exists for the iconographical development of the cross and the hexagram. In the early modern period, as today, the cross served as the central Christian symbol for Protestants and Catholics alike, though Presbyterian forms omitted the figure of Christ (Todd 2002, 54). The star likewise carried religious associations in antiquity, symbolising 'the presence of a divinity; supremacy; [and] the eternal', while the six-pointed form was linked to creation (Cooper 1987, 'star'). It was also associated with the Holy Trinity: God the Father, Christ, and the Holy Ghost. Composed of two intersecting equilateral triangles, the hexagram additionally bore early connections to magic and mysticism, though in modern contexts it is most closely associated with Judaism as the Star of David (Steffler 2002, 81).

As a Catholic nun, Gabrielle Stuart, likely understood the cross in deeply devotional terms. Daybell observes that Catholic writers in sixteenth-century England sometimes headed their letters with a cross, a date, and a religious prefix (such as 'Jhesus', 'Jesus anno' or 'I', a Christogram based on the first three characters of 'Christ' in Greek), arguing that these elements functioned as 'an invocation' (2012, 104). Neither Gabrielle's nor Reade's letters adhere to this three-part formula: Reade placed the cross alone at the head of the letter, while Gabrielle inserted it immediately after the address form *Madame*.[167]

Despite these positional differences, the devotional significance of the symbol remains evident, particularly in Gabrielle's case. Given her religious vocation, it is plausible that she imbued the cross with deep personal significance. As Kaislaniemi has suggested, the act of drawing a cross may itself has constituted a performative ritual within the letter-writing process, physically enacting the sign of the cross as part of composition (2024, personal communication).

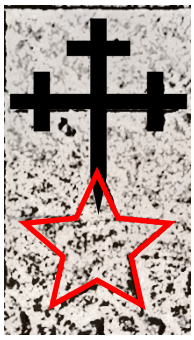
Biographical information on Diane de Clére is limited, and her precise religious affiliation remains uncertain. Nevertheless, as noted in Section 3.1, her French origin and use of French may suggest that she remained Catholic, and she may similarly have invested the hexagram with spiritual meaning. Regardless of individual confessional affiliations, the letters of both Gabrielle Stuart and Diane de Clére express sustained respect and affection for their noble Protestant relative, Marie Stewart.

The symbolic resonance of the cross and star in early modern Scotland is further corroborated by their appearance on Scottish grave markers. Figure 7-9 shows an especially

[167] Meurman-Solin's (2013) discussion of layout features in Scottish letters includes an example similar to I. Reade's, in which a cross is inscribed in the header (Alexander Gordon of Navidale to Sir Robert Gordon of Gordonstoun, 10th September 1634 (NLS Dep 175/65/Bundle 3/216). However, she does not mention the symbol in her discussion.

relevant example: the burial marker of Marie Stewart's father-in-law, John Erskine, first Earl of Mar (c.1521–1572) (Paul 1905, II:615). Although the stone has suffered damage and portions of the inscription have eroded, a cross remains clearly visible in the upper left corner, with a star positioned below it.[168]





Enhanced detail with outlining added to the cross and star

Grave marker for John Erskine, 1st earl of Mar (c.1521–1572) located within the Mar and Kellie family mausoleum at Alloa Old Kirk. Photograph by Claire M. Elder, September 2024.

Figure 7-9: Cross and five-pointed star on the grave marker for John Erskine, 1st earl of Mar

The engraved cross is more elaborate than Gabrielle's, with other crosses at the end of its upper and horizontal arms. It is a 'cross crosslet fichée'(sometimes termed 'fitchy'), a form also found in Mar family heraldry (Morris and Oldfield 2023, 'crosses crosslet'). Although the five-rayed star differs from de Clére's hexagram, the pairing of cross and star nevertheless affirms the broader relevance of these symbols within the Presbyterian Scottish context into which Stewart married.

[168] The grave marker may have been exposed to the weather at some point after St Mungo's Old Kirk, Alloa was condemned and then demolished in 1816. This stone along with the Annabella Murray, countess of Mar's grave marker and others were relocated and positioned on the interior walls of a new Mar and Kellie mausoleum built on the site of the Mar Aisle of the same kirk in 1819 (Historic Environment Scotland n.d.).

7.4 The Fermesse

Until now, the fermesse has received only brief discussion; this section therefore examines the symbol in greater detail. As illustrated in Figure 7-1 Image iii, this symbol  appears in Diane de Cléré's letter, and similar S-shaped marks recur across other StEr letters, typically positioned near the superscription or address form (Figure 6-1). Further examples are shown in Figure 7-10, which presents two superscriptions featuring rows of three symbols underlining the text, and in Figure 7-11 which shows two letter openings in which symbols have been added at the end of the address form.

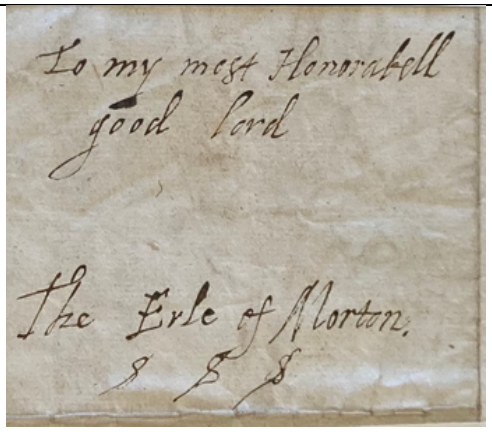


Image i: Marie Stewart (Mar) to William Douglas (Morton), NLS MS 80 fol. 56 leaf 2v, undated

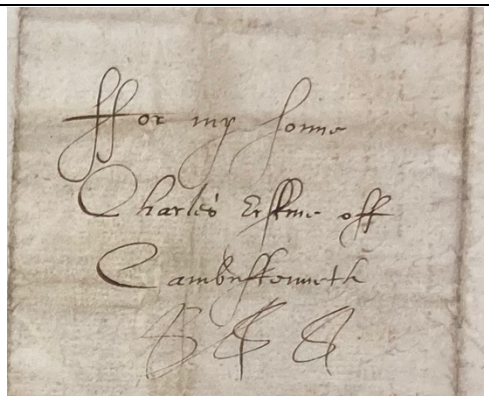


Image ii: Marie Stewart (Mar) to Charles Erskine (Alva-Bandeath), NLS MS 5155 fol. 33v, 23 November 1640 (Scribal)

Figure 7-10: The fermesse in superscriptions

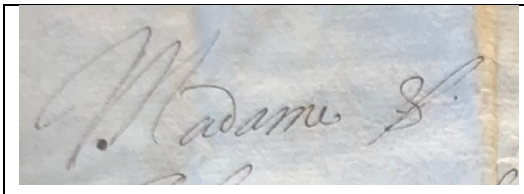


Image i: Alexander Erskine to Marie Stewart (Mar), NLS MS 5155 fol. 14r, 24 July 1638

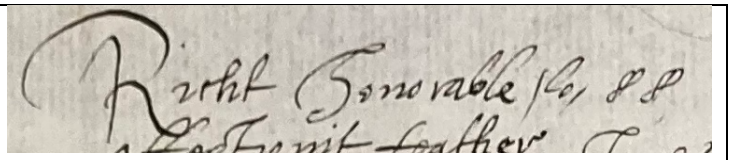


Image ii: Henry Erskine (Scotscraig) to John Erskine (Mar elder), NRS GD124/15/34/6, leaf 1r, 22 April 1618

Figure 7-11: The fermesse in address forms

In the early modern period, the fermesse was a well-established visual motif encompassing a range of secular and religious meanings (Cordey 1936, 191). The widespread circulation of humanist emblems and illustrated explanatory manuals ensured broad familiarity with such symbols (Bath 2018, vii).[169] Often associated with love, affection, and steadfastness, it could also function as a punctuation mark, though it was most frequently linked to the concept of fidelity (Hobson 1935, 99; Cordey 1936, 192; Chareyre 2007, 100; Larson 2015, 121). Accordingly, the analysis in this chapter is informed by the fermesse's layered significance, considering whether the fermesse in the StEr letters performs one or more of these conventional functions, or whether it operates in alternative ways.

Despite its popularity, the term *fermesse* itself was not in contemporary use and does not appear in early modern dictionaries. Instead, the symbol was described in French as the S *fermé* and in English as the *closed S*. The term fermesse is a nineteenth-century coinage formed by reversing *S* and *fermé* to produce *fermé S* (Chareyre 2007, 75). Pronounced without the acute accent on the final <e> as /fɛʁ.mɛs/, this pun plays on one of the symbol's central meanings: firmness (75).[170]

In surveying the fermesse, Hobson identified the symbol across a range of early modern artefacts and manuscripts (1935, 115; Section 6.1.1). However, he noted relatively few examples outside France, consequently concluding that the symbol was almost 'entirely the preserve of the French' (1935, 97). More recent scholarship has broadened this perspective, identifying the use of the fermesse in French contexts, including by figures such as Richelieu (Ranum 2023) and the d'Albret-Bourbon family (Chareyre 2007), as well as in English settings, most notably in the correspondence of Queen Anne of Denmark (Somers Cocks 1980; Wolfe 2013) and among members of the Sidney circle (Hannay 2013; Larson 2015).

Hobson also identified the fermesse appearing alongside other devices. One example relevant to this discussion is an adapted hexagram, in which fermesses are positioned at the tip of each of the star's six points (1935, 108). While one scholar proposed that this configuration functioned as a love charm, Hobson rejected this interpretation, arguing instead that the fermesse was not magical but symbolic of fidelity and firmness (Hobson 1935, 108; 111).

[169] There were at least 6000 emblem books printed during the early modern period (Bath 2018, vii).

[170] Instead of 'fermesse', the direct French translation of *firmness* is the noun 'fermeté' (*Éditions Le Robert* 2008 'Fermeté').

The symbol's association with firmness may derive from the fact that, prior to the reformation, the closed <S> represented *sigillum* ('seal' in Latin), signifying a guarantee of 'monetary stability' on feudal coins (Chareyre 2007, 76–77). Its appearance on currency accounts for its frequent characterisation as a 'numismatic emblem' (Chareyre 2007, 76–77). In 1564, at the outset of her sole reign as Queen of Navarre following the death of her husband, Jeanne d'Albret (1528–1572), leader of the French Huguenot movement, adopted the closed <S> on newly minted coins, harnessing its capacity to communicate unwavering resolve (Chareyre 2004, 19). These tokens functioned not only as a stamp of her regal power but also as 'vectors of propaganda for a population that was not always literate', signalling Jeanne II's commitment to the Reformed faith (19). Figure 7-12 shows the obverse of one such token, featuring the fermesse encircled by Jeanne's motto: *Hasta la muerte* ('To the death', *Pocket Oxford Spanish Dictionary* 2009, 'hasta'; 'muerte').[171]



Musée National du Château de Pau, Pau, P.55.28.10. Reprinted by permission of (C) GrandPalaisRmn (Château de Pau) / Mathieu Rabeau. www.photo.rmn.fr/archive/16.579880.2C6NU0AELMD26.html.

Figure 7-12: Token of Jeanne d'Albret

As Section 3.2 noted, Esther Inglis explicitly connected Stewart with Jeanne through an emblematic drawing and dedicatory verse (Bath 2018, 35–39).[172] Inglis adapted the design from a 1619 portrait of Jeanne by Georgette Montenay, reproducing Montenay's accompanying poem

[171] The Spanish motto reflects the fact that the language was one of several, including Basque and French, spoken within the independent kingdom of Navarre (*Britannica Academic*. 2024. s.v. 'Kingdom of Navarre'. https://academic-eb-com.ezproxy2.lib.gla.ac.uk/levels/collegiate/article/Kingdom-of-Navarre/630740.)

[172] The eight-line verse in French is as follows: 'Voyez comment cette Dame s'efforce / De cœur non seinct d'avancer l'edifice / Du temple sainct, pour detoute sa force / Loger vertu, et dechaffer tout vice. / Notons que Dieu la rend ainsi propice, / A fin qu'il soit glorifié en elle: / Et qu'on soit prompt (ainsi qu'elle) au service / Dont le loyer est la vie eternelle.' The PDE translation is: 'See how this Lady strives, with unfeigned heart, to advance the edifice of the holy temple, with all her strength, to lodge virtue, and to drive out all vice. Let us note that God makes her thus gracious, so that He may be glorified in her: and that one may be prompt (as she is) in the service whose reward is eternal life.' (Inglis 1622).

addressed to the Queen of Navarre (Bath 2018, 35–39).[173] This association, together with the shared Huguenot background of Inglis and Jeanne, and Stewart's status as a committed Protestant convert, raises the possibility that Stewart was aware of the fermesse's religious connotations as employed by the Queen of Navarre.

Following Jeanne's death, her daughter, Catherine de Bourbon likewise adopted the closed <S> within her motto: *Impersuasibilis*, to signal steadfast adherence to Protestantism (Chareyre 2007, 98). Moreover, other reformed Protestants used the symbol to emblemise marital loyalty. Notably, the writer Du-Plessis Mornay incorporated fermesses into his monogram, framing the intertwined initials of himself and his wife to symbolise spousal devotion (Hobson, 1935, 114; Cordey 1936, 191).[174]

Notwithstanding these Protestant associations, the fermesse was also employed by Catholic individuals. One prominent example was Jeanne II's son, Henri de Navarre (1553–1610; reigned 1589–1610) who, unlike his mother and sister, famously returned to Catholicism following his accession to the French throne (Wolfe 2004). Henri used the fermesse both on his seal and in his personal correspondence to signify love (Cordey 1936, 191; 192; Chareyre 2007, 98).[175] Inglis' drawing establishes a visual and textual link between Henri and Stewart via his mother, Jeanne II. However, evidence of an earlier association between the Navarre monarchy and the Stewart family can be traced to Henri's court some two decades earlier (Smuts 2004).

In 1600, Stewart's brother, Esmé Stuart (Lennox younger) served at Henri IV's court as a member of the King's ceremonial guard, the 'cent gentilhommes'(Smuts 2004). His close proximity to the court raises the possibility that he encountered, or participated in, the use of fermesse symbols in correspondence during his service. Beyond Henri IV, other leading Catholic figures also adopted the multifaceted fermesse, including the bishops of Meaux and Agen, the poet Desportes and Catherine de Medici, who employed it in her Books of Hours (Cordey 1936, 193). Indeed, from the 1580s onwards, the fermesse surged in popularity, as extensively documented by Hobson

---

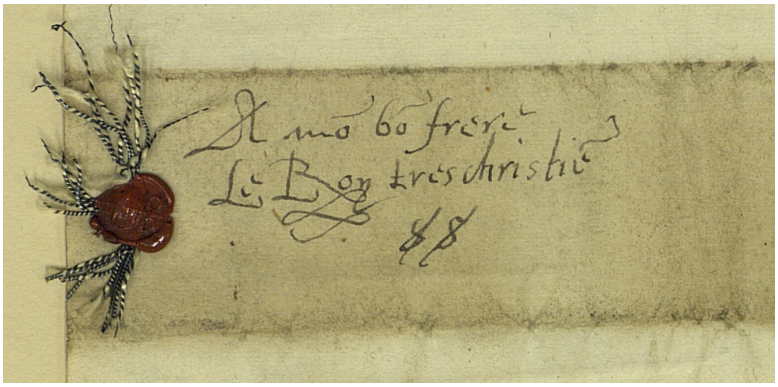
[173] Inglis also produced a similar drawing for Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia, dated 1624 (Bath 2018, 35).

[174] One of John Schawe's letters sent to John Erskine, 2nd earl of Mar, dated 7 September 1618 (NRS GD124/15/32/14) was sent from Saumurs in the Loire Valley, where he was chaperoning Henry, and Alexander Erskine on their educational tour of Europe. In it Schawe mentioned that they had 'gottin letters of addrese, and recommendation from monsieur de plessie Mornay', therein suggesting a connection between the StEr family and the du Plessis Mornays.

[175] de la Fontaine Verwey suggested that the fermesse may have come to be specifically associated with love due to a 'collection of Spanish sayings of 1536' which demonstrate alliteration with the letter *S*: 'Sabio, solo, solicito, secreto [...] given as the four characteristics of perfect love.' (1971, 220). In English, this saying translates to 'wise, alone, solicitous, secret' (*Pocket Oxford Spanish Dictionary* 2009, 'sabio', 'solo', 'solicito', 'secreto').

(1935, 115). By this point it had come to encompass a spectrum of religious and secular meanings, many centred on fidelity (Cordey 1936, 191).

One of Henri IV's most notable correspondents, Queen Elizabeth I, also adopted the symbol in her letters to him (Coatalen and Kaislaniemi 2021). Figure 7-13 depicts a superscription example from 1592:



Queen Elizabeth I to Henri IV, Nov 1592?. CC BY-NC 4.0. (Coatalen and Kaislaniemi 2021. Letter 16).

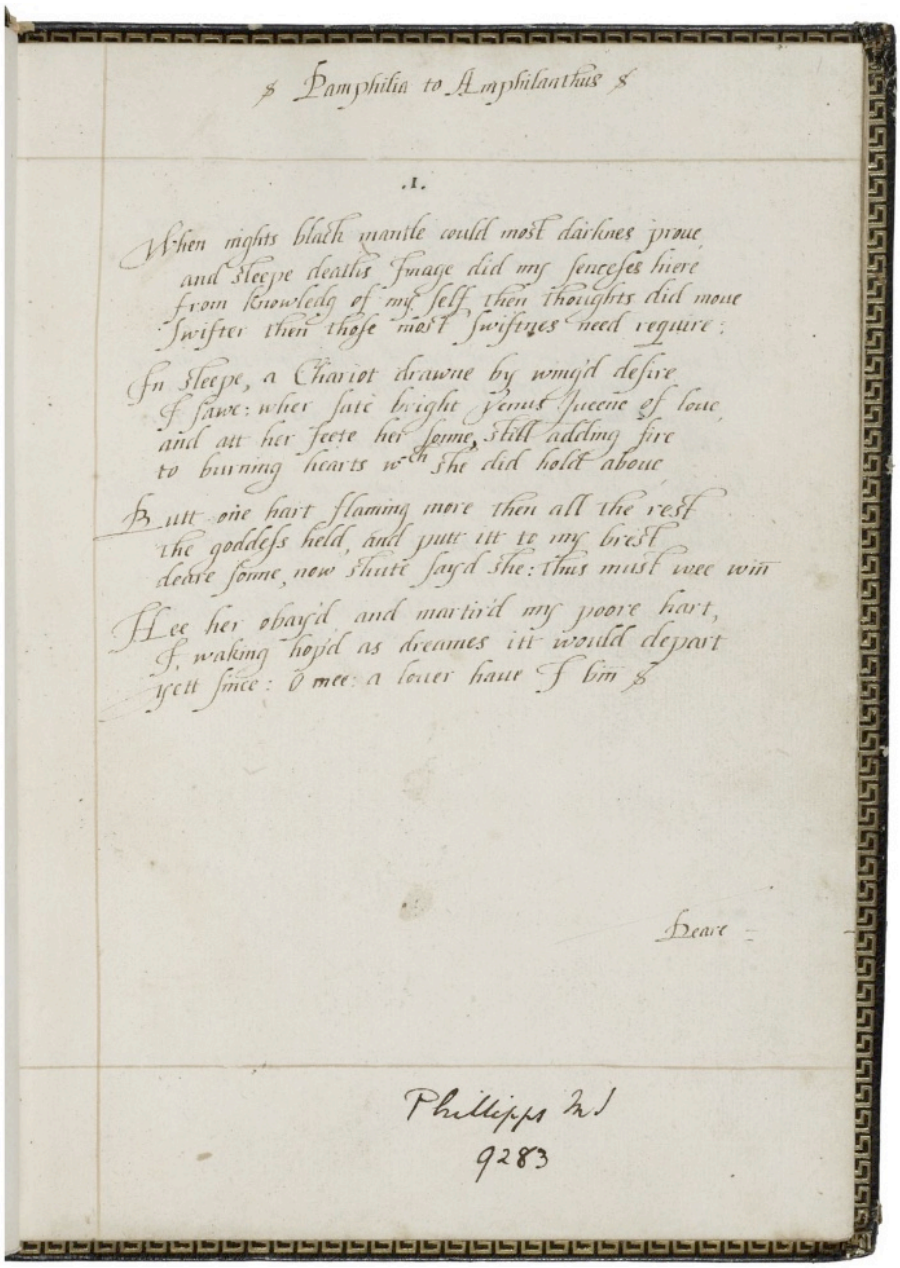
Figure 7-13: Queen Elizabeth I's fermesses to Henri IV

The text superscribed there reads:

> A mo[n] bo[n] frere
> Le Bon tres christie[n]
> $$
> [To my good brother
> The very good Christian
> $$]

The fermesse appeared not only in epistolary manuscripts but also in written songs and verse (Larson 2015, 121). In addition to symbolising abstract concepts such as constancy and affection, writers also used the closed <S> as a textual demarcation, usually to indicate a pause, boundary, or ending (Beal 2008, 's fermé').

This dual function is illustrated in the work of Mary Sidney, Lady Wroth (1587–1651), who employed the fermesse both to frame the title of her poem, as: '*$* Pamphilia to Amphilanthus *$*', and to mark the final line of the sonnet (Hannay 2013, 184; Larson 2015, 122; Figure 7-14).



Pamphilia to Amphilanthus by Mary Wroth, ca. 1615–ca. 1620, fol. 1r. Folger Shakespeare Library, MS V.a.104. https://digitalcollections.folger.edu/bib233141-281838. Licensed under CC BY-NC 3.0.

Figure 7-14: Lady Mary Sidney Wroth's fermesses in Pamphilia to Amphilanthus, ca. 1615–ca. 1620.

Lady Margaret Wemyss likewise employed fermesse-like symbols to signal closure in musical notation. Figure 7-15 shows her playfully extending the French word 'fin' [end] with a series of closed <S> forms, producing 'finne*$$$$*'.[176]

[176] I am very grateful to Roslyn Potter for drawing my attention to these symbols in Lady Margaret Wemyss' manuscripts and sharing her photographs of the images with me.

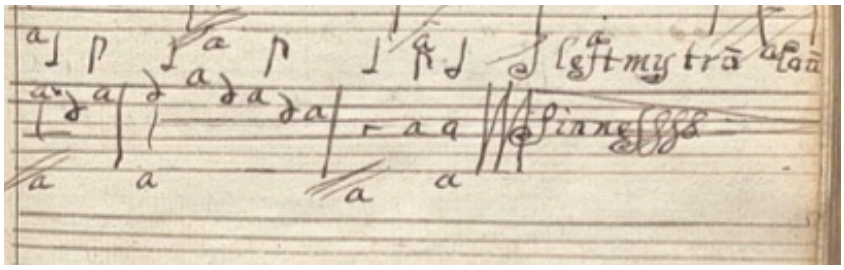
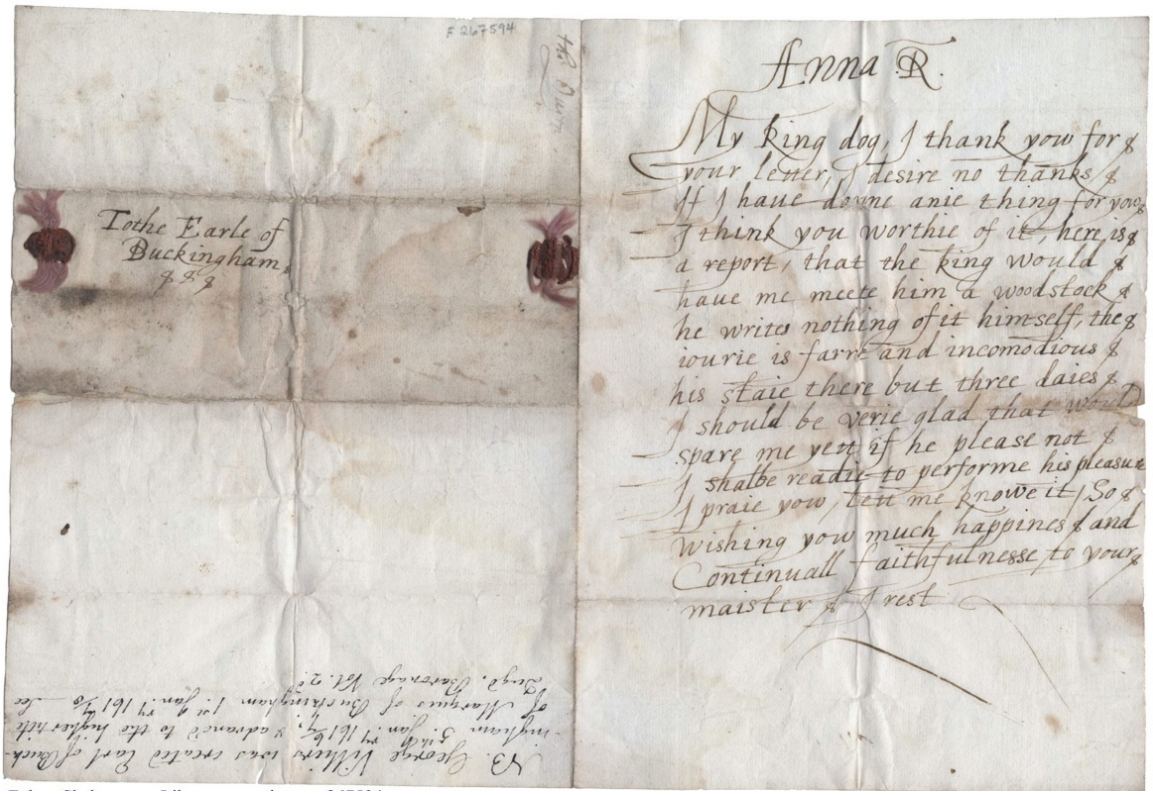


Figure 7-15: Lady Margaret Wemyss' fermesses in musical notation (NLS Dep 314/23, Lady Margaret Wemyss' song book, inscribed 'begun 1643'. 1643–c.1649., n.d. fol. 24r.)[177]

The fermesse could also be used to delimit a letter's lines or concluding remarks. Figure 7-16 presents an example sent to the Duke of Buckingham in which Queen Anne of Denmark inscribed the fermesse at the end of nearly every line (Wolfe 2013).



Folger Acc. 267594, Letter from Anne to George Villiers, duke of Buckingham, 1617, Folger Shakespeare Library, CC BY-NC 3.0, Photo by Erin Blake. (https://digitalcollections.folger.edu/bib266922.352916)

Figure 7-16: Fermesses in Anne of Denmark's letter to Buckingham.

[177] Reproduced here by kind permission of the NLS and the depositer.

Although no surviving letters exchanged between Anne and Marie Stewart have been identified, the documented closeness of their relationship makes it likely that they corresponded and may have shared epistolary practices, including the use of symbols such as the fermesse.[178]

While the fermesse thus served as a form of punctuation or textual boundary, it continued primarily to epitomise fidelity across a range of contexts: romantic, platonic, political, and spiritual (Larson 2015, 122). As Section 2.4.3 emphasised, this thesis seeks to determine what the fermesse signified to the StEr correspondents themselves. Chareyre argues that Jeanne d'Albret's son, Henri IV of France, came to view the S *fermé* as 'too committed, too provocative, carrying a message which was no longer appropriate' as he attempted to ease confessional tensions and promote reconciliation between Reformed and Catholic communities (2007, 98). In contrast to his mother and sister, who incorporated the symbol into public emblems, Henri downplayed its political and religious connotations, reserving it for intimate correspondence as a figurative expression of affection (Chareyre 2007, 98).

Similarly, Hannay (2013) excludes religious connotations from her interpretation of the fermesse in the writings of Mary Sidney, Lady Wroth, a contemporary of Marie Stewart. Instead, she argues that Wroth used the symbol to emphasise continued affiliation with her birth family, likely emulating her aunt, Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke (1561–1621), who employed the fermesse in her correspondence to assert that she remained a 'Sidney' despite marriage (Hannay 2013, xxxvii; 230).[179]

Building on these interpretations, the analysis in Section 7.6 considers whether StEr writers similarly used the fermesse as a 'mark of affection' (Beal 2008, 's fermé'), whether they adopted it as a symbol of familial affiliation through mutual imitation, as seen among the Sidneys (Larson 2015, 122), or whether they invested it with spiritual significance, following Jeanne d'Albret's example (Chareyre 2007). However, before addressing these questions, each distinct fermesse had to be identified in the StEr manuscripts, a process detailed in the following section.

[178] Section 3.1 discusses the relationship between Marie Stewart, countess of Mar and Queen Anne.

[179] Another connection between the Sidneys and Marie Stewart lies in Mary Sidney, Lady Wroth's uncle who was Philip Sidney, the author of *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* (1590). James Caldwell's *The Countesse of Marres Arcadia, or Sanctuarie Containing Morning, and Evening Meditations, for the Whole Weeke* (1625), based on Sidney's work, was dedicated to Marie Stewart (van Heijnsbergen and Royan 2002, xviii quoted in Stevenson 2012: 349).

7.5 Identifying Fermesses

Beal's description of the fermesse as a 'slashed capital letter S, [which resembles] the italic dollar sign *$*' (2008, 's fermé') provides a useful starting point for identifying the symbols in manuscripts. However, closer examination of the closed ⟨S⟩ forms in the StEr letters, written singly or in groups, reveals that while some conform to this idealised representation, other diverge markedly. This variation arises because, in practice, handwritten symbols are subject to the same variation as alphabetic letterforms. While both historic and modern writers may attempt to conform to an 'internalized model', the realised allograph can vary considerably in execution (Davis 2007, 260–61). For the transcriber, some hands clearly pose greater interpretative challenges than others (as noted in Section 4.1.3).[180] Moreover, the early modern tendency to incorporate calligraphic flourishes adds an additional layer of complexity, making the identification of fermesses less straightforward.

Some marks can be confidently excluded from this category. Instances of superscripted underlining (Figure 7-4) and signatory embellishments such as Leven's zigzagged line and Henderson's looping swirl (Figure 7-5: Images iii & iv) do not conform to the fermesse form. However, other marks proved more ambiguous. The curling shapes that join the <l> and <h> ascenders in Elizabeth of Bohemia's signature (Figure 7-17: Image i) are more difficult to discount. When rotated through ninety degrees, these strokes bear partial resemblance to a fermesse, as highlighted by the circled area in Figure 7-17: Image i.

[180] One of the most notoriously challenging hands to read is that of George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury who was seriously afflicted by gout, as noted by Starza Smith (2013).

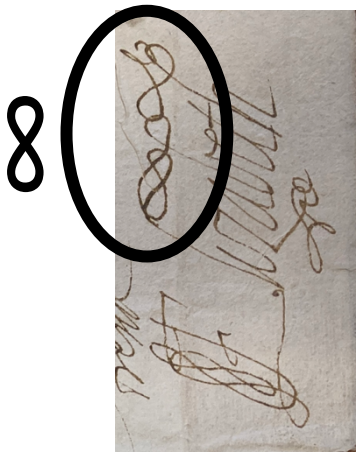


Image i: NRS GD124/15/57/4 leaf 1r Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia to Lord Mar, 20 September [1625] (Rotated 90°).

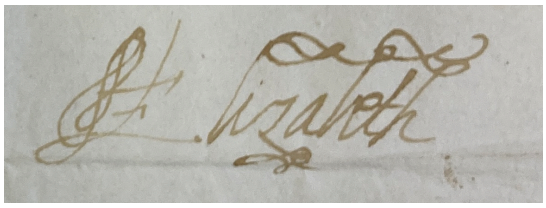


Image ii: NRS GD124/15/57/9 leaf 1r Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia to John Erskine, 3rd earl of Mar, [1637]

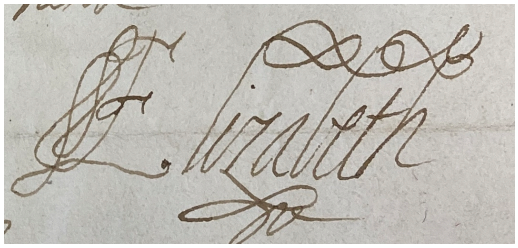


Image iii: NRS GD124/15/57/2 leaf 1r Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia to Lord Mar, 12 June [1625]

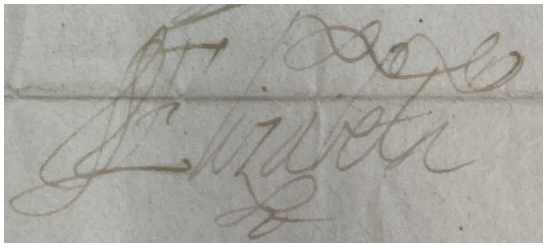


Image iv: NRS GD124/15/57/1 leaf 1r Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia to Lord Mar, 4 October [1623]

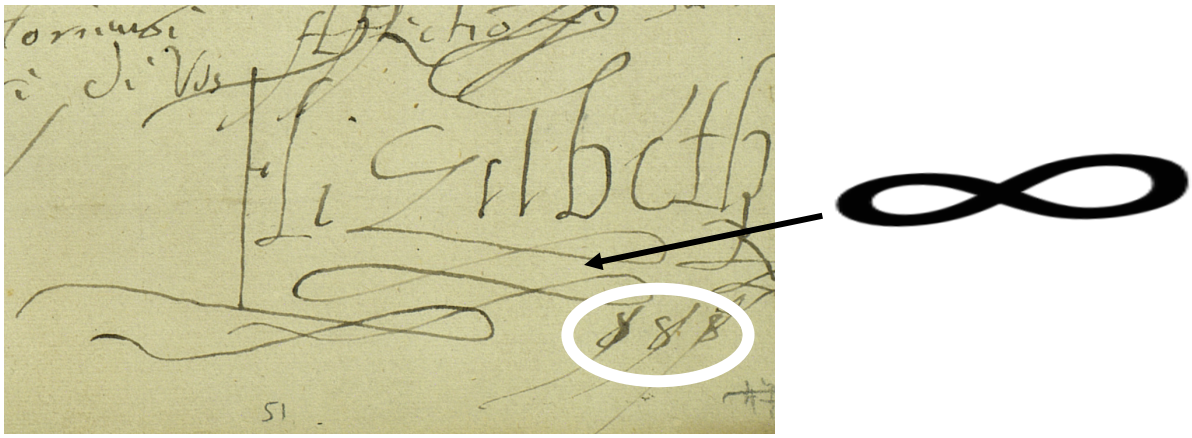
Figure 7-17: Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia's signature flourishes

In his survey of the fermesse, Hobson likened the sign to a vertical infinity symbol (1935, 108), and at first glance the queen's pen strokes do appear to recall that mathematical figure. Indeed, the infinity symbol, ∞, rotated vertically and reproduced alongside Figure 7-17: Image i, confirms this visual similarity. [181] However, although other examples of Elizabeth's signature in the StEr letters display comparable same looping lines at the top (Figure 7-17: Images ii, iii & iv), the resemblance is less apparent. In Figure 7-17: Images ii, iii, and particularly in Image iv, the loops joining the ascenders of <l> and <h> are looser and more open, making it increasingly difficult to trace a clear ∞ or ᔕ shape.

Akkerman highlights the close similarities between Elizabeth of Bohemia's signature and that of Elizabeth I, noting that she consciously emulated the handwriting of her godmother and namesake (2015: 1, 6). A comparison with Elizabeth I's signature, reproduced in Figure 7-18, supports this claim. Elizabeth I likewise incorporated looping flourishes into her signature, though

[181] INFINITY, U+221E (Unicode Consortium 2024).

she positioned them beneath her name, linking the base-strokes of the <E> and the <z> rather than the ascenders.



Adapted from Kaislaniemi and Coatalen. 2021. Letter 24 - No 26 - fol. 2r. Queen Elizabeth I to Henry IV, September 1595? CC BY-NC 4.0. In Photographs of Queen Elizabeth I's French Letters in the National Library of Russia. Zenodo. doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5801447.

Figure 7-18: Queen Elizabeth I's signature with fermesses

The black arrow in Figure 7-18 draws attention to the apparent visual similarity between Elizabeth I's signature loops and the infinity symbol. Yet this resemblance proves deceptive. By comparing the queen's signature with exemplars from Palatino's influential writing manual of 1556, Gibson demonstrated that these flourishes derive from the Italian writing master's calligraphic models rather than from emblematic symbols (2016, 35–36). On this basis, the loops in Elizabeth I's signature cannot be interpreted as fermesses.

However, Elizabeth I added a further three distinct symbols, arranged evenly in a horizontal row (encircled in white, Figure 7-18). These marks differ materially from the signature flourishes. Their consistent form, each an ⟨S⟩ intersected by a clear diagonal stroke, renders them recognisable as fermesses.[182] Through this comparative approach, setting signature embellishments against unequivocal fermesses, ornamental pen strokes can be distinguished from genuine symbols.

Alongside Elizabeth of Bohemia, another StErCor writer presented issues of fermesse identification, this time, a male: Henry Erskine (Cardross). Figure 7-19 displays snippets from ten of Henry's letters which contain potential fermesses within the address form. These marks vary

[182] I would like to thank Samuli Kaislaniemi very much for sharing the manuscripts he has identified which contain fermesses, including this letter.

considerably in recognisability, ranging from the well-formed *$* (encircled, Figure 7-19: Image i), to the pair of symbols (Figure 7-19: Image iv) which resemble the 'finne*$$$$*' in Lady Margaret Wemyss' lute book (Figure 7-15), to less convincing examples (Figure 7-19: Image iii) whose form more closely resembles a modern uppercase <H> than a fermesse.

One explanation for this variation is that the letters were written by different people. As noted in Section 1.3.4, this thesis does not undertake detailed handwriting analysis, but clear differences are nonetheless observable within these ten examples. Most notably, the hand in Figure 7-19: Image iii is in secretary script, whereas Image iv is in italic, a distinction confirmed by comparison of the <c> and <h> letterforms.[183] Further variation appears in the uppercase <R>, whose lobes are angular in Figure 7-19: Images i–ii and rounded in Images iii–ix.

[183] In Figure 7-19, the examples of <c> in Images (i–iii) reflect the influence of French secretary scripts, in which the letter was 'made by two short strokes placed at right angles' (Simpson 2009, 16) and is therefore liable to be confused by modern readers with <r>. Henry's contact with French writing systems is confirmed by his StEr letters sent to his father during his education in that country. Images (i–iii) illustrate another common feature of <c> graphs in secretary script where he letter connects to the following letter, in this case, <h>. The <h> in Figure 7-19: Images (i–iii) likewise shows hallmarks of secretary script, including a downstroke prolonged below the line to form a 'leftward curve' (Simpson 2009, 15). Along with these secretary script forms, Henry also used italic forms, resulting in a mixed script.

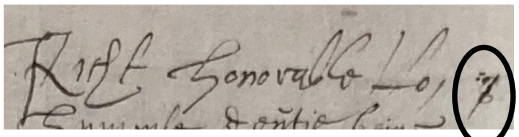


Image i: NRS GD124/14/34/2 leaf 1r, 16 July 1617

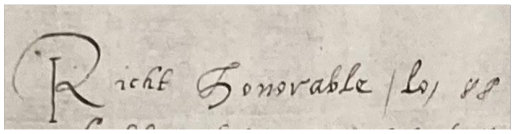


Image vi: NRS GD214/15/34/7 leaf 1r, 23 May 1618

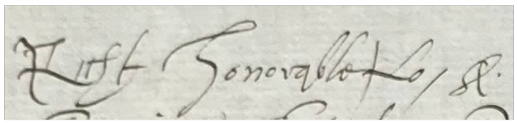


Image ii: NRS GD124/14/34/3 leaf 1r, 7 August 1617

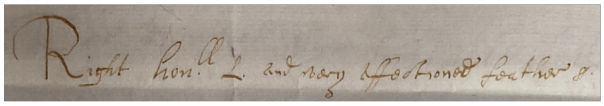


Image vii: NRS GD214/15/34/11 leaf 1r, 28 March 1619

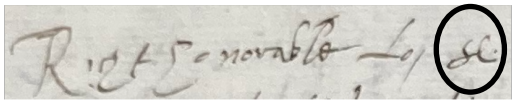


Image iii: NRS GD124/14/34/4 leaf 1r, 22 August 1617

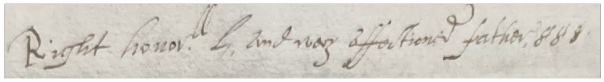


Image viii: NRS GD214/15/34/14 leaf 1r, 11 February 1620



Image iv: NRS GD124/14/34/5 leaf 1r, 22 December 1617

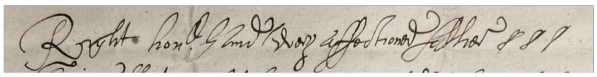


Image ix: NRS GD124/14/34/15 leaf 1r, 12 April 1620

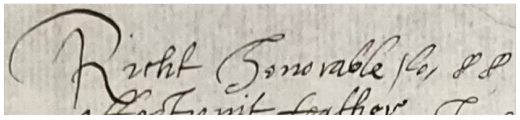


Image v: NRS GD124/14/34/6 leaf 1r, 22 April 1618

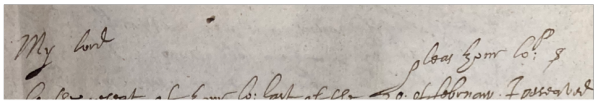


Image x: NRS GD124/15/58 leaf 1r, 1 March 1624

Figure 7-19: Henry Erskine's (potential) fermesses

Further variation appears in the address forms themselves. The first six examples (Figure 7-19: Images i–vi) use the Scots spelling, *Richt*, whereas the next three adopt the anglicised *Right* (Figure 7-19 Images vii–ix). Moreover, in Figure 7-19: Image x, the address form differs entirely in both wording and layout from the other nine. Instead of *Richt* or *Right honorable Lordship*, it opens with 'My Lord', followed by a large gap, after which 'pleas ȝour Lo[rdship] $' is positioned at the far right margin.

Despite these differences, even if Henry did write all ten letters himself, external factors such as writing materials, environment, or physical and mental state may have influenced his handwriting (Davis 2007, 260–61), producing distorted forms of the fermesse. As noted above, the symbol in Figure 7-19: Image iii initially appears unlikely, resembling an <H>  rather than a fermesse. However, when compared with more recognisably 'fermesse-like' symbols (Figure 7-19: Image v:  and Image ii, ) a different interpretation emerges as illustrated in Figure 7-20:

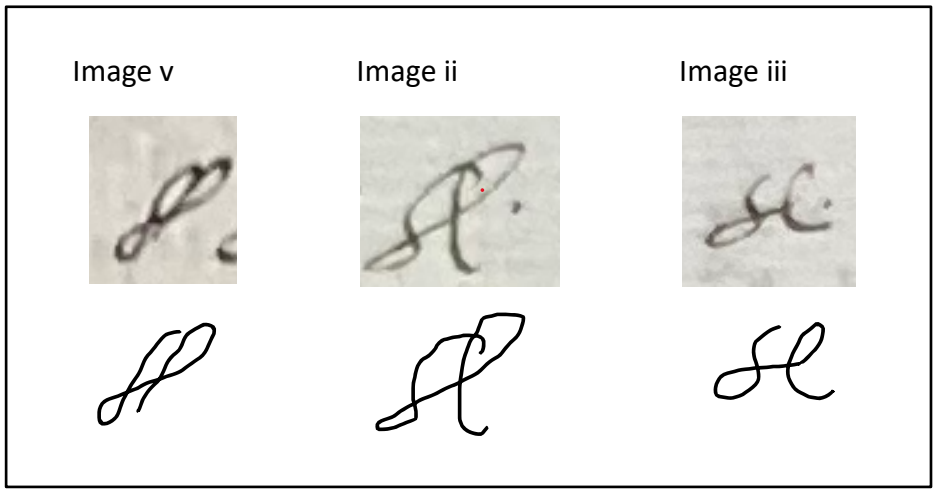


Figure 7-20: Comparison of Henry Erskine's fermesses

The tracings beneath each image chart a progression from a tightly closed <S> to progressively looser and more open forms. Viewed in this sequence, the apparent <H> (Figure 7-20 Image iii) can be understood as an expanded variant of the fermesses seen in Figure 7-20 Images v and ii. This comparative evidence, together with Henry's demonstrable familiarity with the symbol and his consistent practice of adding it to address forms, supports the decision to tag all the symbols shown in Figure 7-19 as fermesses in StErCor2. A similar comparative process underpinned fermesse identification across the corpus to ensure consistency and accuracy.

7.6 Quantitative Overview of the StEr Fermesses

This section presents a quantitative overview of the fermesses included in the StEr letters. Of the 183 letters examined, a quarter contain at least one fermesse, amounting to 49 letters in total (46 in Scots and three in French). Within these letters, 119 *$* symbols occur, either singly or in groups. As Table 7.1 shows, 22 of the 49 letters contain three *$*s; of the remaining 27, eight contain two *$*s, 16 contain one *$*, and three contain four, six or 11 *$*s.

Table 7.1: Overview of StErCor2 fermesses (inc. letters in both Scots and French)

No. of *$* per letter	None	1	2	3	4	6	11	Total letters which contain *$*
Count of letters (EModS)	133	16	8	21	1	0	0	Total EModS = 46
Count of letters (EModF)	4	0	0	1	0	1	1	Total EModF = 3
Total count letters by no. of *$*	137	16	8	22	1	1	1	**Grand total = 49**

Now let us focus only on those senders who chose to use fermesses in all or some of their letters, hereafter *fermesse-senders*.

Table 7.2: Fermesses in fermesse-senders letters

Sex	Religion (P=Presbyterian RC=Roman Catholic)	Sender	Total sender's letters	No. of letters with *$*s	Total *$* in sender's letters	Language
F	P (convert)	Marie Stewart (Mar)	28	20 (71%)	60	Letters in EModS
	RC	Katherine Clifton (Lennox)	2	2 (100%)	2	
	P	Marion Douglas (Drum)	1	1 (100%)	2	
	Likely RC	Diane de Clére	1	1 (100%)	11	Letters in EModF
	RC	Gabrielle Stuart	1	1 (100%)	6	
M	P	Alexander Erskine	21	9 (43%)	12	Letters in EModS
	P	Henry Erskine (Cardross)	16	10 (62%)	17	
	P	Thomas Erskine (Kellie)	2	2 (100%)	2	
	P	Charles Erskine (Alva-Bandeath)	1	1 (100%)	3	
	Unknown	J Lantie	1	1 (100%)	1	
	Unconfirmed	Esmé Stuart (Lennox)	1	1 (100%)	3	Letters in EModF
		Grand Totals	**75**	**49**	**119**	

Table 7.2 shows that there are eleven StEr fermesse-senders: five women and six men. In total, the five female fermesse-senders contributed 33 letters to StErCor2, of which 25 contain *$*s (76%). The male senders contributed 43 letters, 24 of which include the symbol (56%), indicating that women were somewhat more likely to use the fermesse. Given the limited sample sizes (eight

senders contributed only one or two letters) this observation should be treated with caution. However, further support emerges from the three most prolific fermesse-senders. Stewart, the female sender with the highest letter count (28), used the symbol in 20 letters (71%), compared with her sons Henry, who used it in 10 of his 16 letters (62%), and Alexander, who used it in nine of his 21 letters (43%).

Table 7.2 also identifies the religious affiliations of nine of the 11 fermesse-senders also Table 1-2). Five were Presbyterian and remained so (Marion Douglas; Thomas Erskine; and Charles, Alexander, and Henry Erskine); two were Catholic, and two possibly so (Gabrielle Stuart, Katherine Clifton, Diane de Clére, Esmé Stuart); one is unconfirmed (Lantie); and one was born Catholic but later converted to Protestantism (Marie Stewart). These findings corroborate earlier scholarship showing that both Protestant and Catholic writers used the fermesse (Hobson 1935, 114; Cordey 1936, 191; Chareyre 2007, 98; Section 7.4).

7.7 Fermesses in Superscriptions

Sections 7.7–7.10 examine how writers positioned fermesses within the letter layouts, focusing on letters sent by fermesse-senders that contain the symbol. This section begins with fermesses in superscriptions.

The next set of tables, Table 7-1 and Table 7-2, demonstrate that Stewart consistently positioned fermesses in superscriptions in the twenty of her twenty-eight extant letters where the symbol appeared.

Table 7-1: Marie Stewart's fermessed superscriptions (holograph)

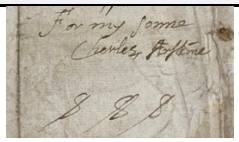
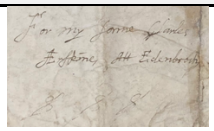
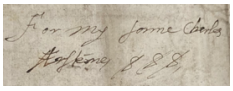
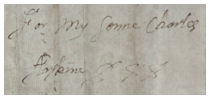
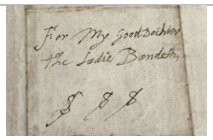
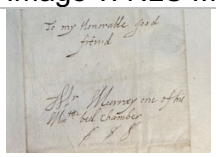
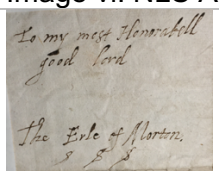
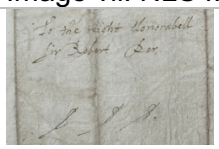
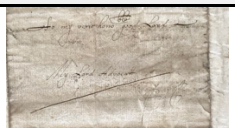
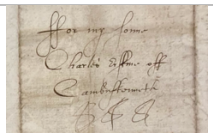
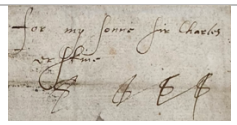
Sender: Marie Stewart (Mar)			
Recipient	No. of holograph letters with *$*	Examples	
Charles Erskine (Alva-Bandeath)	10	 Image i: NLS MS 5070 fol. 46v	 Image ii: NLS MS 5070 fol. 50v
		 Image iii: NLS MS 5070 fol. 48v	 Image iv: NLS MS 5088 fol. 83v
Mary Hope (Alva-Bandeath)	1	 Image v: NLS MS 5070 fol. 64v	
John Murray (Annandale)	1	 Image vi: NLS Adv.MS 33.1.1 [v] fol. 118	
William Douglas (Morton)	3	 Image vii: NLS MS 80 56v	
Robert Kerr (Ancram)	1	 Image viii: NRS GD40/2/13/34 leaf 2v	

Table 7-2: Marie Stewart's fermessed superscriptions (scribal)

Sender: Marie Stewart (Mar)			
Recipient	No. of scribal letters with *$*	Examples	
Thomas Hope (Craighall)	1	 Image ix: NLS MS 5155 fol. 31v	
Charles Erskine (Alva-Bandeath)	3	 Image x: NLS MS 5155 fol. 33v	 Image xi: NLS MS 5070 fol. 93v

All sixteen holograph superscriptions display a trio of signs, *$ $ $*, either underlining the text block (Table 7-1: Images I, ii, v, vi, vii & viii) or completing the final line of text (Table 7-1: Images iii & iv) . The four secretarial superscriptions likewise underline the text block but vary in number, using two (Table 7-2: Image ix), three (Table 7-2: Image x), or four symbols (Table 7-2: Image xi).

Although it is impossible to determine whether Stewart requested the inclusion of the fermesses or whether the scribe reproduced them from comparable address leaves, their presence in non-holograph manuscripts nonetheless suggests that the symbol held particular importance for the Countess. One may imagine her setting down her thoughts in her own hand, signing off with her customary 'your louing mother, Marie Stewart', folding the leaves into a packet, affixing the wax seal, then writing the direction:

(142) For my sonne
Charles Erskine

on the front. Lastly, to seal her missive, she signalled her affection and fidelity with a triple *$*:

(143) For my sonne
Charles Erskine
$ $ $

Upon receipt, her son would have immediately recognised and understood the symbol's meaning, thereby completing the visual exchange of information.

Stewart conveyed a similar message of affectionate constancy by underlining superscriptions she addressed to Charles' wife, Mary Hope (her daughter-in-law), to John Murray (Annandale) and Robert Kerr (Ancram) (both friends and fellow courtiers), and to William Douglas (Morton) (a relative of her husband) with a trio of fermesses (Table 7-1: Images v, vi, vii & viii). These examples indicate that she used the symbol to signal attachment across different types of relationships, both familial and platonic.

Recognising the fermesse's significance for both sender and recipient raises the question of why Stewart did not include it in all of her letters. For five of her eight letters lacking the symbol, the explanation is straightforward: they have no superscriptions.[184] This absence, combined with the fact that the recipient is unnamed within the letters and referred to only by the address form

[184] These are NLS MS 5070 fol. 51, NLS MS 5070 fol. 58, NLS MS 5088 fol. 78, NLS MS 5088 fol. 79 and NLS MS 5155 fol. 19.

‘Louing sonne’, complicates identification. Although all five letters bear archivists’ marks indicating that they were sent to Stewart’s son, Charles, no supporting justification is provided. Notwithstanding this lack of external evidence, the internal content of the letters confirms the attribution: each discusses topics found in other letters Stewart sent to Charles at the same period, making his identification as recipient almost certain.

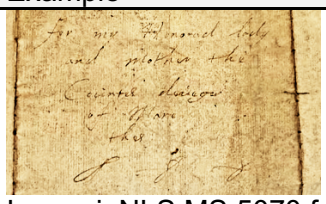
In addition to lacking superscriptions, these five letters show no evidence of sealing. Although crease marks indicate that they were once folded into packets, there are no wax residues or tears suggesting that they were sealed and opened. This, together with the absence of superscriptions, raises the possibility that the letters were either copies retained for filing or intended to be enclosed within a larger packet sent to Charles. Both scenarios would account for the absence of fermesses: if enclosed, Stewart may have placed the symbols on the packet’s superscription instead, while copies would have required none.

The remaining three unfermessed manuscripts do have superscriptions, suggesting a different explanation for the symbol’s absence. All three are formal, secretary-penned letters concerned with business matters (NLS MS 80 fol. 53, 3 February 1604 to William Douglas; NLS MS 5070 fols. 65–66, 20 June 1640, to Norvell and NLS MS 5070 fols. 67–68, 27 June 1640, to Charles). However, the four scribal letters that do contain fermesses (NLS MS 5155 fols. 30–31, 22 November 1640 to Sir Thomas Hope; and NLS MS 5070 fols. 43–44, 17 October 1639; NLS MS 5155 fols. 32–33, 23 November 1640; and NLS MS 5070 fols. 92–93, 6 June 1642, all to Charles Erskine), are similar in character and content. The explanation, therefore, does not appear to lie in their status as formal business correspondence. Rather, it is possible that not all secretaries adhered to Stewart’s personal epistolary practices.

Beyond the fermesses found in Stewart’s own correspondence, evidence from Charles’ letters suggests that she may also have influenced her son’s epistolary habits. Table 7-3: Image I shows Charles emulating his mother’s practice by adding a trio of fermesses to the superscription of a letter directed to her, as follows:

(144) for my Honorad lady
and mother the
Coŭntes doŭager
of Mare
thes
$ $ $ (NLS MS 5070 fol. 55v, 5 January 1640)

Table 7-3: Charles' fermessed superscription in StErCor2

Sender: Charles Erskine (Alva-Bandeath)		
Recipient	No. of letters with *$*	Example
Marie Stewart (Mar)	1	 Image i: NLS MS 5070 fol. 55v, enhanced

As outlined in Section 2.2.1, this project identified only one extant letter sent by Charles to his mother. Given the ontological boundaries of StErCor2, this is his sole contribution to the corpus. Nevertheless, approximately 300 letters sent by Charles to various recipients survive in the NLS volumes MS 5088, 5089, and 5090, including at least 140 addressed to his wife, Mary Hope. A broad survey of these manuscripts shows that he consistently underlined superscriptions with fermesses in the same manner as his mother. One such example, sent to Mary Hope, is reproduced in Figure 7-21: Image i.

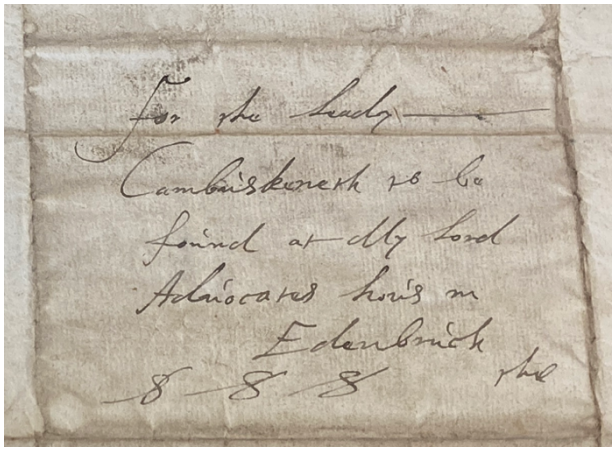


Image i: NLS MS 5155 fol. 56v, Charles Erskine (Alva-Bandeath) to Mary Hope (Alva-Bandeath), 14 November 1644



Image iii: NLS MS 5155 fol. 74v, Sir William Erskine to Charles Erskine (Alva-Bandeath), 2 September ?1645

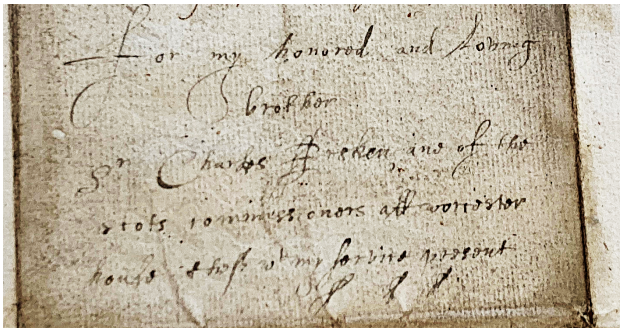


Image ii: NLS MS 5155 fol. 60v, enhanced, Arthur Erskine (Scotscraig) to Charles Erskine (Alva-Bandeath)

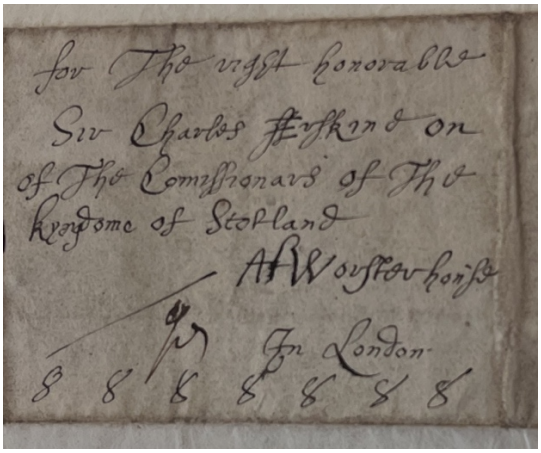


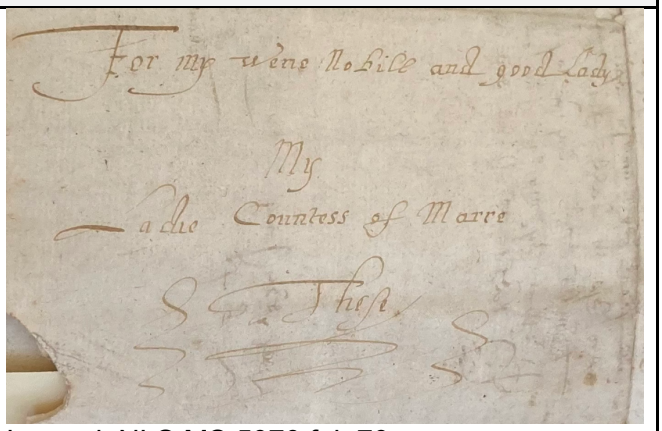
Image iv: NLS MS 5155 fol. 107v, Sir William Erskine to Charles Erskine (Alva-Bandeath), 21 December [1646]

Figure 7-21: The Erskine brothers' fermessed superscriptions

The remaining examples in Figure 7-21 further demonstrate that this practice extended beyond Charles. His brothers, Arthur (Figure 7-21: Image ii) and William (Figure 7-21: Images iii & iv) similarly employed the fermesse in superscriptions of letters sent to Charles. Together, these examples provide additional evidence that members of the StEr family shared epistolary conventions, including the use of fermesses to underscore superscriptions.

One final writer in the StEr dataset also included fermesses in a superscription as shown in Table 7-4: Image i. This letter is signed 'MDrum' by Marion Douglas, Lady Drum, the aunt of Marie Stewart's daughter-in-law, Mary Douglas, 6th countess of Buchan (1601–1628), who was married to Stewart's eldest son James (Table 1-2).

Table 7-4: Marion Douglas' fermessed superscription

Sender: Marion Douglas (Drum)		
Recipient	No. of letters with $	Example
Marie Stewart (Mar)	1	 Image i: NLS MS 5070 fol. 70v

Douglas' letter displays distinct hands: the main body, subscription, location, and date are written in Secretary script, likely by a professional scribe, while Douglas herself added the signature in Italic script, as illustrated in Figure 7-22:

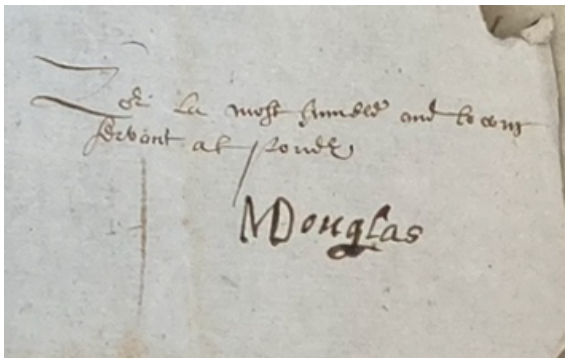


Figure 7-22: Marion Douglas, Lady Drum's signature

However, as Table 7-4 shows, the superscription on Douglas' letter was also written in Italic script. Although her signature alone does not contain provide enough text for a detailed comparison, it is certainly possible that Douglas penned the superscription herself. In any case, the writer flanked the last word of the superscription, 'these', with a pair of fermesses:

(145) For my werie Nobill and good Lady
My
Ladie Countess of Marre
$* These *$ (NLS MS 5070 fol. 70v, 27 June 1640)

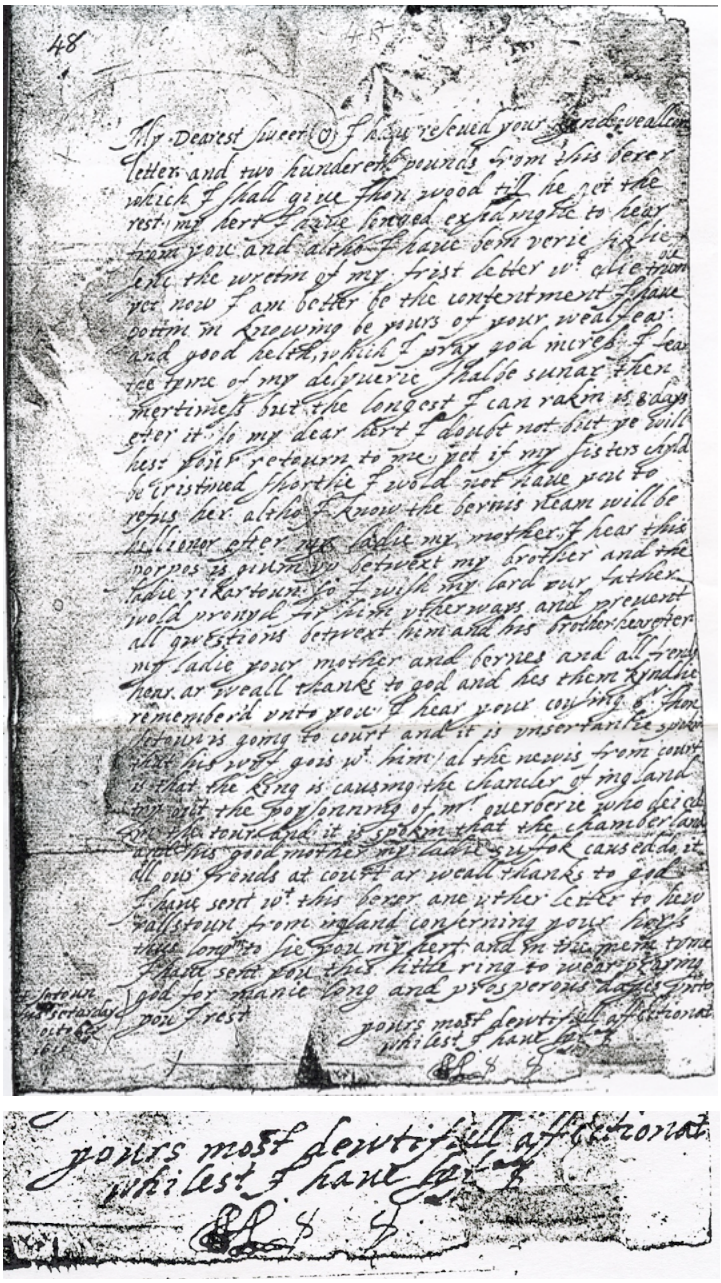
Like Henry's symbols discussed in Section 7.5, these shapes represent a looser interpretation of the fermesse. Yet the symbols on Douglas' letter do appear to represent closed <S>s, with each S' upper open curve closed off by an extended beginning stroke. Given this form, their positioning in a superscription (a practice observed in twenty-three other StEr letters, twenty sent by Stewart, and one each by Charles Erskine, Gabrielle Stuart, Esmé Stuart, and Diane de Clére) and their strong resemblance to other fermesses in the corpus, this thesis classifies them as fermesses.[185]

As far as can be ascertained, unlike Marie Stewart, her siblings, and her kinswoman Diane de Clére, Marion Douglas appears to have received a Scottish-based education. Similarly, unlike Charles and William Erskine, whose mother, Stewart was French, Douglas likely lacked French linguistic or familial influence.[186] Meurman-Solin's (2013) study of Scottish letter layouts in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries features a letter sent from the Scottish noblewoman, Anna Livingston, countess of Eglinton, to her husband, Alexander Seton (Montgomery), 6th earl of Eglinton, on 21 October 1615. Notably, Livingstone is a member of the StEr CoP, being the recipient of the condolence letter from Henrietta Stuart (NRS GD3/5 no.29, undated; Section 3.1).

Livingstone's letter to her spouse contains two, or possibly three, fermesses near the signature section, although folio damage makes the exact number uncertain (Figure 7-23).

[185] In 2023, Davis surveyed a varied selection of address leaves preserved in letters from the Folger collections. Although the examples he discussed contain a variety of flourishes and underlinings, none of them resemble fermesses in the way that Marion Douglas, Lady Drum's symbols do (Davis 2023).

[186] As a woman, it is almost certain that Marion Douglas did not travel to France for her education as had Marie Stewart's other sons, Alexander and Henry Erskine who also used fermesses in their letters.



4. Anna Livingston, Countess of Eglinton, to Alexander Seton (Montgomery), 6th Earl of Eglinton, Seton, 21st October 1615. NRS GD 3/5/117. Previously edited in the Memorials of the Montgomeries, vol. 1, 48: 199; CSC LivingstonEA61502 #170. Published with the kind permission of the Earl of Eglinton and Winton. In Meurman-Solin (2013). https://varieng.helsinki.fi/series/volumes/14/meurman-solin_b/.

Figure 7-23: Anna Livingstone, countess of Eglinton's letter, 1615 with enlarged detail showing fermesses.

While Meurman-Solin (2013) does not specifically comment on Anna Livingstone's use of the fermesse, she observes that Livingstone had served as a maid of honour to Queen Anne of Denmark, who also employed the symbol, as illustrated in her letter to Buckingham (Figure 7-16).

This position would almost certainly have brought Anna Livingstone into contact with Marie Stewart, who was likewise one of Queen Anne's ladies-in-waiting.

The presence of fermesses in the letters of both Marion Douglas and Anna Livingstone confirms that the symbol had extended beyond Francophile circles, functioning as a visual formula in correspondence sent by native Scots as well as by those with French-influenced backgrounds. Moreover, Livingstone's membership in the StEr CoP and her correspondence with Henrietta, Marie Stewart's sister, further illustrate the connections within this elite network of letter-writers.[187]

There is also evidence that English noblewomen at the Jacobean royal court used the fermesse. Lucy Russell, Countess of Bedford, the prominent courtier and close confidant of the queen (Reid-Baxter 2025, 32), inscribed fermesses in both the opening and closing sections of her letters to Lady Jane Cornwallis, sent between 1614 and 1626.[188] The use of the fermesse by Marie Stewart, Anna Livingstone, Lucy Russell, and Queen Anne of Denmark indicates shared epistolary practices among these women and may signal that they formed part of a CoP within the queen's household, alongside Henrietta Stuart (Section 3.1).

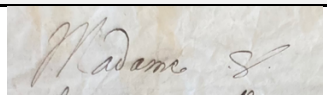
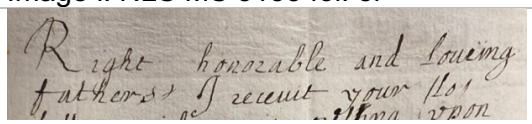
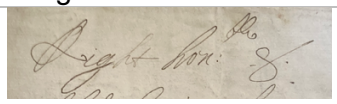
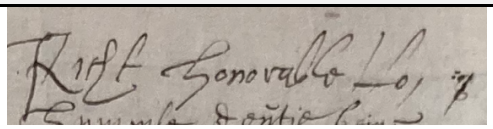
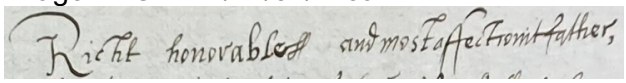
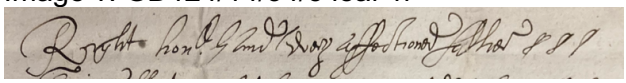
7.8 Fermesses in Address Forms

Table 7-5 shows six examples from the only two fermesse-senders who consistently placed the symbol within or immediately after the address form. These were two more of Lady Mar's sons, Alexander and Henry.

[187] The jewelled Fitzwilliam locket, which may be the miniature featured in a portrait said to be of Anna, 'Lady Livingstone' is also decorated with a fermesse motif (Somers Cocks 1980, 86–7). See also "Anna of Denmark, 'The Eglinton Jewel'" (National Galleries of Scotland 2021), www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/features/king-james-vi-i-%E2%80%93-art-culture-jacobean-court/anna-of-denmark-eglinton-jewel.

[188] I would like to thank Sam Kaislaniemi for bringing Lucy Russell, Countess of Bedford's, and Lady Jane Cornwallis' use of the fermesse symbol to my attention.

Table 7-5: Fermessed address forms

Sender: Alexander		
Recipient	No. of letters with *$*	Example
Marie Stewart (Mar)	4	 Image i: NLS MS 5155 fol. 8r
John Erskine (Mar elder)	4	 Image ii: NRS GD124/15/35/6 leaf 1r
John Leslie (Rothes)	1	 Image iii: NLS MS 5155 fol. 16r
Sender: Henry		
Recipient	No. of letters with *$*	Example
John Erskine (Mar elder)	10	 Image iv: GD124/14/34/2 leaf 1r  Image v: GD124/14/34/5 leaf 1r  Image vi: GD124/14/34/15 leaf 1r
NRS GD124/15/34/2–7, 11, 14; GD124/15/34/15, GD124/15/58.		

As Table 7-5 shows, Alexander included fermesses not only when greeting immediate family members: his mother, Marie Stewart as 'Madame *$*' (Image i), and his father, John Erskine as 'Right honorable and loueing father *$$*' (Image ii), but also more distant relations, such as his brother-in-law, John Leslie, addressed as 'Right hon[orabill] *$*', (Image iii). In the case of his brother Henry, StErCor2 preserves only letters he sent to their father, John Erskine (16 in total) . Ten of these sixteen letters contain fermesses, with one to three of the symbols placed either at the end of the address form, for example, 'Richt honorable Lo[rd] *$*' (Image iv) and 'Right hon[orable] and wery affectioned father *$$$*' (Image vi), or in the middle, for example, 'Richt honorable*$$* and most affectionit father' (Image v).[189]

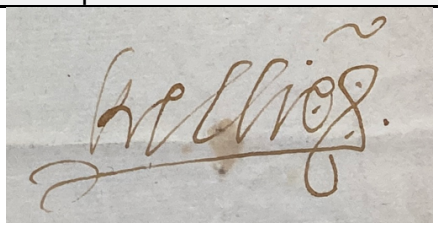
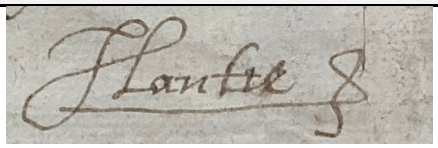
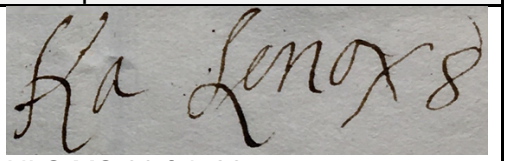
[189] Both Henry and Alexander's letters display different styles of handwriting and it is difficult to know whether all or only some of their StEr letters were self-penned. Questions of authorship such as these are briefly discussed in Section 1.3.4.

Chapter 6 highlighted the capacity for address forms to encode information about interpersonal relationships. By incorporating the fermesse in the opening of their letters, Alexander and Henry signalled affection and filial intimacy: an expression of emotion that Nevala's (2003, 158) language-based study found largely absent when children addressed their parents in seventeenth-century English letters. In doing so, the two brothers drew on a shared visual repertoire within the StEr CoP, using the fermesse to confer symbolic weight and relational nuance to their address forms.

7.9 Fermesses in Signatures

Table 7-6 identifies three senders who incorporated a fermesse into their signatures: Thomas Erskine (Kellie), Lantie and Katherine Clifton (Lennox).

Table 7-6: Fermessed signatures

Sender: Thomas Erskine (Kellie)		
Recipient	No. of letters with *$*	Example
James Erskine (Buchan)	2	 NLS MS 5155 fol. 8r
Sender: Lantie		
Recipient	No. of letters with *$*	Example
Marie Stewart (Mar)	1	 NLS MS 5070 fol. 5r
Sender: Katherine Clifton (Lennox)		
Recipient	No. of letters with *$*	Example
William Douglas (Morton)	2	 NLS MS 80 fol. 22r

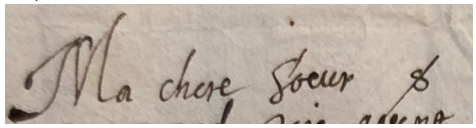
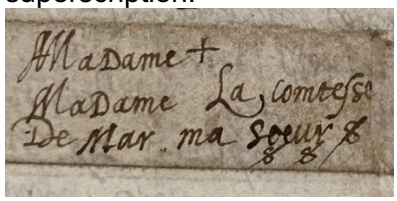
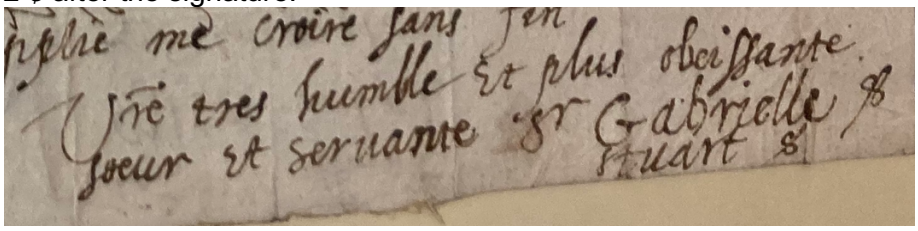
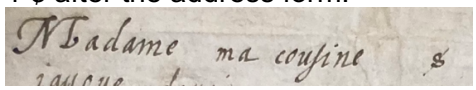
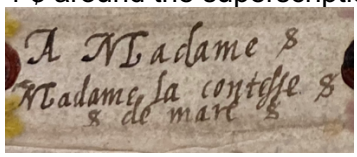
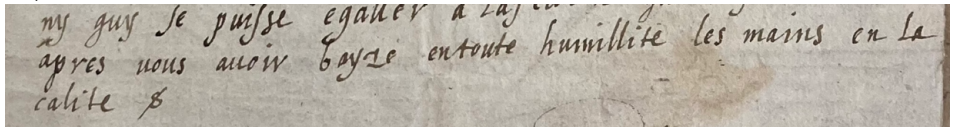
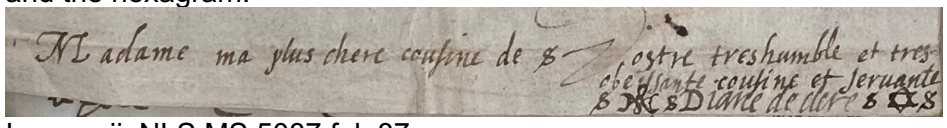
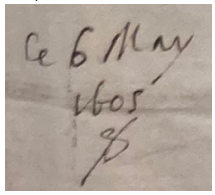
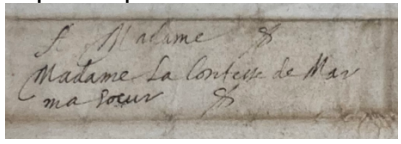
As the royal signatory examples of Elizabeth of Bohemia and Elizabeth I demonstrated, early modern writers often added decorative flourishes to their signature (

Figure 7-17– 7-18). To the casual reader, Kellie, Lantie and Katherine Clifton might appear to have merely embellished their names with idiosyncratic squiggles. Yet, as noted in Section 7.5, careful palaeographic study of other fermesse examples enables scholars to recognise alternate forms of the symbol (e.g., Figure 7-20). In particular, Katherine's fermesse in 'Ka Lenox $' (Table 7-6) evokes Hobson's description of the symbol as an upright infinity sign (1935, 108).

7.10 Fermesses in Two or More Parts of a Letter

Lastly, Table 7-7 illustrates examples from three senders, Gabrielle Stuart, Esmé Stuart (Lennox younger), and Diane de Clére, who placed fermesses in two or more sections of their letters.

Table 7-7: Fermesses in other letter positions

Sender: Gabrielle Stuart = 6 $ total			
Recipient	No. of letters with $	Example detailing no. of fermesses and position	
Marie Stewart (Mar)	1	1 $ after the address form:  Image i: NLS MS 5070 fol. 3r	3 $ at the end of the superscription:  Image ii: NLS MS 5070 fol. 3v
		2 $ after the signature:  Image iii: NLS MS 5070 fol. 3r	
Sender: Diane de Clére = 11 $ total			
Recipient	No. of letters with $	Example detailing no. of fermesses and position	
Marie Stewart (Mar)	1	1 $ after the address form:  Image iv: NLS MS 5087 fol. 87r	4 $ around the superscription:  Image v: NLS MS 5087 fol. 87v
		1 $ at the end of the main letter text:  Image vi: NLS MS 5087 fol. 87r 1 $ immediately prior to the subscription and then 4 more, in two pairs which flank the signature, positioned on either side of the monogram and the hexagram:  Image vii: NLS MS 5087 fol. 87r	
Sender: Esmé Stuart (Lennox younger) = 2 $ total			
Recipient	No. of letters with $	Example detailing no. of fermesses and position	
Marie Stewart (Mar)	1	1 $ in the closer, after the date:  Image viii: NLS MS 5070 fol. 2r	1 $ at the end of the superscription:  Image ix: NLS MS 5070 fol. 2v

All three wrote in French, their native language, and each included fermesses in the superscription (Table 7-7: Images ii, v & ix), following the pattern used by their relative, Marie Stewart (Table 7-1–Table 7-2). In addition, Gabrielle and Diane de Clére appended the fermesse to their address forms, echoing the practice of Henry and Alexander (Table 7-5):

Gabrielle: Ma chere sœur *$* (Table 7-7: Image i)
de Cléré: Madame ma cousine *$* (Table 7-7: Image iv)

Gabrielle further added fermesses after her signature:

Gabrielle *$*
Stuart *$* (Table 7-7: Image iii)

Uniquely amongst the fermesse-senders, de Clére marked the close of her main letter text with the symbol (Table 7-7: Image vi), placed another immediately after the phrase, 'Madame ma plus chere cousine de', and added four more around her signature also ex. 127):

apres vous avoir bayze entoute humillite les mains en la
calite *$*
Madame ma plus chere cousine de *$* Vostre tres humble et tres
obeissante cousine et seruante
$* DdC *$ Diane de Clere *$*✡*$* (Table 7-7: Image vii)

Esmé Stuart was the only sender to fermesse the date:

le 6 May
i605
$ (Table 7-7: Image viii)

Since the dateline appears at the end of his letter, Stuart's placement of the symbol suggests he may have used it to signal closure (see Section 7.4, which notes the fermesse could serve this \'}{ function).

Proportionally, these three letters contain the highest fermesse counts in the entire StEr dataset. Although they represent less than 2% of the total letters (3 out of 183), they account for 16% of all fermesses (19 out of 116), suggesting that French-language letters in the StEr corpus tend to include more fermesses than those in Scots.

However, caution is warranted in interpreting these figures. StErCor2 contains only seven EModF letters, compared with 176 StEr letters in EModS or EmodE, so the sample size is very limited. As noted in Section 1.3.4, two of these seven EModF letters (sent by Stewart's mother, Catherine and her cousin, [L] de Balsac) survive only in nineteenth-century copies, in which transcribers may have omitted the fermesse symbols. Indeed, other nineteenth-century transcriptions made by the Rev. Robert Paul of Charles Erskine's letters fail to record fermesses, thus raising the possibility that the original de Balsac letters included fermesses that were not reproduced. Without access to the originals, this cannot be confirmed.[190] Nevertheless, if these letters did contain fermesses, it would further support the observation that French-language letters were more likely to feature multiple symbols in different parts of a letter.

7.11 Symbols: Discussion of Findings

This chapter has demonstrated the range of marks that early modern writers could incorporate into their letters. Beyond ornamental pen strokes, symbols offered correspondents a way to communicate visually as well as linguistically. By their nature, symbols are regulated, yet writers adapted and personalised them to convey specific messages to their audience. The evidence suggests that symbols such as the fermesse could function as part of a formulaic language in letters, operating in the same way as religious or epistolary formulae to structure communication, index social bonds, and express shared beliefs.

The fermesse was employed by both men and women, across different faiths, and placed in multiple sections of letters: within superscriptions, address forms, signatures, and closings, indicating its versatility as a visual marker of social and emotional connection. In Gabrielle Stuart's and Diane de Cléré's letters, the inclusion of cross and hexagram symbols further underscores the spiritual significance that symbols in formulae could carry. The personal and cultural ties between Marie Stewart and Jeanne II, Queen of Navarre, suggest that Marie may have also used the fermesse to signal her steadfast commitment to God.

At the same time, the symbol's use by figures such as Gabrielle Stuart, Stewart's sister, and Katherine Clifton, her sister-in-law, both of whom were aligned with opposing sides in the

[190] As yet the author has not been able to discover whether these letters have survived. It is possible they were separated from the rest of the Erskine Murray Papers when Rev. Robert Paul selected to transcribe them along with many others sent by Sir Charles Erskine which he also copied. Paul's transcriptions of Charles' letters are preserved in NLS MS 5157.

contemporary religious conflict, illustrates the pluralistic nature of the fermesse. Even if the symbol carried religious connotations for some writers, it did not appear to signify adherence to any single creed. Rather, its shared use across gender, faith, and national lines indicates that the fermesse its significance transcended sectarian divisions, functioning as a broader marker of relational, social, and symbolic belonging.

The distribution of fermesses across Scots and French letters also highlights the influence of linguistic and cultural context. French-language letters were more likely to include multiple symbols in different parts of a letter, while the StEr letters in Scots predominantly featured them in superscriptions and address forms.[191] The StEr family, along with their wider network of correspondents, including members of the queen's household and other CoP participants, demonstrates how such visual conventions circulated within elite social and epistolary networks.

Overall, the fermesse exemplifies how early modern correspondents negotiated the intersection of language, symbol, and social meaning. By integrating symbols into letters as part of a formulaic repertoire alongside religious and epistolary formulae, writers could convey complex messages of devotion, attachment, and identity. The fermesse thus functioned as a shared visual language within a CoP, facilitating communication across familial, platonic, and transnational networks while enriching the expressive potential of written correspondence.

[191] Letters outwith the StEr corpus also showed writers adding the fermesse to, for example, line-endings (Anne of Denmark: see Figure 7-16) and near the signature (Anna Livingstone, countess of Eglinton: see Figure 7-23).

Chapter 8 Conclusions and Future Directions

This thesis analysed how members of an early modern Scottish CoP established and maintained social relationships through the shared communicative resource of formulaic language. The findings show that sustaining social bonds through ongoing communication was the group's principal shared goal. The corpus demonstrates that religious, epistolary, and visual formulaic language foregrounds faith, hierarchy, and relationship-building as central CoP concerns. Individual formulaic expressions, termed formulae here, functioned as remembered, multi-element constructions circulating as communal practice, thereby supporting Bakhtin's (1981) view that linguistic units are shared, remembered, and reshaped for communicative purposes.

Research Question 1 asked 'How can we assemble and digitally encode a corpus of the epistolary writings of an early modern Scottish CoP that enables both computational analysis and public access?' The thesis answered this question through two key contributions. First, by outlining the methodological framework for the conception and compilation of the novel corpus, StErCor2, and second, via a corpus design that enables linguistic and multimodal computational analysis while also facilitating wider public access to the transcription texts (Chapter 4).

The thesis addressed Research Question 2, 'How did members of the StEr CoP use the following three types of formulaic language in their correspondence to construct and negotiate relationships, exert mutual influence, and reflect sociolinguistic identities: (a) religious formulae, (b) epistolary formulae (address forms, subscriptions, and superscriptions), and (c) symbols?' by analysing each category of formulae across Chapters 5–7. The findings demonstrate that formulaic practices in the StEr CoP function collectively rather than independently, forming an integrated multimodal repertoire.

The next three sections of this chapter synthesise how these resources functioned as a complex communicative system, negotiated relationships, performed sociolinguistic identity, and situated themselves within early modern epistolary culture (Sections 8.1–8.4). The final two chapter sections outline directions for future research, and consider the findings' significance for epistolary studies that use historical pragmatics (Sections 8.5–8.6)

8.1 Formulaic Language as a Communicative System

The findings show that for the StEr CoP members, the three kinds of formulaic language examined, religious, epistolary, and symbols, formed a single integrated, multimodal communicative repertoire operating across linguistic, visual, and performative modes.

Religion lay at the centre of the correspondents' worldview. Religious formulae were not decorative but intrinsic to communication, reflecting beliefs embedded in everyday life. Blessings frequently coincided with conventional epistolary closings, demonstrating how devotional and epistolary conventions jointly structured letter endings in ways comparable to in-person encounters. Since routine speech relies heavily on remembered expressions, particularly in religious contexts, this provides evidence that written religious formulae in early modern correspondence may reflect socially embedded patterns of spoken language.

Epistolary formulae structured the text of the StEr letters through openings and address leaves and were often intersected with symbolic elements. The corpus' extensive use of the fermesse, appearing alongside opening address forms, signatures, and external superscriptions, highlights the integration of graphic and linguistic communication in such correspondence. Moreover, the cross-confessional use of the fermesse suggests correspondents recognised its relational significance despite differing religious affiliations. The symbol visually affirmed loyalty, devotion, and relational steadfastness, particularly for familial and transnational correspondents, demonstrating that CoP membership was maintained through layered meaning-making resources extending beyond textual language. Additional symbols, including the cross and hexagram, further show that spiritual meaning was conveyed visually as well as linguistically.

These findings demonstrate the importance of incorporating symbols into the study of early modern correspondence. StEr correspondents who omitted religious formulae sometimes relied on visual formulae to express shared faith, possibly reflecting the risk of explicit religious language during confessional conflict.[192] Beyond symbolic marking, correspondents used script choice, authorship choice, letterlocking mechanisms, and spatial organisation to convey meaning. Correspondents expressed politeness, for example, through folding patterns and deliberate spacing within epistolary formulae.

[192] One example being Reade's letter. Although this letter contains no religious language and their confessional affiliation remains unknown, the cross placed at the letter's opening signals religious identity and solidarity with Marie Stewart (Section 7.3).

Correspondents also used formulae to frame requests and express emotion while reinforcing social and moral positioning in their letters. Petitioners, for example, combined deferential address formulae with religious invocations to situate their requests within frameworks of humility and Christian charity. Shared formulae functioned as communicative shorthand, creating predictability and mutual understanding among CoP members. Reference texts widely used during this period trace the scriptural origins of many of the religious formulae, termed relform here, confirming that they were consciously or unconsciously adapted from biblical sources for personal correspondence. Moreover, the epistolary formulae display similar consistencies: honorifics such as *Madame, My Lord,* and *Right Honourable* were frequently used to signal respect, while kinship terms such as *mother, father, daughter,* and *son*, indicated familial ties. Formulae including c*ousin* illustrate how, in the early modern period, the kinship term signalled alignment or parity rather than literal familial intimacy.

Correspondents primarily employed religious formulae to express piety, submission to divine will, praise, gratitude, and moral conduct, whereas epistolary formulae signalled kinship, friendship, courtesy, and rank maintenance. Intensified epistolary formulae combining honorifics with evaluative adjectives allowed correspondents to convey affect alongside deference. However, deference was rarely expressed through self-effacing salutations typical of earlier periods, reflecting broader seventeenth-century trends. The limited use of conventional commendatory openings in the StEr letters aligns with contemporary letter-writing manuals; instead, most correspondents opened their letters with address forms only, even in formal business letters.

While these findings demonstrate how formulae structured and enriched StEr correspondence, the thesis further argues that their broader significance lies in their role in enabling correspondents to manage relationships. By drawing on linguistic, visual, and material formulae, writers signalled authority, intimacy, and alignment in socially recognisable ways. The following section examines how formulaic language functioned as a tool for negotiating interpersonal dynamics within the StEr CoP.

8.2 Formulaic Language as Relational Negotiation

Within the StEr CoP, members employed formulaic language as a tool for managing relationships, authority, and trust, enabling communication across hierarchy, distance, and uncertainty of confessional affiliation. In particular, the thesis has shown that correspondents employed religious

expressions instrumentally. By invoking divine will or mercy, correspondents reinforced the sincerity and moral justification of their statements, particularly in contexts where religious credibility carried social significance or in relationships perceived as vulnerable. Although this approach may appear strategic to modern readers, early modern audiences understood these expressions as sincere articulations of faith that aligned personal aims with perceived divine sanction. Like the fermesse, StEr religious formulae conveyed loyalty and constancy, although in this case the devotion was directed toward God. Variation in the use of religious formulae also reflects correspondents' purposeful adaptation to contextual demands and highlights the role of formulaic language in stabilising interactions during periods of political and religious uncertainty.

Additionally, correspondents employed religious and epistolary formulae to project humility, albeit toward different audiences: where relforms expressed submission to God and emphasised pious conduct, epistolary formulae signalled deference, recognised status, and indicated kinship alignment. With few letters retaining formal salutations, epistolary formulae maintained attention to hierarchy by incorporating honorifics and role specifiers in address forms and superscriptions, as well as through the frequent use of service-related terms in subscriptions, reflecting the ongoing need to secure patronage. However, while deference remained central in formulae, it often framed extended passages that balanced authority with submission. For instance, although correspondents acknowledged hierarchy when petitioning higher-status CoP members, they also used assertive language when presenting justified requests, expertise, or counsel. Notably, the analysis revealed a link between petitionary linguistic scripts and relform usage: letters with fewer relforms were associated with a more assured approach, while those with a greater number of relforms reflected a more submissive approach.[193] Religious formulae thus enabled petitioners to articulate socially delicate requests through conventionalised, contextually appropriate expressions.

Formulae also mediated affective and relational tensions, enabling correspondents to balance deference with affection, persuasion with solidarity, and public decorum with private sentiment. The StEr correspondents demonstrated acute awareness of impression management and adjusted the formulaic and visual elements in their letters to suit topic, hierarchy, and audience. Formulae thus functioned as both social and linguistic instruments, allowing members of the CoP to negotiate difference while reinforcing shared identity. Overall, this adaptability

[193] Senders who employed few relforms tended toward a confident 'supposal and assurance' approach, combining positive politeness with strong certainty that requests would be granted. Those using more relforms favored lower-modality language and a 'humility and entreaty' strategy (Section 5.4).

enabled correspondents to pursue personal objectives while maintaining social harmony, illustrating the interplay between social position, religious conviction, and linguistic choice.

8.3 Formulaic Language in Community and Identity Construction

Alongside facilitating the negotiation of relationships, formulaic language served to construct membership and perform identity. The CoP's repertoire of formulae reflected values shared across boundaries of gender, rank, confession, and geography. Correspondents used formulae to construct multiple, overlapping identities linked to religious, familial, political, and social affiliations. They used religious formulae, for instance, to signal participation in a shared Christian belief system, while epistolary formulae reflected how senders sought to position themselves in relation to recipients. Formulaic language could also function as a vehicle for parental instruction, to reinforce behavioural norms, or to transmit expectations, with its usage adapted to project particular personae. Marie Stewart's correspondence with Charles illustrates this adaptability: she fashioned herself not only as a dutiful and affectionate parent but also as a fellow follower of God. Margaret Feilding similarly projected multiple identities through formulaic language, presenting herself as a co-submitter to divine will, an affectionate friend, and a socially deferential correspondent when writing to the higher-ranking countess.

Stewart's correspondence with John Murray (Annandale) shows further variation: she constructed herself as a refined and educated courtier through the use of unusual religious metaphors, whereas in her parental role she employed more directive, scripturally patterned formulae to encourage Charles's moral conduct. Within David Murray (Gorthy)'s letter, a set of affective formulae reflecting specifically Presbyterian ideologies appears, positioning both himself and Stewart in a friendship grounded in shared faith. By contrast, Alexander Henderson's focus on promoting collective religious welfare led him to employ more doctrinal formulae in his letters to Stewart. Nevertheless, despite their difference in formulaic usage, both correspondents projected moral and religious alignment with the countess.

Formulaic language also sustained long-distance relational networks, as seen in letters exchanged between CoP members across nations. Shared formulaic practices enabled correspondents to maintain both relational continuity and CoP membership. By reinforcing communal identity, formulaic language sustained the StEr CoP across faith, political, and social spheres, whether in Scotland, France, England, or wider Europe.

8.4 Formulaic Language in Early Modern Epistolary Culture

Alongside revealing a shared internal repertoire, the StEr CoP members' use of formulae across nations reflects their engagement with broader early modern epistolary conventions. Correspondents exhibited epistolary literacy (Whyman 2009, 76), employing visual and physical design features to advance social aims, while their circulation of formulae within elite networks illustrates processes of cultural transmission. Marie Stewart, for example, participated in both a literary and artistic elite and a network of correspondents who shared a common formulaic repertoire. The fermesse distribution across gender, status, and nationality demonstrates mutual influence and shared convention. Moreover, the symbolic repertoire was shared beyond the StEr CoP, as seen in letters by Anna Livingstone and Anne of Denmark. The StEr correspondents use of the fermesse situates them within a wider European cultural network where the symbol signified loyalty and constancy not only in letters but in other artefacts. Furthermore, the corpus' inclusion of the cross and hexagram reveals the visual convergence of belief systems and demonstrates how correspondents could use symbols to express shared spiritual alignment without explicit doctrinal reference.

Formulae also illustrate how early modern correspondence mediated public and private social spheres. Correspondents adapted epistolary formulae to suit their intended audiences: external superscriptions were typically more formal, while internal formulae were often more intimate. Superscriptions tended to foreground titles and status markers to establish hierarchical positioning in publicly visible locations accessible to bearers and observers. By contrast, specialised locking techniques, such as those used in the corpus' accordion-folded letters, were used to enhance privacy and intimacy. These letters were likely enclosed within more formal outer packets that concealed the interior format and protected features such as the silk-floss ribbon bindings. Similarly, Diane de Clére's monogram exemplifies a symbol meaningful only to informed recipients.

Taken together, these findings highlight the wider significance of formulaic language in early modern correspondence and point to further questions about its transmission, variation, and development across communities and contexts. The following section therefore outlines directions for future research.

8.5 Directions for Future Research

Chapter 4 noted that StErCor2's editable TEI-XML files allows users to enrich the data without altering the base text. This design opens numerous avenues for future research, with one possibility being to expand the scope of formulae tagged therein. For example, the StEr BUSINESS letters could be tagged for Scots legal expressions, enabling comparative studies akin to Cruickshank (2013).[194] In addition, the metadata accompanying StErCor2 could support further enquiries using methods from sociolinguistic variation analysis. Encoding the entire corpus for linguistic features diagnostic of EModS and EModE would extend Elder (2022) by facilitating a study of anglicisation across a larger correspondence set.

Given the abundance of Scottish archival correspondence, collaborative projects could explore formulaic language more fully.[195] With 300 relforms in the corpus, the thesis demonstrates that EModS letters are a rich source for analysing religious formulaic language. Digitising additional correspondence would enable comparative studies of relforms across CoPs, social strata, or historical periods, for instance, pre-Reformation Catholic letters versus later Protestant ones, to trace the evolution of formulaic practices. Such studies could also explore the prevalence and placement of the fermesse and other symbols, revealing nuanced meanings within an expanded epistolary corpus.

Future research might also investigate the uncatalogued papers known to survive at the d'Aubigny estate in Bourges. The discovery of extant letters in French sent by Stewart to her relatives would enable comparative studies of her formulaic practices across Scots and French and reveal cross-linguistic strategies in relational negotiation. These directions for future research highlight the potential for expanding both the empirical and analytical scope of early modern correspondence studies. The following section considers the broader implications of the thesis' findings for historical pragmatics and epistolary scholarship.

[194] One avenue for investigation is whether letters dealing with legal matters employed more Scots lexis than others, reflecting the Scottish legal system's distinct terminology and the need to convey the precise meanings and pragmatic nuances embedded in Scots (cf. Cruickshank 2013).

[195] As highlighted by the Scottish Women Letter-Writers Project, P.I.: Jade Scott (2025–).

8.6 Implications for Historical Pragmatics and Epistolary Studies

This study demonstrates that early modern Scottish correspondence provides exceptional evidence of how individuals constructed and maintained relationships across overlapping networks of faith, rank, and family. Formulae are shown not as static conventions but as actively deployed resources which form a foundational mechanism for managing relationships. No previous study has examined so diverse a group of early modern Scottish letter-writers, spanning different countries, confessional beliefs, social positions, and even opposing sides in war. By identifying, transcribing, and digitising these letters into an accessible corpus, this thesis restores these voices to contemporary scholarship.

The study also addresses public engagement with archival materials. Today, positive attitudes toward the Scots language reflect a desire to connect with its origins, yet access to primary sources can be challenging. Following Smith's rationale, applying historical pragmatics to early texts yields 'insights with profound implications for present-day societies' (2020, 29). In doing so, the thesis challenges perceptions of archives as exclusive, contributing to the democratisation of access and providing contemporary readers with ways to engage with early modern communication practices.

A multi-disciplinary approach proved crucial where analysis of religious, epistolary, and symbolic formulae depended on sustained engagement with the original manuscripts. Familiarity with physical sources enabled nuanced recognition of elements that might escape purely textual editions. This underscores the ongoing importance of direct archival access: even rigorous diplomatic editions are mediated, whereas close examination of manuscripts, in person or via high-resolution imagery, reveals the social and material meanings embedded in letters.

StEr correspondents combined linguistic tradition, visual symbolism, and social performance, demonstrating that formulaic language was pragmatically dynamic, socially strategic, and creatively adaptable. StErCor2 shows that communication systems were socially adaptive, multimodal, and identity-forming. Situating the CoP within broader European and confessional frameworks reveals how individuals expressed identity, managed obligations, and balanced personal conviction with societal expectations. These findings illuminate how historical communities constructed cohesion and authority through language, advancing both the documentation of early modern Scottish writing and broader understanding of the interplay between language, belief, and social practice in epistolary communication.

References

Archival Sources

National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh

Adv.MS 33.1.1 [v], State papers collected by Sir James Balfour of Denmilne, volume 5: letter and papers, 1610–1622 (chiefly 1614).
Ch.5654-5756 Deeds and other formal documents of the family of Erskine Murray, 1426-1811.
Dep.314 Papers of the Sutherland Estates, 15th century–1814.
MS 80, Morton papers, volume 8: 'Letters of Noblemen and Gentlemen', 1627–1648.
MS 5070, General correspondence of the family of Erskine of Alva, 1604–1650.
MS 5087, General correspondence, undated, of the family of Erskine of Alva., 17th century-19th century.
MS 5088, General correspondence, undated, of the family of Erskine of Alva., 17th century-19th century.
MS 5155, General correspondence of the family of Erskine of Alva, 1620–1680.

National Records of Scotland, Edinburgh

GD1/44, Title deeds belonging to Major A. Erskine Murray and papers of Sir John Erskine of Alva 1509–1716.
GD3/5, Papers of the Montgomerie Family, Earls of Eglinton: Correspondence, 1363–1931.
GD40/2, Papers of the Kerr Family, Marquises of Lothian (Lothian Muniments): Lothian Papers, Volume XIII.
GD124/15, Papers of the Erskine Family, Earls of Mar and Kellie: Correspondence and personal papers, 1566–1941.
GD124/17, Papers of the Erskine Family, Earls of Mar and Kellie: Estate papers.
GD406/1, Papers of the Douglas Hamilton Family, Dukes of Hamilton and Brandon: Correspondence of the Dukes of Hamilton, 1563–1712.

Others

Token of Jeanne d'Albret (Hasta la muerte). Pau, Musée National du Château de Pau, P.55.28.10. Reprinted by permission of I GrandPalaisRmn (Château de Pau) / Mathieu Rabeau. Accessed 30 October 2024. www.photo.rmn.fr/archive/16-579880-2C6NU0AELMD26.html.
Wroth, Mary. *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*. Manuscript, ca. 1615–ca. 1620. Folger MS V.a.104. Folger Shakespeare Library. Accessed 12 May 2025. https://digitalcollections.folger.edu/bib233141-281838. Licensed under CC BY-NC 3.0.

Online Editions, Corpora, and Projects

Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550–1608. 2013. Edited by Alison Wiggins, Alan Bryson, Daniel Starza Smith, Anke Timmermann, and Graham Williams. University of Glasgow. Web development by Katherine Rogers, University of Sheffield Humanities Research Institute. http://www.bessofhardwick.org.

Bluestocking Corpus: Private Correspondence of Elizabeth Montagu, 1730s–1780s. 2017. First version. Edited by Anni Sairio. XML encoding by Ville Marttila. Department of Modern Languages, University of Helsinki. http://bluestocking.ling.helsinki.fi/.

Breadalbane Collection. 2015. Edited by Jane Dawson. University of Edinburgh. http://ed.ac.uk/divinity/research/resources/breadalbane/Letters.

Centre for Editing Lives and Letters. 2025. http://www.livesandletters.ac.uk/.

Corpus of Patient Documents Project (CoPaDocs). 2017–2022. Edited by Markus Shiegg and Flexible Writers in Language History. http://copadocs.de.

Corpora of Early English Correspondence (CEEC-400). 2020. Compiled by Terttu Nevalainen, Helena Raumolin-Brunberg, Samuli Kaislaniemi, Jukka Keränen, Mikko Laitinen, Minna Nevala, Arja Nurmi, Minna Palander-Collin, Tanja Säily, and Anni Sairio. Department of Modern Languages, University of Helsinki. https://varieng.helsinki.fi/CoRD/corpora/CEEC/.

Corpus of Nineteenth-Century Scottish Correspondence (19CSC). Ongoing. Compiled by Marina Dossena and Richard Dury. University of Bergamo.

Cultures of Knowledge. 2025. Cultures of Knowledge Project. www.culturesofknowledge.org/

Curious Travellers Digital Editions. 2019. Edited and transcribed by Mary-Ann Constantine, Nigel Leask, Ffion Mair Jones, Elizabeth Edwards, Alex Deans, and Vivien Estelle Williams. Software developed by Luca Guariento. University of Glasgow and University of Wales. https://editions.curioustravellers.ac.uk/letters.

Electronic Enlightenment. 2008–2022. Electronic Enlightenment Project, Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford. www.e-enlightenment.com.

Epistolary Culture in Early Modern Scotland Research Network. n.d. Epistolary Culture in Early Modern Scotland Research Network. https://epistolaryculture.wordpress.com/network/.

Helsinki Corpus of Older Scots Texts. 1997. Compiled by Anneli Meurman-Solin. Department of English, University of Helsinki.

Helsinki Corpus of Scottish Correspondence (1540–1750) [ScotsCorr]. 2007. Compiled by Anneli Meurman-Solin and the Research Unit for the Study of Variation, Contacts and Change in English (VARIENG). University of Helsinki, Kielipankki. https://urn.fi/urn:nbn:fi:lb-201411071/.

In Their Own Write: The Lives and Letters of the Poor, 1834–c.1900. 2018. The National Archives and the University of Leicester. Funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. https://intheirownwriteblog.wordpress.com.

La Correspondance du Chancelier Antoine du Bourg (1535–1538). 2016. Edited by Olivier Poncet. Digitised by Camille Desenclos. École Nationale des Chartes. http://elec.enc.sorbonne.fr/dubourg.

Mapping the Republic of Letters. N.d. Mapping the Republic of Letters Project. https://republicofletters.stanford.edu/.

Queen Elizabeth I's French Letters in the National Library of Russia. 2021. Edited by Guillaume Coatalen and Samuli Kaislaniemi. Studies in Variation, Contacts and Change in English 21. VARIENG. https://varieng.helsinki.fi/series/volumes/21/.

Slave Letters. N.d. Digital Collections, M. Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Duke University, Durham, NC. Accessed 3 February 2023. https://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/research/guides/slaveLetters.

The Newton Project. 2024. Directed by Rob Iliffe and Scott Mandelbrote. University of Oxford.

Frequently Cited Digital Resources

AntConc AntConc. Version 4.2.4. 2025. Laurence Anthony. [Software.] Waseda University. www.laurenceanthony.net/software/antconc/.

BCOrder Church of Scotland. 1611. *The Book of Common Order of the Church of Scotland*. Edited by George W. Sprott and Thomas Leishman. William Blackwood & Sons. https://archive.org/details/comorde00chur/page/214/mode/2up.

Beautiful Soup Beautiful Soup (Version 4.12.2). 2023. Leonard Richardson. [Python library.] https://pypi.org/project/beautifulsoup4/.

Douay-Rheims English College of Douay. The Holy Bible. 1610–1582. Edited by William Estius, Bartholomew Peters, and George Colvenerius. Published 1635. Internet Archive. https://archive.org/details/1610A.d.DouayOldTestament1582A.d.RheimsNewTestament_176.

***DSL* 4.0** *Dictionary of the Scots Language*. 2025–. Scottish Language Dictionaries Ltd. www.dsl.ac.uk.

Geneva *The Geneva Bible: A Facsimile of the 1560 Edition*. 1969. Internet Archive. https://archive.org/details/genevabiblefacsi0000unse/.

KJB-1611 The Holy Bible: 1611 King James Version. 2024. King James Bible Online. www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/1611-Bible/.

Nisbet The New Testament in Scots. 1901. By Murdoch Nisbet. Edited by Thomas Graves Law, Joseph Hall, and the Scottish Text Society. With contributions by John Wycliffe and John Purvey. Printed for the Society by W. Blackwood. https://archive.org/details/newtestamentins02wyclgoog/page/n12/mode/2up.

OED *Oxford English Dictionary Online*. 2025. Oxford University Press. www.oed.com.

Oxygen Oxygen XML Editor. 2002–2024. Version 26.1. [Software.] SyncRo Soft SRL. www.oxygenxml.com/.

Pocket Oxford Spanish Dictionary *Pocket Oxford Spanish Dictionary: Spanish–English*. 2009. Oxford University Press. www-oxfordreference-com.ezproxy2.lib.gla.ac.uk/view/10.1093/acref/9780191739538.001.0001/acref-9780191739538.

Python Python. Version 3.14.3. 2026. Python Software Foundation. [Software]. https://www.python.org.

Semantic Domains Semantic Domains. Accessed February 5, 2025. www.semdom.org.

SSNE The Scotland, Scandinavia, and Northern European Biographical Database. 2004. Steve Murdoch and Alexia Grosjean, eds. University of St. Andrews. www.st-andrews.ac.uk/history/ssne/.

TEI *TEI P5: Guidelines for Electronic Text Encoding and Interchange*. 2025. P5 Version 4.9.0. Last updated January 24, 2025. TEI Consortium, eds. 16 September 2025. http://www.tei-c.org/Guidelines/P5/.

Unicode Consortium *The Unicode Standard*, Version 16.0.0. 2024. The Unicode Consortium. www.unicode.org/versions/Unicode16.0.0/.

Secondary Sources

Aberdeen Digital City Libraries. 2025. "Marion Douglas, Lady Drum (1577–1633) and Katherine Forbes, Lady Rothiemay (1583–1652), The Town House." Silver City Vault. Aberdeen City Libraries. www.silvercityvault.org.uk.

Akkerman, Nadine, ed. 2011–. *The Correspondence of Elizabeth Stuart, Queen of Bohemia*. 3 vols. Oxford University Press. Vol. 1 (1603–1631, 2015); Vol. 2 (1632–1642, 2011); Vol. 3 (1643–1662, forthcoming).

Anonymous, variously attributed to Pierre Durand and Jean de la Moyne. 1553. *Le Stile et Manière de Composer, Dicter, et Escrire Toute Sorte d'Epistres*.

Association of Scottish Visitor Attractions. 2025. "Heritage Sites and Film Locations Enjoy Surge in Visitor Numbers." *News*. www.asva.co.uk/heritage-sites-and-film-locations-enjoy-surge-in-visitor-numbers/

Bakhtin, M.M. 1981. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* Vol. no. 1. Translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. University of Texas Press. https://hdl-handle-net.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/2027/heb09354.0001.001.

Bann, Jennifer, and John Corbett. 2015. *Spelling Scots: The Orthography of Literary Scots, 1700-2000*. Edinburgh Scholarship Online. doi.org/10.3366/edinburgh/9780748643059.001.0001.

Bath, Michael. 2018. *Emblems in Scotland: Motifs and Meanings*. Vol. 28. Leiden: Brill Rodopi.

BBC News. 2017. "Last Letter of Mary, Queen of Scots: Display Extended by Three Hours." *BBC News*, February 8, 2017. www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-38907013.

BBC News. 2025. "First Known Letter from King James to Go on Display from 2025." *BBC News*, April 8, 2025. www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c3dk8z21rzjo.

Beal, Peter. 2008. *A Dictionary of English Manuscript Terminology 1450–2000.* Oxford University Press. doi:10.1093/acref/9780199576128.001.0001.

Bengough-Smith, Joshua. 2023. *A Historical Pragmatic Analysis of Marie de Nassau's French-Language Correspondence with her Father, 1573–1577*. PhD thesis. University of Sheffield.

Benskin Michael. 1982. "The Letters <þ> and <y> in Later Middle English, and Some Related Matters." *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, 7: 13–30.

Bergs, Alexander. 2012. "The Uniformitarian Principle and the Risk of Anachronism in Language and Social History." In *The Handbook of Historical Sociolinguistics*, edited by Juan Manuel Hernández-Campoy and Juan Camilo Conde-Silvestre, 121–42. John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated.

Bergs, Alexander. 2021. "Language Change Across a Lifetime: A Historical Micro-Perspective." *Linguistics Vanguard* 7(s2). doi:10.1515/lingvan-2020-0029.

Biber, Douglas. 1988. *Variation Across Speech and Writing*. Cambridge University Press.

Bireley, Robert. 2007. "Redefining Catholicism: Trent and Beyond." In *The Cambridge History of Christianity. Volume 7: Reformation and Expansion 1500–1660*, edited by R. Po-chia Hsia, 143–161. Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CHOL9780521811620.010.

Bowie, Karin. 2020. *Public Opinion in Early Modern Scotland, c.1560-1707.* Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/9781108918787.

Brayshay, Mark. 2016. "Conveying Correspondence: Early Modern Letter Bearers, Carriers, and Posts." In *Cultures of Correspondence in Early Modern Britain*, edited by James Daybell and Andrew Gordon, 48–65. University of Pennsylvania Press.

Breton, Nicholas. 1602. *A Poste with a Madde Packet of Letters*. Thomas Creede.

Brown, Penelope, and Stephen C. Levinson. 1987. *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge University Press.

Burke, John. 1833–38. *A Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Commoners of Great Britain and Ireland, Enjoying Territorial Possessions Or High Official Rank: But Univested with Heritable Honours.* 4 vols. Henry Colburn.

Caldwell, James. 1625. *The Countesse of Marres Arcadia, or Sanctuarie Containing Morning, and Evening Meditations, for the Whole Weeke.* Early English Books Online 2. University of Michigan Library Digital Collections. https://name.umdl.umich.edu/A17589.0001.001.

Chareyre, Philippe. 2004. "La Fermesse de Jeanne D'Albret."*Bulletin du Centre d'Etude du Protestantisme Béarnais*, 36: 19–22. http://www.cepb.eu/Accueil/Articles/BULL36_P_Chareyre_Fermesse.pdf.

Chareyre, Philippe. 2007. "Hasta La Muerte: La Fermesse de Jeanne D'Albret." In *Jeanne d'Albret et sa Cour*, edited by Evelyne Berriot-Salvadore, Phillipe Chareyre and Claudie Martin-Ulrich, 75–102. Classiques Garnier.

Coffey, John. 2004. 'Henderson, Alexander (c.1583–1646)'. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/12900.

Conde-Silvestre, Juan Camilo. 2016. "A 'Third-Wave' Historical Sociolinguistic Approach to Late Middle English Correspondence: Evidence from the Stonor Letters." In *Current Trends in Historical Sociolinguistics*, edited by Cinzia Russi, 46–66. De Gruyter. doi.org/10.1515/9783110488401-006.

Conde-Silvestre, J. Camilo. 2019. "Spelling Focusing and Proto-standardisation in a Fifteenth-Century English Community of Practice." *Studia Neophilologica* 91(1): 11–30.

Cooper, J. C. 1987. *An Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Traditional Symbols*. Thames & Hudson Limited, ProQuest Ebook Central. Ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/gla/detail.action?docID=5878100.

Cordey, Jean. 1936. "L'S Fermé, La 'fermesse' Est-Il Le Symbole de La Fermeté Huguenote?" *Bulletin de La Société de l'Histoire Du Protestantisme Français* 85: 191–93. http://www.jstor.org/stable/24291327.

Cruickshank, Janet. 2013. "The Role of Communities of Practice in the Emergence of Scottish Standard English." In *Communities of Practice in the History of English*, edited by Joanna Kopaczyk and Andreas H. Jucker, 19–45. John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Cruickshank, Janet. 2017. "The Language of Lord Fife in Letters to George Grenville, 1763 to 1769." In *Before the Storm: Papers from the Forum for Research on the Languages of Scotland and Ulster Triennial Meeting, Ayr 2015*, edited by Janet Cruickshank and Robert McColl Millar, 212–231. Forum for Research on the Languages of Scotland and Ireland.

Culpeper, Jonathan, and Merja Kytö. 2010. *Early Modern English Dialogues: Spoken Interaction as Writing*. Cambridge University Press.

Cust, Elizabeth. 1878. "James Stuart, Duke of Lennox and Richmond, of Cobham Hall." *Archaeologia Cantiana* 12: 49–105.

Cust, Elizabeth. 1891. *Some Account of the Stuarts of Aubigny, in France: 1422–1672*. Chiswick Press.

d'Hozier, Louis Pierre. 1738. *Armorial Général, ou Registres de la Noblesse de France. N.p.: de l'imprimerie de Jacques Collombat; de l'imprimerie de Pierre Prault*. Available at: www.google.co.uk/books/edition/Armorial_g%C3%A9n%C3%A9ral_ou_Registres_de_la_no/TS2dfcexCNcC?hl=en.

Dambrogio, Jana, and Daniel Starza Smith. 2025. *Letterlocking: The Hidden History of the Letter*. MIT Press.

Davis, Norman. 1965. "The Litera Troili and English Letters." *The Review of English Studies*, 16 (63): 233–244. https://doi.org/10.1093/res/XVI.63.233.

Davis, Tom. 2007. "The Practice of Handwriting Identification." *The Library* 8(3): 251–76.

Davis, William. 2023. "The Address Leaf of the Early Modern Letter." *The Collation* (blog), 3 October 2023. Folger Shakespeare Library. www.folger.edu/blogs/collation/address-leaf/.

Dawson, Jane E. A. 2005. "'There Is Nothing Like a Good Gossip': Baptism, Kinship and Alliance in Early Modern Scotland." In *Perspectives on the Older Scottish Tongue*, edited by M. Mackay and Christian Kay, 38–47. Edinburgh University Press. doi.org/10.3366/edinburgh/9780748622818.003.0004.

Dawson, Jane. 2019. "The Word did Everything': Readers, Singers and the Protestant Reformation in Scotland c.1560–c.1638." *Scottish Church History,* 46 (1): 1–37. doi.org/10.3366/sch.2017.0002.

Dawson, Jane E. A. 2024. "'Richt Honorabill' Ladies: Noble Power and Aristocratic Women in Sixteenth-Century Scotland." *The Scottish Historical Review*, 103 (3): 361–91. doi.org/10.3366/shr.2024.0680.

Day, Angel. 1568. *The English Secretorie*. John Day. Oxford Text Archive. https://llds.phon.ox.ac.uk/llds/xmlui/bitstream/handle/20.500.14106/A19966/A19966.html?sequence=5&isAllowed=y.

Daybell, James. 2001. *Early Modern Women's Letter Writing, 1450–1700*. Palgrave.

Daybell, James. 2006a. *Women Letter-Writers in Tudor England*. Oxford University Press. doi:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199259915.001.0001.

Daybell, James. 2006b. "Scripting a Female Voice: Women's Epistolary Rhetoric in Sixteenth-Century Letters of Petition." *Women's Writing* 13(1): 3–22. Doi:10.1080/09699080500436034.

Daybell, James. 2012. *The Material Letter in Early Modern England: Manuscript Letters and the Cultures and Practices of Letter-writing, 1512–1635.* Palgrave Macmillan.

Daybell, James. 2015. "Social Negotiations in Correspondence Between Mothers and Daughters in Tudor and Early Stuart England." *Women's History Review* 24(4): 502–27.

Daybell, James. 2016. "The Materiality of Early Modern Women's Letters." In *Women and Epistolary Agency in Early Modern Culture, 1450-1690*, edited by James Daybell and Andrew Gordon, 55-77. Routledge.

Daybell, James, and Andrew Gordon, eds. 2016. *Cultures of Correspondence in Early Modern Britain*. University of Pennsylvania Press.

Daybell, James, and Andrew Gordon. 2016. "Living Letters: Re-reading Correspondence and Women's Letters." In *Women and Epistolary Agency in Early Modern Culture, 1450-1690*, edited by James Daybell and Andrew Gordon, 1–20. Routledge.

de la Fontaine Verwey, H. 1971. "Book Reviews: Les Reliures à la Fanfare. Le Problème de l'S fermeé by Geoffrey. D. Hobson." *Quaerendo* 1(3): 220. doi.org/10.1163/157006971X00194.

de la Serre, Jean-Puget. 1640. *The Secretary in Fashion*. Early English Books Online 2. University of Michigan Library Digital Collections. https://name.umdl.umich.edu/A10214.0001.001.

Del Lungo Camiciotti, Gabriella. 2014. "Letters and Letter Writing in Early Modern Culture: An Introduction." *Journal of Early Modern Studies* 3: 17–35. doi.org/10.13128/JEMS-2279-7149-14163.

Desenclos, Camille. 2016. "Early Modern Correspondence: A New Challenge for Digital Editions." In *Digital Scholarly Editing: Theories and Practices,* edited by M. J. Driscoll and E. Pierazzo, 183–200. Open Book Publishers. http://books.openedition.org/obp/3419.

Dossena, Marina. 2004. "Towards a Corpus of Nineteenth-Century Scottish Correspondence." *Linguistica e Filologia* 18: 195–214. https://aisberg.unibg.it/handle/10446/220.

Dossena, Marina. 2013. "Mixing Genres and Reinforcing Community Ties in Nineteenth-Century Scottish Correspondence: Formality, familiarity and religious discourse." In *Communities of Practice in the History of English*, edited by Joanna Kopaczyk and Andreas H. Jucker, 47–60. John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Dossena, Marina, and Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade, eds. 2008. *Studies in Late Modern English Correspondence: Methodology and Data*. Peter Lang.

Dossena, Marina, and Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade. 2008. “Introduction.” In *Studies in Late Modern English Correspondence: Methodology and Data*, edited by Marina Dossena and Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade, 7–19. Peter Lang.

du Bosque, Jacques. 1638. *The Secretary of Ladies*. Translated by Jerome Hainhofer. Thomas Cotes.

du Tronchet, Etienne. 1591. *Lettres Missives et Familières*. François Didier.

Dumont, Stefan, Susanne Haaf, and Sabine Seifert, eds. 2019–2020. *Encoding Correspondence: A Manual for Encoding Letters and Postcards in TEI-XML and DTABf*. Berlin. https://encoding-correspondence.bbaw.de/v1/introduction.html.

Eckert, Penelope. 2006. “Communities of Practice.” In *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics* 2nd ed. Edited by Edward K. Brown, 683–685. Elsevier.

Eckert, Penelope, and Sally McConnell-Ginet. 1998. “Communities of practice: where Language, Gender, and Power all Live.” In *Language and Gender: A Reader*, edited by Jennifer Coates, 484–494. Blackwell.

Éditions Le Robert. 2008. *Le Grand Robert & Collins*. https://grc.lerobert.com/

Elder, Claire M. 2022. *Anglicisation in the Letters of Marie Stewart, Countess of Mar and her Family: A Sociolinguistic Perspective*. MPhil Thesis. University of Glasgow. https://theses.gla.ac.uk/82801/.

Elder, Claire M. 2024. ‘Stewart [Stuart], Marie, Countess of Mar (1576–1644)’. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. doi.org/10.1093/odnb/9780198614128.013.90000382587.

Elspaß, Stephan. 2005. *Language history from below: Studies on Written Everyday German in the 19th Century.* Max Niemeyer. doi.org/10.1515/9783110910568

Elspaß, Stephen. 2007. “A Twofold View ‘From Below’: New Perspectives on Language Histories and Historical Grammar.” In *Germanic Language Histories ‘from Below’ (1700–2000)*, edited by Stephen Elspaß, Nils Langer, Joachim Scharloth, and Wim Vandenbussche, 3–10. De Gruyter.

Elspaß, Stephan. 2012. “The Use of Private Letters and Diaries in Sociolinguistic Investigation.” In *The Handbook of Historical Sociolinguistics,* edited by Juan M. Hernández-Campoy and J. Camilo Conde-Silvestre, 156–169. John Wiley & Sons Inc.

Elsweiler, Christine. 2022. “Gender Variation in the Requestive Behaviour of Early Modern Scottish and English Letter-writers: A Study of Private Correspondence.” *Journal of Historical Sociolinguistics* 8(1): 55–88. doi:10.1515/jhsl-2020-0040.

Elsweiler, Christine, and Patricia Ronan. 2023. ‘From I am, with sincere regard, your most obedient servant to Yours sincerely: The simplification of leavetaking formulae in 18th-century Scottish and Irish English letters.’ *ICAME Journal* 47 (1): 1–17. doi.org/10.2478/icame-2023-0001

Eurich, Amanda. 2011. “Prescribing Gender: The Letter Book in Early Modern France.” *Journal of the Western Society for French History* 39: 2–12. http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.0642292.0039.002.

Evans, Mel. 2011. *Aspects of the Idiolect of Queen Elizabeth I: A Diachronic Study on Sociolinguistic Principles.* PhD Thesis. University of Sheffield. https://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/14554/1/541694.pdf.

Evans, Mel. 2016. “Tudor Women Writing: Multimodal Style and Identity in the English Letters and Prose of Queen Katherine Parr and Princess Elizabeth”. University of Leicester. https://hdl.handle.net/2381/39748.

Evans, Mel. 2020. *Royal Voices: Language and Power in Tudor England*. Cambridge University Press.

Ewan, Elizabeth, and Janay Nugent. 2008. “Where is the Family in Medieval and Early Modern Scotland?” In *Finding the Family in Medieval and Early Modern Scotland*, edited by Elizabeth Ewan and Janay Nugent, 1–8. Ashgate Publishing Limited.

Ewan, Elizabeth, Rosemary J. Pipes, Jane Rendall, Sian Reynolds, and Sue Innes. 2018. *The New Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Women*. Edinburgh University Press. doi:10.1515/9781474436298.

Ferris, John P. 2010. "The Parliament of 1624." In *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1604–1629*, edited by Andrew Thrush and John P. Ferris. Cambridge University Press. www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1604-1629/survey/parliament-1624.

Filatkina, Natalia. 2018. *Historical Formulaic Language: Theoretical Foundations and Methodological Challenges*. Walter de Gruyter.

Filatkina, Natalia. 2024. "Formulaic Language." In *Handbook of Pragmatics, 27th Annual Installment*, edited by Mieke Vandenbroucke, Jana Declercq, Frank Bisard, and Sigurd D'hondt, 69–86. John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Filatkina, Natalia, Sören Stumpf, and Christian Pfeiffer. 2020. "Introduction: Formulaic Language and New Data." In *Formulaic Language and New Data*, Theoretical and Methodological Implications, edited by Elisabeth Piirainen, Natalia Filatkina, Sören Stumpf, and Christian Pfeiffer, 1–16. De Gruyter.

Fitzmaurice, Susan M. 2002. *The Familiar Letter in Early Modern English: A Pragmatic Approach*. Pragmatics and Beyond New Series 95. John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Folger Shakespeare Library. N.d. *Collection Catalogue*. Folger Shakespeare Library. Accessed 18 July 2025. https://catalog.folger.edu/.

Formulaic Language in Historical Linguistics. 2025. *Formulaic Language in Historical Linguistics: Data, Methods, Tools, and Theory*. Conference blog. https://formulaiclanguagehistorical.blogspot.com/.

Fraser, William, Sir. 1858. *The Stirlings of Keir, and Their Family Papers*. Privately printed by W.H. Lizars. National Library of Scotland Digitised Collections. https://digital.nls.uk/96696980.

Fulwood, William. 1568. *The Enimie of Idlenesse.* Early English Books Online. University of Michigan Library Digital Collections. https://name.umdl.umich.edu/A68079.0001.001.

Gibson, Jonathan. 1997. "Significant Space in Manuscript Letters." *The Seventeenth Century* 12(1): 1–10.

Gibson, Jonathan. 2016. "From Palatino to Cresci Italian Writing Books and the Italic Scripts of Early Modern English Letters." In *Cultures of Correspondence in Early Modern Britain*, edited by James Daybell and Andrew Gordon, 29–47. University of Pennsylvania Press.

Goodare, Julian. 2004. 'Erskine, John, Eighteenth or Second Earl of Mar (c. 1562–1634)'. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/8867.

Görlach, Manfred. 1999. *English in Nineteenth-Century England: An Introduction*. Cambridge University Press.

Grant, Ruth. 1999. "Politicking Jacobean Women: Lady Ferniehirst, the Countess of Arran and the Countess of Huntly, c.1580–1603." In *Women in Scotland, c.1100–c.1750*, edited by Elizabeth Ewan and Maureen M. Meikle, 95–104. East Linton: Tuckwell Press.

Grant, Ruth. 2017. "Friendship, Politics and Religion." In *James VI and Noble Power in Scotland, 1578–1603*, edited by Miles Kerr-Peterson and Steven J. Reid, 57–80. Routledge.

Great Britain. Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts (RCHM).
1874. *Fourth Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts*. H.M.S.O.
1885. *Tenth Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts*. H.M.S.O.
1904. *Report on the Manuscripts of the Earl of Mar and Kellie, Preserved at Alloa House*. H.M.S.O.

Green, Lawrence D. 2003. "French Letters and English Anxiety in the Seventeenth Century." *Huntington Library Quarterly* 66(3): 263–74. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3818083.

Grund, Peter J. 2021. *The Sociopragmatics of Stance. Community, Language, and the Witness Depositions from the Salem Witch Trials*. John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Hamlin, Hannibal, and Norman W. Jones, eds. 2014. *The King James Bible after Four Hundred Years: Literary, Linguistic, and Cultural Influences*. Cambridge University Press. doi-org.ezproxy1.lib.gla.ac.uk/10.1017/CBO9780511779800.

Hannay, Margaret P. 2013. *Mary Sidney, Lady Wroth*. Ashgate Publishing Limited.

Harris, Barbara J. 2016. "What They Wrote: Early Tudor Aristocratic Women, 1450–1550." In *Women and Epistolary Agency in Early Modern Culture, 1450-1690*, edited by James Daybell and Andrew Gordon, 22–35. Routledge.

Hazlett, Ian. 2021. "Introduction." In *A Companion to the Reformation in Scotland, c.1525–1638: Frameworks of Change and Development*, edited by Ian Hazlett, 1–20. Brill.

Henderson, G. D. 1937. *Religious Life in Seventeenth-Century Scotland*. Cambridge University Press.

Historic Environment Scotland. n.d. "Mar and Kellie Mausoleum, Alloa, Old Kirkyard, Kirkgate (Designation LB20953)." trove.scot. Accessed 5 February 2026. https://www.trove.scot/designation/LB20953

Hobson, G. D. 1935. *Les Reliures à La Fanfare: Le Problème De l'S Fermé*. The Chiswick Press.

Hume, Alexander. 1599. *Hymnes, or Sacred Songs, Wherein the Right Vse of Poësie May Be Espied*. Early English Books Online. University of Michigan Library Digital Collections. https://name.umdl.umich.edu/A03826.0001.001.

Huygens Institute for the History of the Netherlands. 2024. *Formulaic Language in Historical Research and Data Extraction: An International Conference*. Programme booklet. https://republic.huygens.knaw.nl/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Formulaic_Language_Final-1.pdf.

Huygens Institute for the History of the Netherlands. 2025. "Formulaic Language in Historical Research and Data Extraction." *Zenodo*. https://zenodo.org/communities/formulaiclanguage2024.

Inglis, Esther. 1622. *Emblematical drawing of Marie Stewart, wife of John Erskine, Earl of Mar: Drawin and writin be me Esther Inglis Ianvar 1622*. MS RB 283000 V:III. Huntington Library. catalog.huntington.org/record=b1859890.

Jacobs, Andreas, and Andreas H. Jucker. 1995. "The Historical Perspective in Pragmatics". In *Historical Pragmatics: Pragmatic Developments in the History of English*, edited by Andreas H. Jucker, 3–33. John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Jucker, Andreas H. 2020. *Politeness in the History of English: From the Middle Ages to the Present Day*. Cambridge University Press.

Jucker, Andreas H., and Irma Taavitsainen. 2013. *English Historical Pragmatics.* Edinburgh University Press.

Kaislaniemi, Samuli. 2017. "Code-Switching, Script-Switching, and Typeface-Switching in Early Modern English Manuscript Letters and Printed Tracts." In *Verbal and Visual Communication in Early English Texts*, edited by Matti Peikola, Aleksi Mäkilähde, Hanna Salmi, Mari-Liisa Varila, and Janne Skaffari, 165–200. Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy, vol. 37. Brepols.

Kaislaniemi, Samuli. 2022–2025. *Material Practices Meet Sociolinguistics: Letter-Writing in Seventeenth-Century England*. Project funded by University of Eastern Finland. https://research.fi/en/results/funding/69466.

Kaislaniemi, Samuli. Forthcoming. "Material Aspects of the French Letters of Queen Elizabeth I." In Queen Elizabeth I's French Letters in the National Library of Russia, edited by Guillaume Coatalen and Samuli Kaislaniemi. *Studies in Variation, Contacts and Change in English 21*. VARIENG. OPEN ACCESS.

Kerr-Peterson, Miles and Pearce, Michael. 2020. "King James VI's English Subsidy and Danish Dowry Accounts, 1588–1596." In *Miscellany of the Scottish History Society*, volume XVI, 1–94. Boydell Press.

Kopaczyk, Joanna. 2013a**. "**Rethinking the Traditional Periodisation of the Scots Language." In *After the Storm: Papers from the Forum for Research on the Languages of Scotland and Ulster Triennial Meeting, Aberdeen 2012*, edited by Janet Cruickshank and Robert McColl Millar, 232-260. Series: Languages of Scotland and Ulster (4). Forum for Research on the Languages of Scotland and Ireland. www.abdn.ac.uk/sll/research/vol-4-after-the-storm-1657.php.

Kopaczyk, Joanna. 2013b. *The Legal Language of Scottish burghs: Standardization and Lexical Bundles (1380–1560)*. Oxford University Press.

Kopaczyk, Joanna and Andreas H. Jucker. 2013. "Communities of Practice as a Locus of Language Change." In *Communities of Practice in the History of English*, edited by Joanna Kopaczyk and Andreas H. Jucker, 1–16. John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Kopaczyk-McPherson, Joanna. Forthcoming a. "Formulaic Language in Medieval and Administrative and Legal Writing." In Writing, Languages and Communities in Italy (Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages), edited by Piera Molinelli and Chiara Ghezzi. Mouton de Gruyter.

Kopaczyk-McPherson, Joanna. Forthcoming b. "The History of Scots." In *The New Cambridge History of the English Language*, edited by Raymond Hickey. Cambridge University Press.

Kopaczyk-McPherson, Joanna. Forthcoming c. "Third-wave Historical Sociolinguistics and Communities of Practice in *The Handbook of Historical Sociolinguistics*, edited by Juan M. Hernández-Campoy J. Camilo Conde-Silvestre. Wiley.

Kopaczyk-McPherson, Joanna, and Andreas H. Jucker. 2025. "Communities of Practice in the History of English." In *The New Cambridge History of the English Language: Transmission, Change and Ideology*, edited by Joan C. Beal, 751–73. The New Cambridge History of the English Language. Cambridge University Press.

Larson, Katherine R. 2015. "Voicing Lyric." In *Re-Reading Mary Wroth*, edited by Katherine R. Larson, Naomi J. Miller, with Andrew Strycharski, 119–36. Palgrave Macmillan.

Lass, Roger. 2004. "Ut custodian litters: Editions, corpora and witnessed." In *Methods and Data in English Historical Dialectology*, edited by Marina Dossena and Roger Lass, 21–48. Studies in Language and Communication 16. Lang.

Lave, Jean, and Etienne Wenger. 1991. *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge University Press.

Lempert, Sabina, and Michael Perrino. 2007. "Entextualization and the Ends of Temporality." *Language & Communication*, 27 (3), 205–11.

Lyall, Roderick. 1996. "The Construction of a Rhetorical Voice in Sixteenth-Century Scottish Letters". *Prose Studies*, 19(2): 127–35. doi:10.1080/01440359608586581.

Macafee, Caroline, and A. Jack Aitken. 2002. "A History of Scots to 1700." *A Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue* Vol. XII, xxix–clvii. www.dsl.ac.uk/about–scots/history–of–scots/.

MacDonald, Alan R. 2004. 'Murray, John, First Earl of Annandale (d. 1640)'. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/19625.

Mackie, J. D., ed. 1969. *Calendar of the State Papers Relating to Scotland and Mary, Queen of Scots, 1547–1603*. Vol. 13, 1597–1603. Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

Macpherson, Rob. 2004. 'Stuart [Stewart], Ludovick, Second Duke of Lennox and Duke of Richmond (1574–1624)'. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/26724.

Magnusson, Lynne. 1999. *Shakespeare and Social Dialogue: Dramatic Language and Elizabethan Letters*. Cambridge University Press.

Magnusson, Lynne. 2004. "A Rhetoric of Requests: Genre and Linguistic Scripts in Elizabethan Women's Suitors' Letters." In *Women and Politics in Early Modern England, 1450-1700*, edited by James Daybell, 51–66. Routledge.

Marcus, Imogen. 2018. *The Linguistics of Spoken Communication in Early Modern English Writing: Exploring Bess of Hardwick's Manuscript Letters*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Marshall, Rosalind K. 2004. 'Stuart [Stewart], Esmé, First Duke of Lennox (c. 1542–1583)'. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/26702.

Mason, Rebecca. 2019. "Women, Marital Status, and Law: The Marital Spectrum in Seventeenth-Century Glasgow." *Journal of British Studies*, 58(4): 787–804. doi.org/10.1017/jbr.2019.86.

Mason, Rebecca. 2023. "Coercion or Consent? Women, Property and Legal Authority in Early Modern Scotland." *Scottish Historical Review,* 102 (2): 232–253. doi.org/10.3366/shr.2023.0612.

Mathis, Kate Louise and Potter, Roslyn. 2024. "Early Modern Women Writers in Scotland." In *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Early Modern Women's Writing.* 1st edn, edited by Patricia Pender and Rosalind Smith, 1–14. Palgrave Macmillan. doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-01537-4_69-1.

McLaughlin, Adrienne. 2017. "Rise of a Courtier: The Second Duke of Lennox and Strategies of Noble Power under James VI." In *James VI and Noble Power in Scotland, 1578–1603*, edited by Miles Kerr-Peterson and Steven J. Reid, 136–54. Routledge.

Meurman-Solin, Anneli. 1993. *Variation and Change in Early Scottish Prose: Studies Based on the Helsinki Corpus of Older Scots*. Vol. 65. Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia.

Meurman-Solin, Anneli. 1999. "Letters as a Source of Data for Reconstructing Early Spoken Scots." In *Writing in Nonstandard English*, edited by Irma Taavitsainen, Gunnel Melchers and Päivi Pahta, 305–22. John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Meurman-Solin, Anneli. 2004. "Towards a Variationist Typology of Clausal Connectives." In Methods and Data in English Historical Dialectology, edited by Marina Dossena and Roger Lass, 171–97. Studies in Language and Communication 16. Lang.

Meurman-Solin, Anneli. 2005. "Women's Scots: Gender-based Variation in Renaissance Letters." In *Older Scots Literature*, edited by Sally Mapstone, 414–40. John Donald.

Meurman-Solin, Anneli. 2013. "Features of Layout in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Scottish Letters." In *Annotating Variation and Change* (Studies in Variation, Contacts and Change in English 1), edited by Anneli Meurman-Solin and Arji Nurmi. https://varieng.helsinki.fi/series/volumes/14/meurman-solin_b/.

Meurman-Solin, Anneli. 2016. *Manual to the Helsinki Corpus of Scottish Correspondence 1540–1750*. Kielipankki – The Language Bank of Finland. www.kielipankki.fi/wp-content/uploads/ScotsCorr_Manual_2016.pdf.

Meyerhoff, Miriam, and Anna Strycharz. 2013. "Communities of Practice." In *The Handbook of Language Variation and Change,* 2nd ed, edited by J.K. Chambers and Natalie Schilling-Estes, 28–447. Wiley-Blackwell.

Morris, John, and Philip Oldfield. 2023. *British Armorial Bindings*. University of Toronto. https://armorial.library.utoronto.ca/.

Murray, David. 1615. *A paraphrase of the CIV. Psalme by David Murray*. Early English Books Online. University of Michigan Library Digital Collections. https://name.umdl.umich.edu/A07923.0001.001.

National Galleries of Scotland. 2021. *Anna of Denmark, "The Eglinton Jewel."* In *King James VI & I – Art & Culture at the Jacobean Court*, August 17. www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/features/king-james-vi-i-%E2%80%93-art-culture-jacobean-court/anna-of-denmark-eglinton-jewel.

National Library of Scotland. 2016. *Exceptions to Copyright Guide*. www.nls.uk/media/pogbarjf/2016-10-copyright-exceptions.pdf.

National Library of Scotland. 2025. *Archives and Manuscripts Catalogue*. https://manuscripts.nls.uk/.

National Portrait Gallery. 1798. *Mary Erskine (née Stewart), Countess of Mar*. Stipple engraving by Edward Harding. www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/use-this-image/?mkey=mw133780.

National Records of Scotland. 2025. *NRS Online Public Catalogue*. https://catalogue.nrscotland.gov.uk/nrsonlinecatalogue.

Nevala, Minna. 2003. “Family First: Address and Subscription Formulae in English Family Correspondence From the Fifteenth to Seventeenth Century.” In *Diachronic Perspectives on Address Term Systems*, edited by Irma Taavitsainen and Andreas H. Jucker, 147–76. John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Nevala, Minna. 2004. “Inside and Out: Forms of Address in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Letters.” In *Journal of Historical Pragmatics* (5): 27–296.

Nevalainen, Terttu. 2001. “Continental Conventions in Early English Correspondence.” In *Towards a History of English as a History of Genres*, edited by Hans-Jürgen Diller and Manfred Görlach, 203–224. Winter.

Nevalainen, Terttu, and Helena Raumolin-Brunberg. 1995. “Constraints on Politeness: The Pragmatics of Address Formulae in Early English correspondence.” In *Historical Pragmatics: Pragmatic Developments in the History of English*, edited by Andreas H. Jucker, 541–601. Benjamins.

Nevalainen, Terttu, and Helena Raumolin-Brunberg. 2016. *Historical Sociolinguistics: Language Change in Tudor and Stuart England*. 2nd ed. Longman.

Newsome, Helen. 2018. *‘sche that schuld be medyatryce (mediatrice) In thyr (these) matars?’: Performances of Mediation in the Letters of Margaret Tudor, Queen of Scots (1489–1541).* PhD Thesis. University of Sheffield. www.academia.edu/39176917.

Newsome, Helen. 2023. “‘[An] old battle constantly re-fought’”: Why Language Matters when Editing Early Modern Women’s Letters: A Case Study Of the Holograph Letters of Margaret Tudor, Queen of Scots (1489–1541).” *Women's Writing* 30 (4): 337–352. https://doi.org/10.1080/09699082.2023.2266040.

Newsome-Chandler, Helen, editor. 2025. *The Holograph Letters of Margaret Tudor, Queen of Scots (1489–1541)*. Vol. 70. Cambridge University Press.

Nugent, Janay, Cathryn Spence, and Mairi Cowan. 2024. *Gender in Scotland, 1200–1800: Place, Faith and Politics*. Edinburgh University Press Ltd.

Paul, James Balfour, ed. 1904–14. *The Scots Peerage: Founded on Wood’s Edition of Sir Robert Douglas’ Peerage of Scotland, Containing an Historical and Genealogical Account of the Nobility of That Kingdom*. 9 vols. David Douglas.

Paul, Robert, ed. 1893. “Twenty-Four Letters of Sir Thomas Hope, Bart., of Craighall, Lord Advocate of Scotland, 1627–1646.” In *Miscellany, First Volume*, edited by the Scottish History Society, 73–139. Publications of the Scottish History Society, vol. 15. T. & A. Constable for the Scottish History Society. https://dn790007.ca.archive.org/0/items/miscellanyofscot01edin/miscellanyofscot01edin.pdf.

Pearce, Michael. 2019. “Anna of Denmark: Fashioning a Danish Court in Scotland.” *The Court Historian*: The Northern Line: Representing Danish Consorts in Scotland, England, and Great Britain 24 (2): 138-151.

Pearce, Michael. 2020. “Lady Binning’s Feather.” *Objects and the Archive* (blog), August 29, 2020. https://vanishedcomforts.org/2020/08/29/lady-binnings-feather/.

Pettigrew, Stephanie. 2018. “Paleography à la Française.”, *Unwritten Histories* (blog), 16 January 2018. www.unwrittenhistories.com/paleography-a-la-francaise/.

Pfeiffer, Christian and Markus Schiegg. 2020. “Religious Formulae in Historical Lower-Class Patient Letters.” In *Formulaic Language and New Data. Theoretical and Methodological Implications*, edited by Elisabeth Piirainen, Natalia Filatkina, Sören Stumpf, and Christian Pfeiffer, 250–77. De Gruyter.

Ranum, Orest A. 2023. “An Unknown Historian of Richelieu and His Age”. www.academia.edu/98234264.

Reid, Steven J. 2023. *The Early Life of James VI: A Long Apprenticeship, 1566–1585*. Birlinn Limited.

Reid-Baxter, Jamie. 2015. “Elizabeth Melville, Lady Culross: Two Letters to Her Son James.” In *Children and Youth in Premodern Scotland*, edited by Janay Nugent and Elizabeth Ewan, 205–19. Boydell and Brewer. ProQuest Ebook Central. https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/gla/detail.action?docID=4397505.

Reid-Baxter, Jamie. 2021. *The Letters of Lady Culross*. Unpublished edition.

Reid-Baxter, Jamie. 2022. “Esther Inglis: A Franco-Scottish Jacobean Writer and Her Octonaries upon the Vanitie and Inconstancie of the World.” *Studies in Scottish Literature* 48 (2): Article 7. https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/ssl/vol48/iss2/7.

Reid-Baxter, Jamie. 2025. *Letters of David Murray*. Unpublished edition.

Richardson, Malcolm. 1984. “The Dictamen and its Influence on Fifteenth-Century English Prose.” *Rhetoric: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric* 2(3): 207–26.

Richardson, Katherine, Tara Hamling and Graeme Earl. 2019–2022. Middling Culture: The Cultural Lives of the Middling Sort, Writing and Material Culture 1550–1650. www.middlingculture.com.

Richardson, Leonard. 2023. “Beautiful Soup Documentation.” *Crummy: The Site*. www.crummy.com/software/BeautifulSoup/bs4/doc/.

Rickard, Peter. 1989. *A History of the French Language*. Taylor & Francis Group.

Robertson, William. 1811. *The History of Scotland, During the Reigns of Queen Mary and King James VI*. By and for R. Chapman.

Rosie, Alison. 2022. *Scottish Handwriting 1500-1700: A Self-Help Pack*. Scottish Records Association and the National Records of Scotland. www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files/research/publications/NRS-Scottish_handwriting_self-help_kit-Web_ready_version.pdf.

Rothes, John, Earl of. 1830. *A Relation of Proceedings Concerning the Affairs of the Kirk of Scotland from August 1637 to July 1638*. Edited by James Nairne. Bannatyne Club.

Rutten, Gijsbert and Marijke van der Wal. 2013. “Epistolary Formulae and Writing Experience in Dutch Letters from the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries”. In *Touching the Past: Studies in the Historical Sociolinguistics of Ego-documents* edited by Gijsbert Rutten and Marijke van der Wal, 45–65. John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Sanderson, Joyce M. 1984. “A Recently-Discovered Poem in Scots Vernacular: ‘Complections of Men in Verse.’” *Scottish Studies* 28: 49–68. https://open.journals.ed.ac.uk/ScottishStudies/article/view/585/611.

Scally, John J. 2004. ‘Hamilton, James, First Duke of Hamilton (1606–1649)’. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/12087.

Scott, Jade. 2024. *The Letters of Lady Anne Percy, Countess of Northumberland (1536–91): Gender, Exile and Early Modern Cultures of Correspondence*. PhD thesis. University of Glasgow, Scotland.

Scott, Jade. Forthcoming. *Annas Keith, Countess of Moray and Argyll: Gender and Power in Early Modern Scotland*. Edinburgh University Press.

Scott, Jade, and Alison Wiggins. 2020. “Letters as objects.” In Search of Mary Queen of Scots – Blog. *Mary Queen of Scots Project*. https://mqs.glasgow.ac.uk/index.php/2020/10/01/Letters-as-objects/.

Scottish Parliament. 2025. Scottish Languages Act 2025 (asp 10). Edinburgh: Scottish Parliament. www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2025/10/.

Sharpe, Charles Kirkpatrick, ed. 1815. *Extracts from the Household Book of Lady Marie Stewart, Daughter of Esme, Duke of Lenox, and Countess of Mar*. Privately printed.

Sharpe, Charles Kirkpatrick, and Alexander Allardyce, eds. 1888. *Letters from and to Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, Esq.* 2 vols. William Blackwood and Sons.

Sidney, Philip. 1590. *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*. Edited by Risa Bear. Transcribed from the Sommer facsimile of the 1590 Ponsonby edition. www.luminarium.org/renascence-editions/arcadia1.html.

Simpson, Grant. 2009. *Scottish Handwriting 1150–1650: An Introduction to the Reading of Documents*. John Donald Publishers Ltd.

Sinclair, John. 2004. *Trust the Text : Language, Corpus and Discourse*. Oxford: Taylor & Francis Group.

Sizer, J. R. M. 2004. 'Douglas, William, Seventh Earl of Morton (1582–1648), Politician and Nobleman.' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/7933

Smith, Jeremy J. 2005. *Essentials of Early English: An Introduction to Old, Middle, and Early Modern English* 2nd ed. Routledge. doi:org.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/10.4324/9780203087107.

Smith, Jeremy J. 2012. *Older Scots: A Linguistic Reader*. Boydell Press.

Smith, Jeremy J. 2020. *Transforming Early English: The Reinvention of Early English and Older Scots*. Studies in English Language. Cambridge University Press.

Smuts, R. Malcolm. 2004. 'Stuart, Esmé, Third Duke of Lennox (1579?–1624)'. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/67529.

Starza Smith, Daniel. 2013. "The Material Features of Early Modern Letters: A Reader's Guide", in Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608. Edited by Alison Wiggins, Alan Bryson, Daniel Starza Smith, Anke Timmermann and Graham Williams, The University of Glasgow. Web development by Katherine Rogers, University of Sheffield Humanities Research Institute. www.bessofhardwick.org/background.jsp?id=143.

Steffler, Alva William. 2002. *Symbols of the Christian Faith*. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

Stevenson, David. 2004a. 'Gordon, George, second marquess of Huntly (c. 1590–1649).' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/12085.

Stevenson, David. 2004b. 'Hamilton, James, Second Marquess of Hamilton (1589–1625).' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/12085.

Stevenson, David. 2004c. 'Ker, Robert, First Earl of Ancram (1578–1654), Courtier and Politician.' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/15457.

Stevenson, Jane. 2012. "Reading, Writing and Gender in Early Modern Scotland." *The Seventeenth Century*. 27(3): 335–374.

Stewart, Alan. 2003. *The Cradle King: A Life of James VI and I*. Chatto & Windus.

Stewart, Alan, and Heather Wolfe. 2004. *Letterwriting in Renaissance England*. Folger Shakespeare Library.

Stewart, Laura A. M. 2013. "Authority, Agency and the Reception of the Scottish National Covenant of 1638." In *Insular Christianity: Alternative Models of the Church in Britain and Ireland, c.1570–c.1700*, edited by Robert Armstrong and Tadhg Ó hAnnracháin, 88–106. Manchester University Press. doi-org.ezproxy2.lib.gla.ac.uk/10.7228/manchester/9780719086984.001.0001

Stewart, Laura. 2016. *Rethinking the Scottish Revolution: Covenanted Scotland, 1637–1651*. Oxford University Press. doi:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198718444.001.0001.

Stewart, Laura A. M., and Janay Nugent. 2020. *Union and Revolution: Scotland and Beyond, 1625–1745*. Edinburgh University Press. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctv1c29s7b.

Stuart, John, ed. 1841. *The Miscellany of the Spalding Club*. Spalding Club.

Tanskanen, Sanna-Kaisa. 2003. "Early Modern Letter-writing Instruction and Real Correspondence." In *Discourse Perspectives on English: Medieval to Modern*, edited by Risto Hiltunen and Janne Skaffari, 167–195. John Benjamins Publishing Company. doi:10.1075/pbns.119.08tan.

The National Archives. n.d. a "Currency converter: 1270–2017." Accessed October 1, 2025. www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter/#currency-result.

The National Archives. n.d. b *Prize Papers Collection*. The National Archives.

The National Archives. 2020. *Copyright and Related Rights*. cdn.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/information-management/copyright-related-rights.pdf.

The National Records of Scotland. 2015. "Scottish Handwriting.com." www.scottishhandwriting.com.

Thomson, Thomas, ed. 1843. *A Diary of the Public Correspondence of Sir Thomas Hope of Craighall, 1633–1645: From the Original in the Library at Pinkie House*. Bannatyne Club.

Todd, Margo. 2002. *The Culture of Protestantism in Early Modern Scotland*. Cambridge University Press.

Tucker, Marie-Claude. 2002. "Scottish Students and Masters at the Faculty of Law of the University of Bourges in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries." In *Literature, Letters and the Canonical in Early Modern Scotland*, edited by Theo van Heijnsbergen and Nicola Royan, 111–120. Tuckwell Press.

van Dixhoorn, Chad, John Bower, and Tom Breeden, eds. 2025. *Westminster Assembly Project*. https://westminsterassembly.org/.

van Eyndhoven, Sarah. 2021. "'An Eye for an Aye': linguistic and political backlash and conformity in eighteenth-century Scots." *Journal of Historical Sociolinguistics* 7(2): 243–82. doi.org/10.1515/jhsl-2020-0004.

van Eyndhoven, Sarah. 2023. *'Ane end of an auld song?' Macro and Micro Perspectives on Written Scots in Correspondence during the Union of Parliaments Debates*. PhD Thesis. University of Edinburgh. dx.doi.org/10.7488/era/3793.

van Eyndhoven, Sarah, and Lynn Clark. 2020. "The <quh–>–<wh–> Switch: an Empirical Account of the Anglicisation of a Scots Variant in Scotland During the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries." *English Language and Linguistics* 24(1): 211–36.

van Heijnsbergen, Theo. 2010. *Studies in the Contextualisation of Mid-Sixteenth-Century Scottish Verse*. PhD Thesis. University of Glasgow. https://theses.gla.ac.uk/74028/1/10753938.pdf

van Heijnsbergen, Theo, and Royan, Nicola. 2002. *Literature, Letters and the Canonical in Early Modern Scotland*. Tuckwell Press.

Wells, Vaughan T. 2004. 'Leslie, John, Sixth Earl of Rothes (c. 1600–1641)'. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/16493.

Women's Early Modern Letters Online. 2023. "About WEMLO." www.wemlo.ac.uk/about/.

Wenger, Etienne. 1998. *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*. Cambridge University Press.

Wenger, Etienne, Richard A. McDermott, and William Snyder. 2002. *Cultivating Communities of Practice: A Guide to Managing Knowledge*. Harvard Business School Press.

Whyman, Susan. 2009. *The Pen and the People: English Letter Writers 1660–1800*. Oxford University Press. Online edition, Oxford Academic, February 1, 2010. doi-org.ezproxy2.lib.gla.ac.uk/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199532445.001.0001.

Wiggins, Alison. 2013a. "Editing Bess of Hardwick's Letters." In Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550–1608, edited by Alison Wiggins, Alan Bryson, Daniel Starza Smith, Anke Timmermann, and Graham Williams. University of Glasgow. Web development by Katherine Rogers, University of Sheffield Humanities Research Institute. www.bessofhardwick.org/background.jsp?id=142.

Wiggins, Alison. 2013b. "Bess of Hardwick's Life in 12 Letters." In Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550–1608, edited by Alison Wiggins, Alan Bryson, Daniel Starza Smith, Anke Timmermann, and Graham Williams. University of Glasgow. Web development by Katherine Rogers, University of Sheffield Humanities Research Institute. www.bessofhardwick.org/background.jsp?id=169.

Wiggins, Alison. 2017. *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: Language, Materiality, and Early Modern Epistolary Culture.* Routledge.

Wiggins, Alison. 2024. “The Materiality of Written Textual Forms” In *Archives: Power, Truth, and Fiction*, edited by Andrew Prescott and Alison Wiggins, 197–214. Oxford University Press. doi:10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198829324.001.0001.

Williams, Graham. 2013a. “The Language of Early Modern Letters: A Reader’s Guide.” In Bess of Hardwick’s Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550–1608, edited by Alison Wiggins, Alan Bryson, Daniel Starza Smith, Anke Timmermann, and Graham Williams. University of Glasgow. Web development by Katherine Rogers, University of Sheffield Humanities Research Institute. www.bessofhardwick.org/background.jsp?id=174.

Williams, Graham T. 2013b. *Women’s Epistolary Utterance: A Study of the Letters of Joan and Maria Thynne 1575–1611*. John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Williams, Graham T. 2016. “Written Like a ‘gwd’ Scotswoman: Margaret Tudor’s Use of Scots.” *Scottish Language* 35: 89–95.

Wiseman, Susan. 2010. “Reading Seventeenth-Century Women’s Letters.” In *The History of British Women’s Writing 1610–1690*, edited by Mihoko Suzuki, 114–28. Palgrave Macmillan.

Wolfe, Heather. 2009. “Women’s Handwriting.” In *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Women’s Writing*, edited by Laura Lungers Knoppers, 21–39. Cambridge University Press.

Wolfe, Heather. 2012. “‘Neatly Sealed, with Silk, and Spanish Wax or Otherwise’: The Practice of Letter-Locking with Silk Floss in Early Modern England.” In *In the Prayse of Writing: Early Modern Manuscript Studies. Essays in Honour of Peter Beal*, edited by Peter Beal, S. P. Cerasano, and Steven W. May, 169–184. The British Library.

Wolfe, Heather. 2013. “A Letter from Queen Anne to Buckingham Locked with Silk Embroidery Floss.” *The Collation* (blog), 8 October 2013. Folger Shakespeare Library. www.folger.edu/blogs/collation/a-letter-from-queen-anne-to-buckingham-locked-with-silk-embroidery-floss/.

Wolfe, Michael. 2004. “Henry IV (France) (1553–1610; Ruled 1589–1610).” In *Europe, 1450 to 1789*: *Encyclopedia of the Early Modern World*, Vol. 3, edited by Jonathan Dewald, 156–59. Charles Scribner’s Sons. Gale eBooks. link-gale-com.ezproxy2.lib.gla.ac.uk/apps/doc/CX3404900508/GVRL?u=glasuni&sid=bookmark-GVRL&xid=66b2fa30.

Wood, Johanna L. 2009. “Structures and Expectations: A Systematic Analysis of Margaret Paston’s Formulaic and Expressive Language.” *Journal of Historical Pragmatics* 10(2): 187–228.

Wray, Alison. 2002. *Formulaic Language and the Lexicon*. Cambridge University Press.

Wray, Alison, and Kazuhiko Namba. 2003. “Use of Formulaic Language by a Japanese-English Bilingual Child: A Practical Approach to Data Analysis.” *Japan Journal of Multilingualism and Multiculturalism* 9 (1): 24–51.

YSA. 2025. “Glossary.” *Your Scottish Archives*. Scottish Council on Archives. https://yourscottisharchives.com/glossary/prefix:a.

Young, John T. 2019. “Newton Project: Transcription and Tagging Guidelines (Version 7).” In *The Newton Project.* Directed by Rob Iliffe and Scott Mandelbrote. www.newtonproject.ox.ac.uk/about-us/tagging-and-transcription-guidelines.

Appendices

Appendix A Glossary

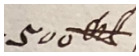
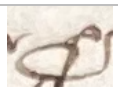
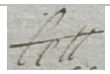
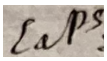
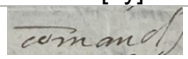
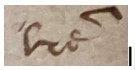
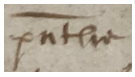
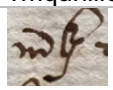
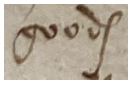
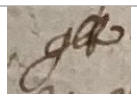
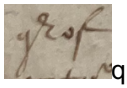
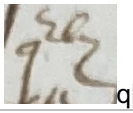
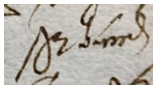
The following list defines the terms used in the thesis. Each is italicised on its first mention in the main text.

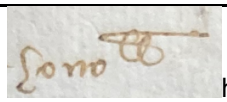
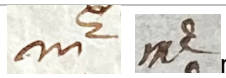
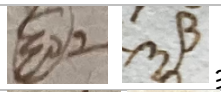
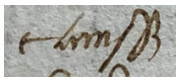
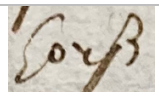
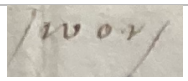
address form	A form of address positioned at the beginning of the letter, for example, *Madam, Sir, Charles,* or *Richt honorabill.*
addressee(s)	The person or persons named in the superscription text on the address leaf of the letter (Davis 2007, 255).
accordion fold	A letter folding technique where the paper is folded into a zig-zag pattern of 'repeating mountain and valley folds' (Dambrogio and Starza Smith 2025, 124).
archivist's mark	The text added by modern-day archivists or curators.
autograph	A section of handwriting which can be attributed to a single person.
bearer(s)	The person or persons who carried the letter and delivered it to the recipient.
bifolium	A sheet of paper of any size, which has been folded in half to create four writing sides (Beal 2008, 'bifolium').
closing	A closing section which includes the subscription, the signature(s) and the location and date, if given.
corpus data	The original text of the StEr letters including any contemporary additions such as marginalia or endorsements.
corpus metadata	Information captured about the StEr letters, including, for example, the manuscript's archival shelfmark, as well as sociolinguistic data such as the sender's sex or title.
endorsement	An administrative type of text, contemporary with the letter's date of composition, which either summarises the letter content or gives, for example, the date or location of receipt or categorises the letter somehow.
folio	This thesis uses either *folio* or *leaf* according to the cataloguing practices of each archival collection. Many of the StEr letters are bifolia: created by folding a single sheet in half to produce two pages (four writing sides). In the NLS, some bifolia are numbered fol. 1r–2v, while others are assigned a single folio number; in the latter case, their four writing sides are referred to here as leaves (e.g., fol. 1, leaf 1r, 1v, 2r, and 2v; see Beal 2008, 'folio').
graph	A unique instance of a letter, such as /a/, as it appears on a particular page (Davis 2007, 255).
grapheme	Refers to a letter, such as /a/, independent of any particular realisation of it (Davis 2007, 255).
hand	Variation in an individual's handwriting

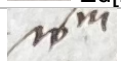
holograph	A letter whose main body was written by a single person. The category may also include letters with postscript or marginalia written in other hand.
idiograph	The way (or one of the ways) in which a writer usually writes a letter, such as, /a/ (Davis 2007, 255).
italic script	An Italian script with clear, cursive letter forms, it increased in use in Scotland across the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In early adoptees it could suggest an elite, humanist education (Simpson 2009, 17–18; Starza-Smith 2013).
leaf	See folio.
letter-writer(s)	A general term used to encompass anyone involved in the initiation or creation of a letter.
letterlocking	The process involved in folding and sealing a letter before delivery. May include the folding pattern, seals, and bindings (Dambrogio and Starza Smith 2025, 1).
main body	The main section of the letter's text which includes any opening and closing formulae, the signature, and the postscript. Not included are marginalia, endorsements, and the superscription.
marginalia	Text written in the margins or at the top or bottom of the text that is contemporary with the letter's date of composition.
mixed script	A mix of secretary and italic script forms which increased in use during the seventeenth century as secretary was influenced and overtaken by italic (Simpson 2009, 27).
opening	The address form and/or salutation (including any symbols) which appears at the start of a letter.
postscript	An additional section of text which usually appears after the main letter text and closing formulae or within the margins (Williams 2013).
recipient(s)	The person or persons who received the letter.
scribal letter	A letter in the handwriting of a person or persons other than the sender.
secretary script	A common type of writing in Scotland in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries used for 'every day and business purposes' (Simpson 2009, 26). Also known as 'bastard secretary' (Evans 2020, 48).
sender(s)	The person(s) who initiated the letter, including those which were not sent, or are copies or drafts.
signatory/signatories	The person or persons who signed the letter, usually positioned after the subscription.
subscription	Formulaic closing text, for example, 'your loving mother', usually positioned after the main letter text and before the signature.
superscription	The text on the address leaf used to direct the letter, may include the addressee name(s), location, and other directions (for example, 'in haste') (Williams 2013).
thorn	The Old English character equivalent to <th>, represented as <Þ>. By the late fourteenth century, it had degraded to resemble <y>, hence words such as *that* were written as *yat* and often abbreviated to *y^{at}* (Simpson 2009, 42).

tittle	A diacritic, sometimes called a cup-mark, which writers placed above <u>, thus <ŭ>, to distinguish it from <v>. It was occasionally positioned above <v> or <w>.
yogh	A Scots letter-symbol <ȝ> equivalent to <y> in vernacular texts. Over time the yogh came to resemble <z> in handwriting, and this explains its use in print (Simpson 2009, 42).

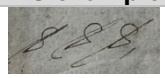
Appendix B Quick Guide to the Transcription

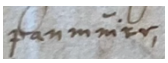
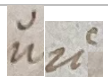
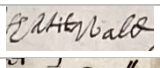
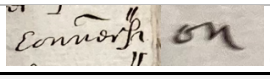
ABBREVIATIONS: CONTRACTION AND SUSPENSION		
Name	**Form**	**MS example and transcription**
In general, expanded abbreviations follow either the most common contemporary Scots or English spellings recorded for the word (in *DSL* or *OED*) or the spelling of the word within the transcribed text.		
Con symbol		 c[on]  c[om]
Denominations	merk libra, solidus, denarius	 m[er]k[is]  *500 li*  *xvi s*  *xx d*
Elaborated <p>	per  par  pro 	 p[ar]  p[er]  p[ro]
-er graph (hook-shaped upstroke)		 ev[er]rie
letter/lettre	Lre / lett	 l[ettre] / l[etter]
Lord/Ladyship	l/ lo/ Lo: Lo^{p} la/ La: La^{p} La^{ps}	  lo[rd], lo[rdship], lo[rdships]  La[dy]  La[dyship]  la[dyships]
Macrons and tildes	 line above missing letters 	 com[m]and  l[ett]re lettres  p[resen]tlie vmquhille
Plural, -is -es		 m[er]k[is] (n.b. The looped symbol which represents <-is> closely resembles long -s so editorial judgement was used when deciding whether -is or -s was intended.  good[is]
Plural, -is -es + another superscript letter	 -ris	 [ris]
Quh	q^{lk} q^{r}of q^{rby}	 q[uhilk]  q[uherof]  q[uherby]
<s> + <r>	 s^{r} 	 s[er]vand  s[ir] / s[chir] /s[cher]

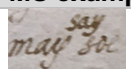
Superscript characters (missing letters are supplied and included in square brackets along with any superscript characters)	<ll> hono^{ll}	 hono[rabell] / hono[rabill]
	<r> m^{r}	 m[aister] / m[ister]
	<r> ȝo^{r}	 ȝ[our]  s[ir]
	<t> W^{t} y^{t} W^{t}in	 w[ith] w[ith]in
Superscript characters which do not indicate an abbreviation are silently lowered.	no^{t}	 not
Symbol resembling Scharfes <s>	sß 	 cauiss[is]  hors[s]
Worship/Worshipfull	/wor/	 wor[ship], wor[shipfull]

PROPER NAMES		
Type	**Policy**	**MS example and transcription**
Place names	Spelling modernised and expanded in square brackets	 Ed[inburgh]
Person names	Spelling modernised and expanded in square brackets	 W[illiam]
Signatures	Not expanded, original orthography retained	

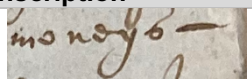
OBSOLETE LETTERS		
Name	**Policy**	**MS example and transcription**
Yogh	Transcribe as ȝ, ȝ	 ȝe
Thorn, resembles <y>	Transcribe as y	 ye

SPECIAL SYMBOLS		
Name	**Policy**	**MS example and transcription**
Fermesse	Transcribe as *$*	 $ $ $
Ampersand	Replace with unicode character	 & (<U+FF06, Unicode Consortium 2024>)

OTHER LETTERS		
Name	**Policy**	**MS example and transcription**
w	Retain original orthography	 w  w
u	Retain original orthography	 u
u with tittle	Retain original orthography	 panmũire 
Double <ff>	Retain original orthography	ff
Ligatures: sh, st, th	Regularised to <sh>, <st>, <th>	 sh  st
Short and long s	Regularised to <s>	 s
Conjoined words	Retain original orthography	 thatitwald
Word broken across lines	Rejoined using hyphen - or double hyphen = on first line	 conũersi=on

ADDITIONS and DELETIONS		
Name	**Policy**	**MS example and transcription**
Text inserted above, below line or in margin	Inserted into text and denoted by carat marks.	 may ^ say^ soe

Deletions, errors, corrected text which are legible	Transcribed and marked up using XML notation.	~~say~~

PUNCTUATION		
Name	**Policy**	**MS example & tagged transcription**
Line-fillers	These are transcribed as in the manuscript as – or =	 moneys -
Full stop, comma, semi-colon, colon, brackets, virgule, double hyphens	Retain original punctuation as far as possible. Size and position are not replicated.	