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Horace Walpole and his correspondents : social network analysis in a historical context

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Appendix A. Walpole's Use of Female Terms ending in -ess[1]

A.1. Walpole in the *OED*

Horace Walpole takes up second place in the list of authors mentioned by Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2009: 58) with words that were first recorded by the *OED*. In the list of 230 words that carry his name as first user, one group of words stands out in particular, i.e. those ending in *-ess*: *adventuress*, *agentess*, *artistess*, *chancelloress*, *conspiratress*, *incumbentess*, and *Methusalemess* are all ascribed to him. Furthermore, Walpole was also believed to be the first to have used *countess* as a verb in the sense of "to make someone a countess" (ca 1785), which is an example of morphological conversion. Besides the fact that for unclear reasons it is remarkable that all these words exclusively occur in the first half of the *OED*, it is striking that the source of all these words are Walpole's correspondence, with four of the above words deriving from his correspondence with Horace Mann (see further chapter 5). Apart from his enormous collection of letters, Walpole is also credited with writing various literary works, including the novel *The Castle of Otranto* (1764). Altogether 97 quotations in the *OED* have been derived from this novel, though not none of them illustrate his use of the *-ess* suffix. A search through the digitized version of the novel (see *Project Gutenburg*) only yielded evidence of already existing *-ess* words, including *heiress*, *mistress*, *princess*, and *protectress*. This begs the question of what makes Walpole's letters, particularly those addressed to Mann, so exceptional that the *OED* exclusively cites newly-coined *–ess* words from them?

[1] What follows in this appedix derives from an article jointly written with Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade, in Dutch (Henstra and Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2009). I am grateful to Matthijs Smits for his help in preparing the original text for inclusion here.

A.2. Walpole and Mann compared

The large number of first usages from Walpole in the *OED* suggest that Walpole was particularly progressive in his language use, especially in his letters to Mann, not least due to his use of *-ess* terms. Walpole is credited with being the first user of 230 words, of which 42 (18%) are from his correspondence with Mann. Moreover, of Walpole's total contributions to the *OED* (2160 items), 316 (14,6%) are from his letter correspondence with Mann. These numbers could point to two things: either Walpole's language in his letters, particularly to Mann, is more innovative and demonstrably different than in other texts, or the makers of the *OED* derived a non-representative number of quotations from Walpole's correspondence, and especially that between Walpole and Mann. As for the latter, this is not unlikely, as Schäfer (1980) shows that this was indeed the case for Shakespeare.

In order to put the occurrence of Walpole's *-ess* words in the *OED* in a wider perspective, the digitized correspondence used in the present study (CHWC) was supplemented with texts from Walpole that were available from *Project Gutenburg*, i.e. two older editions of his correspondence and a number of literary and historical works, namely *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), *Historic doubts on the life and reign of King Richard the Third* (1768) and *The hieroglyphic tales* (1785). In the analysis of earlier editions of the letters I checked whether the *-ess* words in the *OED* indeed occur more often in letters to Mann than in those addressed to other people, while Walpole's other works were studied to find out if the words were typical of the language used in his letters.

Searching Walpole's correspondence for possible *–ess* words produced the results presented in Table A.1. The table also shows for which

year each word was first cited in the *OED*; in three instances, designated in bold, Walpole was cited as the first user of the word in question. To be able to assess the relative frequency of the words discussed, I have normalised their occurrence per 100,000 words.

word	frequency	per 100,000 words	year	first occurrence in *OED*
sing. + pl.				
actress	5	0,726	1741	1666
adventuress	1	0,145	1754	1754
ambassadress	12	1,741	1743	1716
archduchess	7	1,016	1741	1618
baroness	2	0,290	1762	1420
conspiratress	1	0,145	1770	1770
countess	110	15,692	1740	1154
dauphiness	4	0,580	1744	1548
defendress	1	0,145	1749	1509
duchess	309	44,840	1740	1300
electress	5	0,726	1743	1618
empress	69	10,013	1742	1154
giantess	1	0,145	1781	1380
goddess	13	1,886	1742	1340
governess	3	0,435	1742	1712
heiress	9	1,306	1743	1659
hostess	1	0,145	1743	1385
idolatress	1	0,145	1769	1613
incumbentess	1	0,145	1760	1760
Jewess	2	0,290	1747	1388
laundress	1	0,145	1744	1550
legislatress	3	0,435	1772	1711
marchioness	1	0,145	1747	1570
mayoress	1	0,145	1749	1525
mistress	78	11,319	1742	1330
murderess	5	0,726	1752	1393
patroness	1	0,145	1771	1425
peeress	12	1,741	1743	1688
pretendress	1	0,145	1772	1700
priestess	1	0,145	1762	1656
princess	282	40,922	1740	1385

protectress	1	0,145	1766	1570
shepherdess	1	0,145	1742	1387
tigress	1	0,145	1766	1700
tutoress	1	0,145	1752	1614

Table A.1. Words in *-ess* and their relative frequency in the Walpole letters to Mann (1741–1786, approx. 689,000 words).

A large number of the words in Table A.1 occur only once or a few times in the letters to Mann. The most frequently occurring words are titles of nobility, such as *empress*, *duchess* and *princess*, most of which were already in general use by the eighteenth century (*princess*, for example, was already cited with a quotation from 1385 in the *OED*). However, there are also words which originate from the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth centuries, such as *legislatress*, *peeress*, *pretendress*, and *tigress*. In this respect, Walpole's usage reflects that of his time, and for a number of these words he is cited along with a quotation in the *OED*, albeit not always as the first user.

If we compare Walpole's letters with Mann's that are also part of the edition by Lewis *et al.,* we notice that Mann's use of the *-ess* words was much less frequent than that of Walpole. While Walpole's amounts to approximately 138 of these forms per 100,000 words, that of Mann comes down to about 108 per 100,000 words. In the *OED* there are only seven words for which Mann was attributed as the first user: minchiate, miramur, paymastership, pandle, puddy, retardure and oilskin. Many of these words are now obsolete, and a number of them are of Romance origin: minchiate, miramur, retardure. The number stands in stark contrast to Walpole's 230 first quotations, although this may also be clarified by the relative scarcity of material Mann produced in comparison to Walpole. Mann was a diplomat and not a writer, like his friend, and Mann's quotations in the *OED* are all from his correspondence with

Walpole. This correspondence therefore appears to have been an important source for the compilers of the *OED*. Moreover, if we look at the amount of creativity in both men's language, we notice that Walpole's letters show more variation in language use in terms of lexical playfulness than Mann's letters. Walpole used 48 different types of words ending *-ess*, whereas with Mann I found only fourteen. After deducting the items designating titles of nobility, we are left with 25 types with Walpole, and six with Mann. In terms of language use, Walpole therefore appears to be more innovative and creative lexically than Mann in his letters addressed to him.

A.3. Walpole's use of -ess words

Beal (2004: 21) also refers to Walpole's innovative word usage, basing herself on the occurrence of so-called nonce-words, hapax legomena such as *gloomth* and *greenth* formed in analogy with *breadth* which were hardly accepted at the time. *Gloomth* nonetheless appears in the *OED*, illustrated with no less than three examples derived solely from Walpole's letters, the first of which is from a letter to Mann from 1753 (the other examples are from 1754 and 1774). *Greenth* also dates back to 1753, and was illustrated with an example from a letter to another good friend of his, George Montagu (1713–1780).

The many quotations by Walpole in the *OED*, especially the 230 words he would appear to have coined, including the seven *–ess* words for which he was cited as the first user, confirm the general idea we have of Walpole as an innovative language user. This is at least apparent from his informal correspondence. In order to compare the language used in letters to Mann with Walpole's usage in general, the *-ess* words in the correspondence with Mann from Table A.1 were compared to the three other available digital texts. The results have been summarized in Figure A.1 below. This graph shows that

the number of *-ess* words shows considerable variation in the different Walpole texts. It is particularly remarkable that the frequency of these words is much higher in his novel *Hieroglyphic tales*, that is, in narrative prose, than in the collected letters and the letters to Mann (and also the historical text). Furthermore, it appears that the frequency of *-ess* words does not differ considerably from the collected correspondence and is in fact lower than the oldest of the two in the two earlier letter editions.

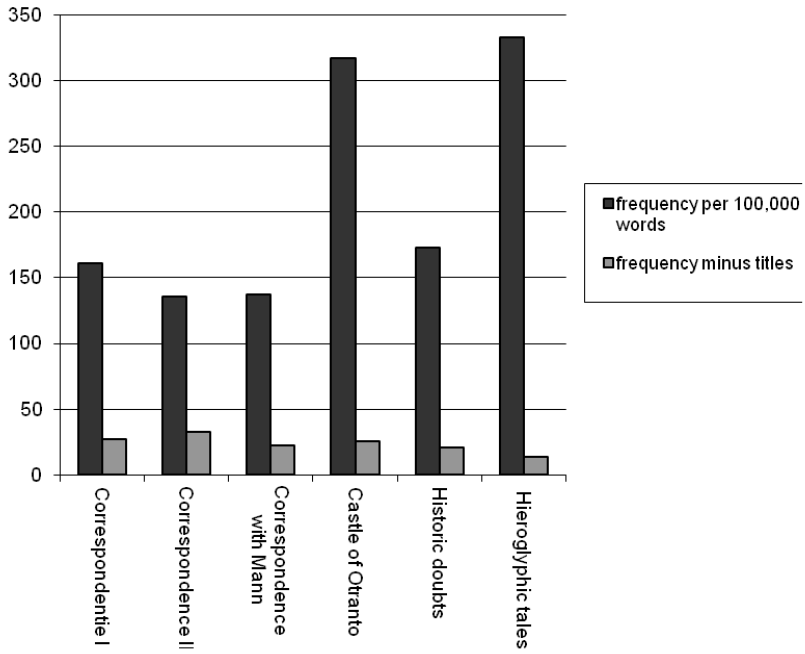

Figure A.1. The use of *-ess* words in different types of Walpole texts.[2]

[2] Correspondence 1: 1735–1797, approx. 1,175,500 words; Correspondence 2: 1736–1795, approx. 185,300 words; Correspondence Mann: 1741–1786, approx. 689,100 words; *Castle of Otranto*: 1764, approx. 38,500 words; *Historic Doubts*: 1768, approx. 38,100 words; *Hierogyphic Tales*: 1785, approx. 14,500 words.

However, there are important differences as well. *The Castle of Otranto* contains a high frequency of *-ess* words, even though the only words which recur regularly are *heiress*, *mistress*, *princess* and *protectress*. The same goes for the two other texts, in which we also find titles of nobility such as *countess*, *duchess*, and *empress*. If we confine the *-ess* to those relating to nobility, which, after all, had been in the English language for much longer, it appears that the frequency of *-ess* words in the letters is not much different from that in the other texts. However, in the different editions of the correspondence the variation of *-ess words* is much larger. Besides the list of words from the correspondence with Mann (Table A.1) we find in the older letter editions: *laddess*, *imitatress*, *Methusalemess*, *conqueress*, *abbess*, *translatress*, *paintress*, *prophetess*, *poetess*, *physicianess*, *persecutress*, *patriarchess*, *coheiress*, and lastly *authoress*. In addition to *Methusalemess*, for which Walpole was mentioned as the first user in the *OED* (see A.1)we find the word *imitatress* in a letter from 1784 to the Count of Strafford. However, the dictionary provides a quotation from Coleridge dating from the nineteenth century as first citation: thus, this word may be antedated with a quotation from Walpole.

On the basis of all this it may be concluded that the frequency of *-ess* words in Walpole's language is not necessarily higher in his letters than in his other works, but that the *creative* use of language by Walpole in his letters is more prominent than in his other works. This fits the general picture of Walpole: as shown in chapters 1 and 3, Walpole was keen on correct language use, but he also appears to have been in an innovator in the use of certain morphosyntactic constructions in his informal texts such as letters to friends.

A.4. Walpole's quotations and the *OED*

Of the 42 words from the correspondence with Mann for which the *OED* provides a first citation by Walpole (not just the function designations ending in *-ess*), eight have the label "rare", seven are "obsolete", three are nonce words, five are "alien/not naturalised", and one is "now dialectal". In all, 21 of the 42 words, exactly half, were marked with one of these labels. Examples include *agentess* (rare), *artistess* (rare), *chancelloress* (nonce) and *Methusalemess* (obs., nonce). Moreover, for thirteen of the 42 words quotations are given only from Walpole, sometimes even more than one. It seems that many of the words that are ascribed to Walpole, except for the *-ess* words *agentess*, *artistess* and *Methusalemess* also words like *awaredom*, *caligulism*, *Frenchism*, *gloomth*, *Gothicize*, *impertinence* (v.), *primitivity*, *sultanize*, *unembroiled*, *unnotify*, *well-behated*, and *zingo*, were hardly in common use at the time. Only a few words, including *artistess* and *chancelloress*, have later citations. It is thus debatable whether these words should have been included in the *OED* at all. The *OED* is currently being revised, and in doing so the editors have decided to be more consistent than was possible for their forebears in the pre-digital era (see Brewer 2007). A comparison with the second edition of the *OED* (1989), which may still be consulted digitally, shows that many changes have been made between the letter M, where the revision process started, and Z, which is where the editors arrived in December 2011. Right now work has started on the early letters of the alphabet, but work also continues on the basis of themes and keywords. For example, seven new words have been added for Walpole during the revision process. Besides that, many alterations have been made to words where Walpole was originally cited as the first user. In the second edition he is

named as the author of *pasticcio* with a quotation from 1752 from a letter to Mann, whereas in the revised edition this word has been antedated by ten years, again with a quotation from a letter from Walpole, though without the name of the letter's addressee. The first quotation for *politicize* has remained the same, although here, too, Mann's name as the addressee has been removed. Thus, not every change appears to be an improvement in presentation of the material.

A.5. Conclusion

The word *primitivity* in the above list of new words by Walpole is a good example of his linguistic creativity (he could have simply used the word *primitiveness*, which has existed since 1644). This first use of *primitivity* is illustrated by a quotation from a letter to Mann (1759). A second quotation is from more than a century later, which begs the question of whether Walpole's usage had any discernible impact. This also counts for the majority of function designations ending in *-ess* that were ascribed to him by the *OED*, including words that were unpopular at the time and would not gain much currency later either. Walpole may have been a linguistic innovator with regard some words that started to become a part of the developing standard language, but his use of unprecedented (and undocumented) word forms, particularly his use of *–ess* words, is a different matter altogether. Walpole's use of these words did not have a resounding impact, particularly because they occurred in his most informal letters only, in which he apparently felt more licensed to be lexically creative than in his published works. It is perhaps for that reason that his usage may have gone unnoticed by people engaged in the codification of the language by way of dictionaries or otherwise.

Görlach (2001: 174) asserts that in the eighteenth century the morphological process 'the productivity of the [*-ess*] pattern is quite limited'. This undoubtedly applies to English in general, but this statement is not necessarily true at the level of the language user as an individual. Indeed, as the above discussion has shown, Walpole's language was quite productive in this area. This was, in fact, discovered this by way of a kind of historical coincidence. As a 'historical dictionary' (see the *OED* website, 'About the *OED*') the *OED* ought to provide a representative account of language use throughout time. Walpole's exceptional language use, as it is described here, is, however, evident only due to the unsystematic way in which the *OED* at its outset collected material for illustrating words and their usage. These kinds of inadequacies will, it is expected, be dealt with during the dictionary's revision process. On the one hand this would be commendable; on the other hand, some changes have not led to improvements. Walpole's lexical creativity remains visible, but for unclear reasons the references have sometimes been altered to such an extent that the exact context in which the quotation appeared is no longer present. The most consistent editorial intervention in revising the *OED* would be – in this case – to remove all the material for which Walpole's informal letters served as evidence. As seen in the quotation above from Görlach (2001), most of the words dealt with in this study never really became a part of the English language. This, however, is not a procedure that would be recommended, as there would consequently remain little opportunity for a philologist to examine the private language of an individual language user, Horace Walpole in this case, which would provide valuable insight into creative morphological processes as they function today.

Appendix B. Overview of the Volumes and correspondents in the digital *Corpus of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*

Volume	Correspondent
1—2	Rev. William Cole
9—10	Frederick Montagu
	George Montagu
11—12	Agnes and Mary Berry
	Agnes Berry
	Barbara Cecilia Seton
	Mary Berry
	Robert Berry
13—14	Rev. Thomas Ashton
	Thomas Gray
	Richard West
15	Rev. William Beloe
	11th Earl of Buchan
	Sir David Dalrymple (Lord Hailes)
	James Edwards
	Edward Edwards
	Robert Henry
	Samuel Lysons
	Rev. Daniel Lysons
	Rev. Conyers Middleton
	Rev. Robert Nares
	William Robertson

	William Roscoe
16	William Bewley
	Thomas Chatterton
	John Fenn and Mrs Fenn
	Nathaniel Hillier
	Michael Lort
	John Pinkerton
	Rev. Henry Zouch
17—26	Sir Horatio Mann, 1st Baronet
28	Rev. William Mason
30	Charles Hanbury Williams
	Richard Edgcumbe
	Henry Fox
	Lord Lincoln
	Lord Holland
	George Selwyn
31	Anne Pitt
	Lady Mary Coke
	Lady Browne
	Lady George Lennox
	Lady Hervey
	Lady Suffolk
	Mary Hamilton
	Hannah More
	Mrs Dickenson
32—34	Lady Anne Fitzpatrick
	3rd Duke of Grafton

Anne, Countess of Upper Ossory

John and Anne, Count and Countess of Upper Ossory

John, Count of Upper Ossory

35 Richard Bentley

John Chute

Sir William Hamilton

George Simon 2nd Earl Harcourt

George Hardinge

The 2nd Earl of Strafford

36 Horatio Walpole, 2nd Baron of Wolterton

George, 4th Earl Waldegrave

Hon. William Waldegrave

Anne Clement

Charles Churchill

George, 3rd Earl Cholmondeley

George, 4th Earl Cholmondeley

Maria, Duchess of Gloucester

William Henry, Duke of Gloucester

Sir Edward Walpole

Frederick Keppel

Honorable Robert Walpole

Horatio Walpole, 1st Baron of Wolterton

Jane Clement

Lady Cadogan

Lady Chewton

Lady Charlotte Maria Walpole

Lady Dysart

Lady Elizabeth Laura Waldegrave

Catherine, Lady Walpole

Lady Mary Churchill

Mrs Cholmondeley

Mrs Horace Churchill

George Walpole, 3rd Earl of Orford

Sir Robert Walpole

Thomas Walpole the younger

Thomas Walpole

Hon. William Waldegrave

37—39 Lady Ailesbury

Anne Seymour Conway

Francis Seymour Conway, Viscount Beauchamp

Henry Seymour Conway

Henrietta Seymour Conway

Francis Seymour Conway, 1st Earl of Hertford

Isabelle, Countess of Hertford

Lord Henry Seymour