Noblewomen's Epistolary Networks: Case Studies from Italy and Scotland

Attending to Early Modern Women
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Abstract: This workshop studies the private letters of early modern noblewomen in a family and political context. Several Italian cases highlight issues of distance and rhetoric for "traveling brides," women who married away from their natal families. Two Scottish cases illuminate issues of property and national identity for women whose husbands were absent. Taken together, the letters present interesting questions of genre, agency, and power.

Our discussion will proceed chronologically: background on Lucrezia Borgia (Deanna Shemek) and the Colonna women (Renée Baernstein) will then be followed by discussion of the Italian women's letters. We will then move northward and later in time, considering Anna Livingston (Suzanne Trill) and Katherine Hamilton (Nicola Cowmeadow), followed by discussion of the Scottish cases. We will reserve some time for a comparative discussion.

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Part I. Italy: Elite Women on the Move

In the early modern period, significant numbers of elite Italian women moved beyond their cities' walls when they married. Patrilocal marriage in these cases meant the abandonment of hometowns, families, even languages; in their correspondence, these women transmitted culture across considerable distance. They were thus both subjects and objects of exchange. We are interested in the following open-ended questions: how did these women figure and construct distance? How did geographic distance intersect with social, linguistic, and other distances for them? How did they view the "exchanges" of other women through marriage? How did the generic and political expectations of the epistolary genre reflect their writings?

While the workshop is grounded in the texts and stories of a few individual women, we aspire to move toward sketching the commonalities of a shared experience. To that end, participants are warmly invited to raise more examples of "traveling brides," from any time or place provided they offer some means of accessing the questions described here.

Colonna women – Translations by Renée Baernstein

Background

The Colonna family (Paliano branch) was one of Rome's most ancient baronial families, holding feudal lands in the papal states and in the Kingdom of Naples. Like many of the city's traditionally independent barons, the Colonnas had to adapt to a rapidly shifting political environment in the sixteenth century, as popes from new families like the Farnese and the Carafa limited the barons' feudal autonomy. After about 1550 the Colonna turned to the King of Spain, Philip II, for political support and employment, eschewing their formerly independent stance;
Colonna men such as Marco Antonio Colonna, Duke of Paliano (1535-1584) became "hispanized knights" in service to the Spanish crown. Marco Antonio served among other offices as Viceroy of Sicily from 1579-84. The Colonna's kinship networks, meanwhile, stretched beyond their Roman base to become transpeninsular and even international: Colonna women married noblemen from Lombardy, Spain and Sicily as well as more locally. As far-flung family representatives, these women served as cultural mediators and political agents for the Colonna.

In the following letters, three of the Colonna women residing in the Kingdom of Naples write to the Colonna base in Rome. Geronima and Agnese ("Agnesia") were the sisters of Marco Antonio Colonna, who depended on his mother, Giovanna d'Aragona (d. 1576) to represent him in Rome. Geronima married the Duke of Monteleone in 1558 and moved to Naples, while Agnesina married Onorato Caetani, a member of the Roman baronage, in 1565 and lived most of her married life on the Caetani property of Sermoneta, outside of Rome. Giovanna Colonna, Marco Antonio's oldest daughter, married the Neapolitan Duke of Mondragone in 1566, at the tender age of 12. These letters are addressed to Marco Antonio, his mother, or household agents.


I received Your Excellency's letter and thanked God infinitely that your catarrh turned out well; and certainly it gave me great displeasure to see how your breath was tormented. Take care, my patroness, to take care of yourself and live healthily with the grace of Our Lord; for you know how much your life is dear to all, and how much it means. For on it depends our benefit; and without it I believe I would be almost nothing in the world. I don't write with my own hand this time, as I have a fever and a headache, I believe caused partly by discenso and partly by the grief caused me by your illness. This evening, Saturday, the Duke of Mondragone² visited me; I gave him the compliment of an embrace, as you commanded. He is certainly a great servant of yours, and shows in all his actions the greatest signs of kindness (gentilezza) and modesty, and the more one gets to know him, the more agreeable he seems. He wanted to write to Your Excellency, but it seemed to him ill mannered to write to you if he couldn't send a representative with the letters to pay you his respects. He's now awaiting whatever instructions my husband has for him. And may your Excellency favor him, for he deserves your favor, being such a loyal servant and being knighthly (cavalier) with all the goodness and courtesy of the world. In addition to tonight, he came to the house other evenings, where sometimes s.ra Felice has been as well, and he has played with her and with me... and everyone thought he was lovely.....

p.s. [autograph]

My patroness, on the matter of sending a young girl [with Giovanna when she marries]; of course I will do as you command; but Your Excellency must say, if you so command my brother, that most certainly it would be a great benefit to that girl, who comes at such a young age to a house she doesn't know, without having a single person who can help her...

¹ Biblioteca Statale di Santa Scolastica, Subiaco, Archivio Colonna, Corrispondenza di Personaggi Illustri (hereafter AC PI) BS cam. 188 let. 5.
² Fiancé of Geronima's niece, Marco Antonio's daughter, Giovanna. They married in January of 1567.
2. Geronima Colonna (MAC's sister) in Naples to Cesare Gallo in Rome, 27.viii.1569³

On the matter of the lady Costanza⁴ I’m so very anxious, seeing things proceed so slowly, whether because of the coldness or ill intentions of Borromeo, that makes me doubt whether they'll induce that lady to desperation. For I know her nature well, and how quick (subitanea) she is; she has little patience in her affairs. I wish therefore that it will be possible and seem expedient that they should procure that the case be held in that city [Rome]. I beg you therefore please to think about it and work with my lady [Giovanna d'Aragona], and with Cardinal Colonna so that, if Milan cannot deliver better news, with the authority, favor and diligence of you and the lawyers, the case should be brought to Rome...

3. Geronima Colonna in Naples to Cesare Gallo, Marco Antonio's agent, in Rome, 9 Sept. 1569⁵

[Geronima here responds to the news that Borromeo is delaying Costanza's annulment. Borromeo wants to insist the spouses live together for three years before the court can confirm Sforza's impotence, as provided by canon law. Sforza and his grandmother have previously been accused of cruelty to Costanza.]

I believe you'll have had my letter, that was sent with the ordinary [courier]... The situation is this, signor Cesare: that I am dead, afflicted, lost, desperate to see my lady Costanza in this state; the least bad outcome would be the convent; but I'd rather see her not just a nun, but dead, before I would stand for her to be in the hands of those cruel people, as they fear she may be, thanks to that cursed Borromeo. There's no one up there, the girl is all alone, without anyone of authority or of advice; ... as he writes to cardinal Alessandrino of this girl. The point of the business, it seems to me, is that we fear for the life of this girl, so much that we have to wonder where and how this three-year trial will be held, if we're required to have it. All of you [in Rome] must go to Cardinal Colonna, implore him by God that he should go to Cardinal Alessandrino, and ask that they at least await the arrival of her father [before deciding], or that this case should be held in Rome; if this girl doesn't merit any pity for my sins, take account at least of the reputation of my brother, for that really matters.

O how cursed Borromeo is! Christian without pity; government without prudence; religious without charity. How can there be a more inhuman man than this cursed Borromeo...

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³ AC PI. AB cam. 1 let. 6.
⁴ Costanza Colonna, daughter of Marco Antonio, who had been raised largely in Geronima's home in Naples. Costanza had just married Francesco Sforza, the Marchese di Caravaggio (Lombardy), in 1568. Her marriage was in the process of being annulled for impotence, with the assistance of Carlo Borromeo, Archbishop of Milan.
⁵ AC PI AB cam. 5 let. 2.
4. Agnesina Colonna to Giovanna d'Aragona s.d. but probably late 1566 – early 1567

God knows how it troubles me to tell you about my troubles, having always tried to cover them up, so as not to trouble you more than I know I do. But now as I am reduced to the point that my reputation is at stake, besides which I can't take it any more, makes me tell you what terrible things I have suffered because of this blessed lawsuit. And lately since my brother had this last decision in his favor, it's incredible what they're doing here, since they can't swallow it, and since they can't take it out on others they take it out on me. And last night in particular signor Onorato [Caetani, her husband] picked a great row with me after dinner. Very violently and with no reason he began to say the most bestial things I've ever heard in my life, which I can't repeat because this morning my eyes and head ached from crying this whole night. It's enough to say it was all bad things about the Colonna house; if they were the most infamous (infami) persons in the world he couldn't have said worse; and he said that if I was badly treated before, now he would keep me down with kicks and treat me like a slave. And because I answered him that he should repeat that to my family... Signora, I am in such a state; I am the mother of many children and after patiently receiving blows without knowing why, only I cannot suffer that improper things are said about my brother. I beg Your Excellency, advise me what to do. I've thought to ask the Cardinal of Sermoneta here, and tell him the facts, and see what he says and then have him tell everything to the Pope, except that I wouldn't want to put my brother in difficulties... Please tell me your opinion, and I'll do what you command. And believe me, for my honor of my soul and my life, I can't stay this way...

5. Agnesina Colonna in Sermoneta to Giovanna d'Aragona 10 Mar. 1567

Yesterday evening the Cardinal came here, and at first he wouldn't speak, nor did he want my children to kiss his hand as usual. We ate together without him speaking to me at all, and then we stayed in a room alone without servants and for two solid hours we didn't say ten words. And then at the end he told me he didn't want anything from Naples and he wanted to leave this morning early. When I saw that things were worse than ever, I told him he didn't have to say anything to me... except that I was expecting these days he should want to fix how we are living at home as he had let us know by Pietro Valletta, and seeing now that he was leaving without doing anything, I begged him not to take it ill if we resolve to do something. He knows better than me that we can't live this way here. He answered me with words that I don't want to tell you, so as not to afflict you too much; but I was so angry; I was astonished, knowing I didn't deserve them. But I assure you that I remembered I was your daughter, and I answered him that although I would displease him [she threatens to leave the house and move back to Rome].

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6 AC PI BQ 128 let. 4.
7 The Caetani and the Colonna families were engaged in a protracted lawsuit involving feudal properties.
8 AC PI BQ 126 let. 1.
9 Cardinal of Sermoneta, a kinsman of her husband's.
6. Giovanna Colonna in Naples to Giovanna d'Aragona in Rome, 12 May 1567
[autograph]

Here I have your letter, which brought me incredible happiness, and commanded me that I send you some rose preserves (conserva) [which are included].... The Duke [of Mondragone] is well, and as for me the pregnancy is treating me better, and we are awaiting the Prince who is already on the way....

7. Giovanna Colonna in Naples to Giovanna d'Aragona in Rome, 30 Sept. 1567
[secretary]

I have taken so much consolation from the pleasure that Your Excellency has felt about my childbed, that I don't know what form of words could express it. This I say reasonably, because having heard of your feelings from signor Marco Antonio Spannocchia, knowing that all proceeds from the courtesy of your spirit, and the great love you bear me, I can say that the satisfaction I feel from your happiness is greater than that which the child himself brings me. I remain thus with infinite obligation, and I give you the news that both I and your newborn servant are well, by divine grace. May God do me the favor that I should always receive such news from you...

Isabella d'Este Letters - Translations by Deanna Shemek

1. 1490 February 23 Marmirolo

To her sister, Beatrice d'Este, expressing regret at not being more demonstrative at their parting after Isabella's marriage.¹²

My dismay at your departure was so great that I was quite beside myself and could find no appropriate words for such an occasion and that would befit the tender love we bear each other. If I weren't certain that your Ladyship must know this came from the tenderness in my heart, which prevented me from speaking, I would try to offer excuses. But excuses aside, I must say that I so regret being deprived of your Ladyship's sweetest company that I feel my soul has left my body. Nor can I think of anything but your Ladyship, whose image appears before me at every hour and in every place. Though here my illustrious lord looks well on me, and no pleasure is lacking, I don't enjoy these things with the contentment I would feel if I had your Ladyship near. And since I cannot visit you personally, I will do so continuously in spirit, and often with letters, begging your Ladyship to treat me similarly, for I could have no greater pleasure than hearing of your Ladyship daily. I pray you commend me every day to our most illustrious mother, and every night when you go to receive her blessing, receive it also for me and kiss her hand in my name. To you I offer nothing, since it seems to me superfluous to give you that of which you are just as much mistress as I am. Your Ladyship will excuse me if I don't write now in my own hand, for I am much occupied. But another time I will make good on this omission. I offer myself and commend myself to your Ladyship.

¹⁰ AC PI BQ 149 let. 3.
¹¹ AC PI BQ 149 let. 1.
¹² AG b. 2904 libro 136 cc. 1v-2r.
[Write in similar vein, mutatis mutandis, to the illustrious Alfonso, Ferdinando, Sigismondo and Giulio d'Este.]

2. 1490 March 4 Mantua

To her half-sister, Lucrezia Este, complaining that she has not received answers to her letters.\(^{13}\)

Most illustrious cousin, beloved as a sister: The courier we sent returned with no reply to the letter we wrote you, which would have much amazed us if we had not already anticipated that you would be caught up in so many pleasures that you no longer remembered us. And it seems to us that you have verified the proverb that says, ‘out of sight, out of mind.’ We did not write you in our own hand, since we doubted you would trouble yourself to respond, and we guessed well, because if you did not deign now to send the courier with as much as a tiny little letterlet, much less would you have written it yourself. And so, having written you that we intended to write you in our own hand, we changed our mind upon verifying what we suspected. And yet we thought to confuse you by writing yet another letter to ask you, if you don't care to honor us with one of your letters, at least to kiss the hand of our mother every day in our name, and keep us commended [to her] and to our illustrious lord father. And greet all the ladies of the court on our behalf. We dispose ourselves to your pleasure.

3. 1490 March 4 Mantua

To the courtier Francesco on the sadness at the Ferrarese court after Isabella’s departure.\(^ {14}\)

We have learned from a letter from Giovanmaria Trotto that since our departure you are all cold and mute at the table for lack of skirmishes with us. Since we hope to return there for this St. George’s day, we warn you that you must prepare well to defend yourself from the many assaults we have planned for you! We would be most grateful if you kept us continuously commended to her Excellency Madama and to the illustrious lords our brothers and sister, and if you would comfort all the courtiers one by one on our behalf. We offer ourselves to your pleasures.

4. 1490 March 9 Mantua

To the duchess of Ferrara, thanking her for writing and lamenting the absence of letters from others. \(^ {15}\)

Through the reply your Excellency made, I learned of your wellbeing, which I desire more than my own. There was no need to explain why you did not respond to me in your own hand, because any letter from you pleases me. I would not want you to go to any trouble on my

\(^{13}\) AG b. 2904 libro 136 c. 4v. The addressee is perhaps Francesco Castello.

\(^{14}\) AG b. 2904 libro 136 c. 6v

\(^{15}\) AG b. 2904 libro 136 c. 7r-v
account, though when I do have letters from your Excellency's hand I keep them as holy relics. I beg you, for my part, to excuse me if this letter is not written in my hand, for I was with the most illustrious duchess of Urbino all day and had no time. My illustrious lord consort came here yesterday, and today after dinner he went back to Gonzaga en route to arriving there [in Ferrara]. Perhaps your Excellency will see him before you get this letter of mine.

Your Excellency once charged that I would soon forget everyone there [in Ferrara]. But it seems to me that just the opposite is true, because I have written to twelve people and received not one reply, except from Gianmaria Trotto. Whence I have cause to complain of that whole court, and especially of Lucrezia, Madama Polissena, and most of all our Francesco, who didn't bother to write me even a line or two. I don't know whether this results from his having become too great a master, or from some other reason unknown to me. And so if I wrote no more in the future, your Excellency could not accuse me of haughtiness or of forgetting Ferrara. I enclose here the list of all those to whom I wrote, so that your Excellency will be apprised of my every action. To your good grace and that of my illustrious father I commend myself.

5. 1490 August 11 Mantua

To her half-cousin, Margherita d'Este, inviting her for a visit.

Since we have had a little fever these days and are not entirely free of it, we would like to have your company to soothe us. We pray you please request leave from the illustrious lord our uncle, to whom we are also writing in proper fashion. If he is content, as we believe he will be, and provided that it very much please our illustrious lord consort, and once our father, who must speak to him for us, has informed us that this is the case, you will come here. We would like you to come before Sunday, so that if we are feeling better we can see the feast of Our Lady of Grace and the palio race on San Leonardo together. Please advise us through this rider regarding the day of your arrival and the number of people in your party. We offer ourselves to your pleasure, praying you commend us to the most illustrious lady Antonia.

16 Perhaps Francesco Castello.
17 AG b. 2104 libro 136 c. 49r.
By Maria Bellonci

A Prince of Mantua:
The Life and Times of Vincenzo Gonzaga
The Travels of Marco Polo
Lucrezia Borgia

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF
LUCREZIA BORGIA

Maria Bellonci
Translated by Bernard and Barbara Wall

2003
Salvatore Baioni, thirty-nine rings to deck the ears of the 'sham Moors', spurs, gorgets and masks by the Ferrarese specialist Gerolamo della Viola, a mysterious 'ball to make music', false heads, furs, candelabras, bells, swords, bells, trumpets, down to the strangest trousseaus of clothes, shirts, jackets, doublets, cloaks, boots and shoes.

Lucrezia and her company travelled to Ferrara by stages. They passed through Spoleto where she had once been Governor. At Gubbio, in the territory of Urbino, they were welcomed by the famous Elisabetta Gonzaga, Duchess of Urbino, who was the sister of the Marquis of Mantua. They passed through Pesaro and as they advanced further north the company was upset by rumours which turned out to be unfounded - that Gian Battista Carracciolo - the betrothed of the beautiful Dorotea whom Valentinois had raped - intended to attack them. On January 28 they reached Bologna where they were entertained by the Bentivoglio family, the tyrants of that city. Outside Bologna at one of the loveliest country houses of the Bentivoglio, Lucrezia was visited by Alfonso of Este, and the bride and bridegroom spent some time 'in diverse and pleasant discussion in the presence of us all', after which Alfonso departed. The last part of the journey was made by barge along the riverways. Isabella of Este Gonzaga, and her brother Don Giulio, set out to meet Lucrezia on the last stage of her journey on the morning of February 1, 1502.

The next dreaded meeting was with Ercole of Este at Torre della Fossa where he awaited his daughter-in-law with a group of his court dignitaries. As soon as the barge touched the banks Lucrezia rose, passed rapidly over the little bridge, and bowed to kiss his hand at the water's edge. He in turn lifted her up, embraced her, pronounced the expected words of welcome, took her by the hand and led her and the most important members of her court to his great golden Bucentaur or ceremonial galley. Here the ambassadors waited their turn to pay their respects to the bride, and, this done, all present entered a kind of pavilion where Lucrezia was given the place of honour between the French and Venetian ambassadors. Isabella of Este was given second place, between the Venetian and the Florentine ambassadors, and the Duchess of Urbino came third, between the Florentine ambassador and the ambassador from Lucca. In the subsequent conversation the gallant French ambassador, de la Roche Martin, behaved as if he were the chivalry and courtesy of France personified. Outside they could hear echoes of the fooleries of Lucrezia's clowns who were on the galley deck diverting Ercole of Este and Alfonso amidst the roaring laughter of the lords and courtiers. As the galley drew near Ferrara, they heard the joyful rumbling of Alfonso's cannon mingled with the blasts from the trumpeters riding along the banks with Alfonso's crossbowmen, keeping abreast with the boat. And thus, towards four o'clock and with repeated salvoes of artillery, they reached the villa of Alberto of Este just outside Ferrara, where Lucrezia was to remain until the morrow. Here the bride was received by Lucrezia d'Este Bentivoglio, Ercole of Este's eldest illegitimate daughter, and a crowd of Ferrarese and Bolognese gentlewomen. Teodora Angelini was presented by Alfonso's senschal, with her team of twelve girls-in-waiting selected by Duke Ercole, timorous and laughing in red satin and black velvet. Lucrezia smiled continually, acknowledging compliments, smiling at the women, the girls, the five carriages presented by Ercole, one decorated in gold with white horses, one in brown satin with brown horses, and so on. When these presentations were over it was time for leave-taking and the great Este company returned to Ferrara.

When Lucrezia mounted to her apartment and was alone, she could at last remove the smile that had been fixed on her lips since daybreak and think her own thoughts. She could not yet claim to have won through, but she had arrived, and she had glimpsed the towery rectangular mass of the Este castle in the distant plain. The climax and the completion of the marriage would be on the morrow. She must have trembled at the thought of this new intimacy. She was tired and her ideas and feelings
were confused. But before she lost consciousness she perhaps saw two plumes in her mind's eye, one white and one red, both clear and free in the unclouded sky.

Her wedding dress was of satin and curling gold, with wide, French-style sleeves lined with ermine; and her cloak was of gold woven upon a golden background in an ample sixteenth-century design, and ermine-lined throughout. The gold and ermine against a background of dark satin showed off the famous Este jewels to perfection—gorgeous rubies and diamonds hung round her neck and sparkled in the golden net that loosely held up her long hair, leaving her forehead free. As soon as her women had finished preparing her, Lucrezia mounted a great grey stallion caparisoned with crimson velvet—a present from the Duke—and set out for the city in the company of the French ambassador and part of her suite. At the gates stood the doctors of Ferrara University, the flower of the city's intelligentsia, ready to carry the canopy of crimson satin beneath which the bride rode alone. The French ambassador kept beside her, but outside the canopy, so one informant tells us, and another that he followed behind in the company of the Venetian ambassador. The procession formed and moved off. It was led by Duke Ercole's mounted crossbowmen to the blare of eighty trumpets and twenty-four fifes and trombones. Immediately after them came the nobles of Ferrara with their rich golden chains and lively glances as they were recognized and applauded by the populace. Then came the Duchess of Urbino's noblewomen dressed by her command in black velvet or satin; then Don Alfonso on a horse adorned with great pieces of gold worked in relief by Messer Bernardino, the Venetian. Whether by personal taste or by chance Alfonso himself was wearing quiet colours against which the gold gleamed—a beige doublet, a black cap with a white feather, and beige hose touched with pink. Beside him rode his brother-in-law, Annibale Bentivoglio, surrounded by his friends, Gerolamo dal Forno from Modena, Alessandro Faruffino, Andrea Pontegino and Bigo dei Banchi.

Next came the Roman and Spanish noblemen, who filled popular feeling with curiosity and distrust. They looked foreign (and perhaps they genuinely felt so) and too arrogant for their lack of ornamentation, though some of the Spaniards whose delicate faces were frozen in an expressive pallor and whose dress was either gold brocade or plain black velvet, aroused admiration for their sombre nobility. And then came five bishops, as was to be expected in the suite of a Pope's daughter, and the ambassadors, two by two, from Lucca, Siena, Venice and Florence, and four from Rome in long coats of gold brocade. Then came six drummers and two clowns. The clowns heralded Lucrezia who advanced slowly under the flaring canopy. She was so full of the moments she was living through that even when her horse reared and shied at the fireworks she continued to smile. She slipped from her stallion's back and mounted one of her mules which the grooms brought up, while the stallion was given to a page who rode ahead of Lucrezia's canopy with great theatrical effect. There followed the solemn entry into the city. Duke Ercole drew up beside her and they advanced between the houses and across the piazzas of Ferrara, with the Duchess of Urbino in a new sophisticated dress of black velvet sewn with golden astrological symbols. Behind came the three Orsini women, Orsina Orsini Colonna, Jeronima Borgia Orsini and Adriana Mila, followed by twelve court carriages bearing local and foreign beauties who were much admired and discussed. Then came Lucrezia's personal cavalcade and the baggage train of mules, caparisoned in their uniform of yellow and brown satin or cloth.

Despite the fact that she was entering a foreign city, Lucrezia was composed and assured. She was free at last and enjoying a triumph which for once owed less to her power than to her grace. She had smiles and greetings for everyone—noblemen and common people, artisans and soldiers, and they all felt like knights engaged in the defence of a frail woman. She may just at first have disappointed some of the onlookers by her small irregular features and slight figure. But as soon as the first
feelings of disillusionment were over their hearts were won by her sweet expression and the way she moved her eyes, as if begging for life. Lucrezia reached the Piazza del Duomo amid fanfares, cheers and songs. Everything passed off without a hitch. Homage descended on Lucrezia from the sky itself, in the form of two acrobats who slid down from the Rigobello towers and the Palazzo of the Podesta to her feet. By this time the leaders of the procession had entered the courtyard and were taking up positions along the arcade on the far side and along the flanks under the windows decorated in the flowery style of the Lombard Renaissance, with Borso’s Este symbols, basilisks, eagles, crosses and roses. They left the space at the foot of the great marble stairway free.

There Isabella of Este Gonzaga had taken up her position, resolutely dominating the noblewomen from Ferrara and Bologna and wearing her famous dress embroidered with ‘pauses in music’, which formed a remarkable contrast with the astrological gown of the Duchess of Urbino. Lucrezia dismounted at the bottom of the main staircase for the ritual embraces and the customary ceremonial. Alfonso’s and Ercole’s archers struggled for her canopy and mule while she ascended the stairs for the last phase of her triumph.

The doorway of the reception hall was flanked by two gigantic statues in gilded wood bearing clubs. Under their symbolical guard she passed into the hall—‘amongst the loveliest in Italy’—decorated for the occasion with gold and silver tapestries and silken hangings. Here she was welcomed by an aged man whose face betrayed his life of study—the humanist Pellegrino Prisciano who recited an official speech in solemn, boring and over-ornate Latin. His point of departure was not even Adam and Eve, but the marriage of the elements, earth and water, and after references to the Chaldeans, Egyptians and Greeks, and quotations from Homer and Aristotle, he came at last to the praise of Lucrezia. In a few sentences he extolled the Borgia family, especially Callixtus III, and became ecstatic about the person and achievements of Alexander VI to whom he dedicated an extraordinary period that was the corner-stone of his enormous oration. He compared the Pontiff with St Peter and added: Habiuit Petrus Petronillam filiam pulcherrimam; habet Alexander Lucretiam dacore et virtutibus unique resplendentem. O immensa Dei omnipotens mysteria, O beatissimi homines . . .

Valentinus was also given a place in the family tree of the spiritual life, his military achievements providing good material for eloquence. With the Borgias disposed of, the orator tackled his principal argument, the glory of the Este family, which he traced from its beginnings and developed at great length.

We have found no evidence of other speeches made that day nor of verses recited by any of the poets. The gentleman of the court were presented, and later Lucrezia, accompanied by Isabella of Este, the Duchess of Urbino and a procession of ambassadors, retired to the nuptial apartment and with a final blast of trumpets the doors were shut against the curiosity of the courtiers. No one thought of indulging in the customary quips made by relations round the marriage bed, as had happened at Alfonso of Este’s first marriage when they sang aubades to the couple until Alfonso threatened them with a stick. Lucrezia was too nervous and modest for such acts of coarse hilarity and she had many reasons for wishing to draw the curtain over her adventures in love and marriage.

Directed by Adriana Mila, the girls removed Lucrezia’s golden dress and with swift and skilful hands they did her hair and laid her nightdress ready. Probably she had no time to go back over the story of her life up to this point before Alfonso entered the room. It was a warm night.

\[1\] Peter had a very beautiful daughter Petronilla; Alexander has Lucrezia radiant with all grace and virtue. O unfathomable, almighty mystery of God, O men most blest . . .
Part II. Scotland: The Politics of Kinship

Over the past ten to fifteen years, the study of early modern English women’s letters, in both the literary and historical fields, has positively exploded. Studies such as those by Daybell and Whyman have revealed letters to be a significant source for exploring women’s various engagements with familial and political structures. To date, however, little comparable research has been undertaken with regard to Scottish women’s letters. This omission is particularly regrettable given the material, political changes during the C17th from the Union of the Crowns (1603) to the Act of Union (1707). With James VI/I’s removal to London, accompanied by many of his Scottish noblemen, the political structures in Scotland in particular witnessed a huge change. As Maurice Lee Jr. indicates in Government by Pen letters between men (most notably James VI/I himself and the Earl of Dunfermline) became central to Scottish politics and Anglo-Scottish relations.

But what about Scottish noblewomen? For the most part, they did not join their husbands in London, so how did their husbands’ absence affect marital relations? To what extent did this mean that Scottish noblewomen became involved with local issues/disputes? What role, if any, did these women play – through their letters – in influencing the political developments of the day? The following letters are by two women who were prominent in their particular kinship networks: Anna Livingstone, Countess of Eglinton (1587-1632) and Katharine Hamilton, Countess of Tullibardine, later Duchess of Atholl (1662-1707).

Anna Livingston, Countess of Eglinton¹

1. NAS GD3/5/33. 11 November 1612. Anna, Countess of Eglinton, to her husband Alexander, Earl of Eglinton.

My Deare hert acording to your desire and my dewtie I can nott/ omit this ocasione in wretting vnto you, alltho I be putt in hop to sie/ <you> or this come to your hands, which I wold wish war trew, butt in/ the meine tyme I most content my self in obeying you and shall/ euer struye to yield you sattisfactione be all the means that I/ can be write or anie way I can possible, assuring you I can/ not but be partaker of your weal and crosses, for the continuuan<ce>/ of your loute, and good helth must nxds mak myn to be the better/ therfor I pray you tak no mallancholie for your presand croses/ which w<tt> the grace of god I trust we shall shortlie ouerome./ the chanceler hes told me he will wret to you to staye no longe[r]/ if his ma<tie> be no better myndet then he was, I wish her ma<tie>/ may be ane good agent for you, as also that my lord rotchester/ may proue ane trew frend vnto you. I haue wretin thanks to/ ladie Jane for her kyndnes vnto you which I am verie [damage]/ as for your adios at this time, my hert I will assur you of m[y]/ ladie your mothers gret care for the weall of your affears, be/ the asistance of my lord your ncle, and you brother, they ar in/ a verie good esteat. for the presant presed be god: for my lord/ my father hes prowyet his twentie thousand marks, but hes/ bein in gret danger of his lyf be ane sqwinance in his hais / I com from him yesterday and left him at a resoneble good/ esteat. I steayd w<tt> him but one night, for I came hear w<tt>/ my lord your brother who was casione for

¹ All Scottish letters transcribed by ST and NC from original Mss held at Blair Castle, the National Archives of Scotland and the National Library of Scotland.
ten thousand/ marks for your wys, which your vnclce and my ladie pro/wydet for, as ye will know at miting, my lord elphiston/ hes also send his monie. now I pray you my hert if/ before your parting yee want monie spear nott to caus/ sell thos things yee twk vp w<i> you. william ditt will/ get his monie acording to yourletter: ther was one I wret/ to you w<i> ane little ring in it, I fear it is not come to/ yourhands, yet I must remit al forder til miting/ and so praying god for your good retourne I rest

at setoun. 22. noveumber. /1612 yours euer mor then myne owne/
ALEeuingstoune

2. NAS GD3/5/49. 17 March 1613. Lady Jane Drummond to Anna, Countess of Eglinton. `To the richt honourable/my loiuing sister/the Countes of eglintoune'.

sweet sister: I woll wse no/ serymonys, nether to thank/ yow for your cyndness nor/ excues my selfe for writing/ so sildum to yow, my redy-nes to serue yow shall re-companc the first, and/ beliue I will not neglect/ the last, bot when I am/as it war compellld, ether/be my attendanc, or som/ wther neiser bissines,which I know your disou[.]-/sion will excues, whan the/ king went from this efter/ the marieg, ther was no/ word of your husband/ his bissines, it lay as ded./ as I remember I wrett so/ to your husband, which I/ hop or this he hes resaiued/ bot I heir sens sum good/ body hes wakned that/ sogett [subject], for I haue hard ther is sum comissin/sent doun to the counsall cerserning him/bot no body can say better to yow then yow/ haue said patienc and a good cau se overcums/at last]

it grieues me infinitly that [I?]/ shuld be so crost bot that/ is all wimen can do, to/ grie at ther frinds truble/ I protest to god sister I shu[id]/ haue thocht my self hapy/ if I could haue done goo[d]/ in this errand of your hus/bands, and what I can [d.]/ shall be euer raedy/sister for your kind offe[r]to find me linnin and ac/quuita [acqua vitae], I humbly thank/yow, bot without serymo[ny]/ lat me intret yow not to[?]j/ do it, to I desyr yow, wh[i]ch/ without serymony I shall/do when I haue wse of/ any, yow haue many huse[s]/to furnish it war a pit[jie]/ to giue yow to much a[ill]at ons. God send yow ha/pines in them, and I hop/ yit to be mirry with yow yit in sum of/ them so praying yow remember my seruic/ to my lord your husband be confident/that I shall euer remain

your la: faithfull/ sister to serue yow/Jane Drummond

The 17 of march

3. NLS Adv. 33.1.1.vol 5, no. 98. Anna, Countess of Eglinton, `To My honourable Louing Brother/Mr Morray one of his Ma<ties>/ Bedchamber'. 22 October 1614.

My verie Louing Brother being advertised be my/ lord my housband letter how infinitle he is bound vnto/ your feithfull delling for him at his ma<ties> hands/ In such sort that he hes been graciously resaeued/ and hops shortlie be your trew frendschp to be/ dispached with grett contentment. therefore I/ must accoruding to my bound dewtie signifie vnto/ you by these lines that I doe acknowledging my self/ and all that I haue powar ouer for euer teyed/ in the trewest degrie of frendschp vnto you/ as lykways my ladie my good mother hes desyr'd/ me to assur you by thers as from her self if euer/ yee haue ocasionse to mak t<i>yall therof, that yee/ haue not anie frend
mor reday to plesour you/ then schie is according to her powar, and I think/ all that loues my houssand <&> me that apertins ws/ will think them selvs for our caus lykways/ oblised vnto you, or ells I can not estemn them friends/ I willsay no mor but I wish wee maye be so hapi/ to reqwyt your frendship, and most ernestlie/ intretes that yec will at all occasiones mak wse of/ the powar yee haue ouer her who shall euer/ remaine

Your louing sister and/ fathfull frend

at Setoun/ 22 October/1614 Anna C Eglintoun

In the left hand margin, she continues

if ye think it fit present my must affectionate humbelle servise vnto his Ma<tie> and say/ from mee that xitt senc the tyme my houssand did posess eglintoun I was neuer so content/ till now it hes plejad [sic] his hines fauorable to reseaue him whom I hop will stryue to/<deserve it> I did wret vnto you on Monday the .17. of this instant at on which daye your/ worthie wyf parted from this vpon her iornay towards you/ I pray god send you ane hapie miting, and many prosperous days toghider.


My Deare and louing Brother I did reseaue your/kind and weakalm letter from S<&> daued murray/ which did infinitlie contentment <me> boeth by the /pleasing newis of her ma<ties> good helth and/ her singular fauour schowed to you in this/ fullich [foolish] falling out of sumersyds w<&> you to his/ oune disgrace which hes med him so heated [hated]/ of that's hear that ar bound to you and knows/ your trew worth and his fallchoud that if ither/ war non but your servaunt my houssand he wold/ if it war exceutable to you and nessicer vnredor/ to pruf him ane erund lyare [if] in that/ he wret to you and message sent w<&>, that/ ungret fullich couising of yours heriegh [??]/ I long now to hear what satisfacione is med vnto her ma<tie>, and you I pray god increas/ her gfritness with the king and estimacione and loque of the piple w<&> ane long and hapie/ raing ouer ws. I was mor then desirous to haue/ hard the sertantie of thes things from you/ and especialie concerning your owne helth/ which I pray good may be good/ and I doute/ not of your wealfear vther ways but I/ protest your siklines when I hard it did/ mor grue me then yee can imagine and/ I was neuer content till ye wret to me/ of your better helth god of his mersie increas/ it whilst I liue, as concerning thos particulars/ yee desired me I haue bein courious for/ your satessfacon to tr<a>y them and fyndis/ [new side of paper] that my lord .ab. dois esteem him self bound to/ my lord chamberland for nothing but/ fear words and thinkis him proud and/ fecless [feckless], and I haue this out of his owne/ moueth that he could haue found in/ his hert to haue fought in him in your/ quarrel, boeth hee and Sr wiliam setoun/ did much press your good inteerament/ at your owne hous and kyndnes to me/ we haue bein all at Jhon achamillits wading [wedding]/ to Sr wiliams dochter [daughter] wheuer yee was offin/ remember'd. as for my Lord B, hopes they/ ar but small as I euer doubted it was thought/ that Sr James [s], now lord [oc] did put him/ in hop the chamberland wold doe much for/ him and when he found him self dese[u/r/v]'d/ at his coming to court I think he was/ ashamed to enter with you inhe respect/ he did not creue your opinion nor your/ housbands in his coming but as I did/ expect he rewis it. I pray you lat me know/ what is don betwixt your housband and/ couchinvar concerning thos lands he hes/ in
[w]adset in loudiane for couchinwar/ giue it out that yee had agrid w<><> him/ for his right. but I remember ye med me/ once dissuad my sister and her housban<><>/ to giue ther consent to him. So I can not/ think ye ar agrid but if it might content/ you or your housband they wold giue it to your self but not to him. So I expect/ to hear from you concerning those matters [turns paper around and continues]/ now dear brother I can not omit to giue you thanks of the infinit fauour<><>/ booth you and your worthie housband at all occasionis schowis to me and my housband and now haueing such ane car at my/ loid glenkern got no thing/k don in our preioucice [prejudice] ther was ane letter/ procurd from his ma<tie> to my lord in fauouris of the lord of eakat/ which he hes sent the ansur of to your housband to present to/his ma<tie>, with the tru informacione of the esteat of that erand/ and I most intret you to insist that he will haue ane care to put <that/> his ma<tie> does not beliue anie wrong informacione of our unfrends./ my lord hes his servuice rememberd vtnto you as to her whom he thinks him self/ mor bound vtnto then <he> is able to requwyt booth he and I am ashamed that as/ yet we haue in no measour but good will requwyt the infinit obligacie we owe you:/ but I wishe we may liue no longer if we haue not full powar to command ws/ in what is in our pouar to plesour you and your housband whois implo/-ymentis we long for. I will say no mor but hopes ye will doe it shorttie/ as I wish it be also trew that my lord of skun hes qwet fakland to/ you alredie but I pray you lat me hear of it from your self which/ will mak me haue the greter desire to liue and sie you ther as I wish/ my good ladie mar presed be god grows stronger the nearer her tym/ aproches. Her sonne my lord bouchan and the ereel of rouhtous being/ booth wadet this nixt wiek to ther young bryds god giue them much ioye/ myladie erskins docther is depereted this lyf but grows fat her self, your Iames/ Hew and Henrie is in good helthe thanks to god and I trust shall be men/ to serue you and etter mertinmess I expect yee will pray for me that I may/ bring fureth this child and liue to deserue your innumerable kyndeneses/ but houseower ye shall neuer show fauour to anie that boeth in lyf and death/ shall trewlier rest yours most faithfulie affectionat euerie waye

Anna C. Eglintoun

Paper turned around again and a final post script: 'my ladie my good mother remembers her louing/ dewtie vtnto you and to your housband

5. GD3/5/115. 27 June, 1615. The Earl of Eglinton to his wife Anna, Countess of Eglinton

My suteiteste hert I haue reseuitt zouer/ kynd letter qhilk hes bred me grett content/ioyed to understand of zouer goud helthe and/ weillfair qhilk I sall euer vise [whish?] from my hert/ to continuou, I am sertin and sour [sure] that ze heue/ reseuitt a letter of myn tou or thrie days/ befoir I reseuitt this of zouers; I hop/ my sueitt [heart] ze sall neuer haue iust ressoune/ to challenge me vpon unkyndnes for I sall euer be/ and euer hess bein redded to testifie my wncchang=able affection wnto zou, for I protest I haue no/ contentment in this world, but that qhilk h/ haue of zouer self; and that I haue coum of zou/ sue assuring zou that I sall hest my retour bak/ to zou so soum as I can, ze sall caeus reseue zou/ acayutie from the beirrer, and ze sall ask and sie/ at my lady our mother agen qhat tyne scho vill/ haue hir boutter prouidditt to, till zou aduertiss=ioyed I rest, and remainis euer.

Zours
6. GD3/5/1430 Isabella Setoun, Countess of Perth, to her sister Anna, Countess of Eglinton,
(Fraser dates as 1617).

‘to my werie honourable louing/sister the Countes of Eglintoun’.

Deir sister the beirer heirof being w<\>in a/ tua o.3. myles to me he being at branksithe/ with his schieff did me the fafour to coum/heir and sie me the whilk I did accep as/ no small point of keyndnes done to me/ knouing him to be your housbands mand and/ the grittier was I contenit be his weiseit [visit]/ that I might haue the occatique to wrytt thin/ few wnformall lynes to yow tho I haue no/ greit sougett [subject] worthie the trubling yow with / at this tyme Lourance at his heir being w<\> me shew me that whilk obefor I knew as l/ wrett to yow by my ladie our mothers aduer/ tisement zett becas it was my ladies will/ that I should keip it quyet to my self I/ did mak my self to seim to him that did/ not heire of it befor bot he schew me that/his Ma\tie> hade wretin donne for my broth/er If it be so I preay good [sic] it be for good/ to yow bothe as I hope itsalbe If I had/ knone that it wald not haue beine offfence if/ to my lord your housband that I hade wretin/ a letter to his Lo self Iould not haue/ bein so long seylent bot I dout not bot/ his lo will haue me excousid that I do not/ wrytt till I hir fre your La If my lynes/ may be acceptable to his Lo or not and till/ your neixt advertisement deir sister I will onli intret yow to present my/ louing deutie to my lord your housband and I sall preay to god for a happie/ returne to his Lo againe and I beseik yoy deir sister think not long till/ his Lo returne againe and be not forzetfull of my seruit to yow in my/ former letter that I wret to yow w<\> my man donalde marten. I rest your most louing sister/ to serue yow/ ISetoun

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**Lady Katherine Hamilton** was the daughter of William Douglas-Hamilton, first earl of Selkirk and Lady Anne Hamilton, third duchess of Hamilton in her own right. Lady Katherine married John Murray, earl of Tullibardine and later first duke of Atholl in May 1683. He was the son of John, first marquis of Atholl and Lady Amelia Anne Sophia Stanley. They were a Highland noble family and were Episcopalians while the Hamiltons, one of the most powerful magnate families in Scotland, were a lowland family and strictly Presbyterian. Lord John converted to Presbyterianism to marry Lady Katherine. She was a devout wife and mother but was also hugely involved in her husband’s career and politics. She ran the estate, managed business and involved herself in church affairs in his absence and was a trusted confidant and advisor. She died on 11 January 1707 at age 44.

This letter concerns the devaluing of English money and what is most interesting is that in the absence of the Earl of Tullibardine the Chancellor of Scotland sends someone to Lady Tullibardine to have her relate her husband’s opinion. However she was not asking her husband about what she should say but reporting on her response.

you will have in ye jurnels of counsell what pased there, but raily I think it is a shame to hear how oft our mony is cryed up & down but however it is better yn to have all ye clied English mony to pass curant here as was like to have carried the counsell day before; the Ch; sent for Bolery [name] yesterday morning & bid him come doun to me to know what I thought woud be yr opinion in ye making the clied mony curant here, I told him very plainly I was confident you woud be against it & I wondred how rationall parsons coud be for it, for since it was discharged in England there was no doubt they woud turne all there base mony doun upon us & take away ours wch passes for more than it does here

2. Blair MS 29.I.(9).452 November 25th 1697, Margaret Countess of Panmure to her sister Katherine Countess of Tullibardine.

Lady Panmure is referring to the Scots bid to fund and plant a trading colony on the Isthmus of Panama, the Darien Scheme. The failure of this venture played a part in anti English feeling prior to Union although the loss of vast sums of money added to the poverty of Scotland an aspect which made Union desirable for many.

there has been two or three meetings of the African Comppany I think all scotts folks should stand up for it and certainlie if they did the english would not be so well able to obstruct it but it seems some thinks a burd in hand is worth two flying, there are many have not yet payed in ye first part of ye mony for ye most part it is people that is in the government that has not payed, however I hope it shall yet doe well in spight of some folks hearts


Lady Katherine vents her anger at how a fellow politician has dealt with her husband and also includes her concerns on the state of Scotland, and more especially the poor and disbanded officers, during the late 1690’s when famine ravaged the country.

Ld Argyll has now the sole management of our worthy Chan: [Chancellor, the earl of Marchmont]wch last I am told says he will ventur his neck and fortune to humble my Ld T…I am perswaved what ever the K;[King] may doe he cannot but be convinced the E of Marchmont has delt most ungratefully wt my Lord, for his Maste;ie knows how many good offices he has don
him I must owne I think the greatest tack upon my Lord Tullibardine of all ye actions of his life
is yt he had so great a hand in putting so unworthy a man as E: Marchmont in the station he is
in...the condition of this poor nation is most lamentable the crys of ye poor being dayly
increasing, & the prices of ye corns rising wch was never known this time of ye year before but
in all aparence we shall have a doun right famine for there has ben great rain & winds so yt
much of ye corns are shaked & the rest rotting so yt we have a very sad prospect, & in all this
session of P: there is nothing don for the poor who are swarming up & doun, my Ld made draw
an act in their favours & sent it to ye commissioner but he woud not hear of it & I must tell yt
Lap: ye two years Poll’ yt is imposed was pretended in P: to be for ye payments of ye disbanded
officers but they have now disposed of it other ways so yt they are not get one grote of it & many
of them are starving...

4. Blair MS 45.(1).60 December 28th 1699 Susan, Lady Yester from Edinburgh to her sister
Katherine Countess of Tullibardine

This letter opens with discussion on muslin and things she is sending including book and one
called ‘the Queens closet’ cookery and surgery book printed about 1655 but then continues with
news of Darien and the reaction of the English.

you will er now have heard that the news is confirmed [is confirmed added above the line] of
Jameson, with the other ships having repossed Calladonie I hope in God they shall not easilie be
put out of it againe and its not doubted but the rising sun is there by this time, I had a letter by
Sundays post from my brother Basil dated from Northallerton on Fryday morning he wrts that
what we are doing here makes a great noise in England and that they were expecting no les than
a visit from us he mett accidently wt some parlament men who appeared to be our friends and
said they thought we had a very hard measure I long to hear what reception my Brother gets
which I think we may now quikly know, I am glade the adress went so well in Perthshire I wish
our countrey folks behave as well I have not yet heard how it goes in the west but I hear the
ministers in Glasgow is preaching very fast against it I must say the godly Kirk has acted their
part well at this time...

5. Blair MS 45.(2).114 April 23rd 1702 Katherine, Countess of Tullibardine to earl of
Tullibardine. The need for a by-election locally and his audience with Queen Anne.

King William had died in March 1702 so Tullibardine had gone to London as had many other
Scots nobles.
you’ll hear before this yt Grinouck [Greenock] is dead so there will be a new election for
Stirlingshire wch I doubt will not goe the better yt you are not at home I cannot bring my selfe
to believe what I find you doe yt any English are serious for an union wth Scotland on any
honourable or good terms for us, I’m really very hard of faith in it nor can I see throu it, I pray

18
God Almighty to doe for us & guide any yt are to be concerned in it for I think it a very weighty matter...I am much obliged to her Matie who was pleased to remember me & yt she received you so gratiously, but we long to hear yt you are like to take off ye impresions our country men had been so busy to make, & yt your like to doe some good...

6. Blair MS 45.(2).131 May 12th 1702 Margaret Countess of Panmure to her sister Katherine Countess of Tullibardine.

Exchange of news in an effort to work out what will be happening in regard to the Scottish Parliament.

I give you many thanks for your news, I hear lrd Queensberrie is causing lay in his provisions for ye parliamant and amongst ye rest is 5 tunn of French wine (and owns it to be so) this I fear is no sign the ye parlement is to be so soon dissolved yet I am glad yr lord has so good hopes I wish it may continue tho I think the D of Queensberrie being talked of to be sole secretary looks not well. You say nothing of when yr Lord or ye rest of our friends were to come from London but I think it must be soon now, seing the time of ye parlement approaches.... and pray remember your own maxim that those that are in ye right are often ye fewest in number but after all I am afraid things will not run so near as that so few a number could make any balance, however a little time will sho how matters will goe...

7. Blair MS 45.(2).154 July 30th 1702 Anne, Duchess of Hamilton to her daughter Katherine Countess of Tullibardine.

Elections were called for 1702 which galvanised party politics in Scotland in an unprecedented manner. The women of the Hamilton family were particularly involved and Duchess Anne used her daughters to exert pressure on their brother the fourth Duke of Hamilton to lead the opposition to Union. His conduct was notoriously unreliable and his mother despaired of his behaviour both personal and political.

there is a meeting of the shire to be here on Sunday next and I have written to my son Hamilton to be here as it is where he will have the opportunitie to speak to several about the questions which there is great pains taking by several influenced by the court party to be for such as will be for them which I hope shall not be hear but whether yr brother will come here or not at this time I know not, I wrote to him that I hoped his wife would not be against his coming on so good an account and if she pleased to come with him should be very welcome...

8. Blair MS 45.(2).181 September 13th 1702 Katherine Countess of Tullibardine to Earl of Tullibardine in Edinburgh heading off south, she writes from Huntingtower, Perth.

God of his infinit mercy goe alongst with you & derect all yr ways & return you in safety soon, it's he alone yt can give success & make even good designs to prosper, wich I trust you have &
yt you'll doe as you wrote to me before you went last up [to London] yt you woud putt a
difference between men and things, & tho I know some has not caried as they ought eather
ingratude or even for their owne interst, yt you know its our saviours precept & example to
doe good for evil even in things yt but concerns man & you know there is a deeper concerne
here even the glory of god & ye good of his Church & this poor land...

9. Blair MS 45.(2).193 September 23rd 1702 Katherine Countess of Tullibardine to William
Marshall, Baillie at Falkland.

Lady Katherine wrote this letter to a local official in Falkland, a town within their estates. She
and her husband wanted his brother Lord James Murray to be the elected representative of this
town or another in their jurisdiction, Perth. As Tullibardine was in Edinburgh Lady Katherine
managed the attempt to have Lord James elected. Although unsuccessful this letter highlights her
authority and ability. She also sent a copy of this to a local noble and relative, the Earl of Rothes.
I have ground to beleive yt there is some design to have a commissioner to represent Falkland in
this new Parlement, I cannot but think if you know of it, you would have aquainted my son
Murray or me in my Lords absence for I doubt not but you'll think it both for the countrys interst
& raisonable yt he have the recommending of the parson to be commissioner, I desier you'll
make the utmost tryall in this matter & if there be such a designe lett the trusteyes of yr number in
yt toun yt you know is my lords friend to come here tomorrow without delay yt my son may talk
with him who would have wrot to you himselfe also but yt he was obligd to goe to Perth about
some business if there shoud be such a design on foot, & yt there is no time for one of yr
number to come here let Ld James Murray be the man chosen, I expect yr greatest diligence &
activity in this affair wch I know my lord is so much concerned in yt you can doe nothing more
accontable to him nor obligding to yr assured friend ...

10. Blair MS 45.(2).195 September 24th/25th 1702 Katherine Countess of Tullibardine to
Earl of Tullibardine.

The elections of 1702 again and this is regarding the matter of Lord James representing the town
of Perth. Intrigue here as some townspeople want a representative with no 'Athol inclinations.'
Katherine engaged with this issue and sent various letters to people reminding them of their
promises of support etc she also finds out that two local men, Baillies Robertson and Fleming are
to blame for having 'let Lord James down when pretending to support him.'

its neither possible nor fitt to tell you particulars here but in short you are most treacherously
betrayed by those you trusted, yt man you told me was so wilie is so indeed and beyond belief
base but I must restrain my pen not knowing how this will come to your hands but I wish you
could know all we doe,.its hoped the elections in this shire will goe very well, what will come of
the branch of Perth I know not they are in a ferment just now but its hoped whoever they elect
will be for yr interest

Sept 25th "this far was wrote yesterday morning how vexed and troublesome a time I have had
this eight day about your bro: Ja (James) affair I shall not now say but tell you I was loath to give
it over & therefore under pretence of seeing nephew basil I went in to Perth where I sent for George Austin who brought you the message having sent for him several times...I began to argue the point with him & desired to know if those employed him would not stand to what they had said, for you must know dean of Guild Robertson [council leader] told me & has endeavoured to spread it and make it believed as much as he can yt the highland party & ye presbeterions are joined together ... & has taken his cunning ways to incinuate yt he was the man most acceptable to you & with all to stir up the whole town against it any but one of their owne number its impossible to tell you the hundred part of the falsehood of yt man he is a most dangerous companion & I suppose is in a nother intrest yn the toun or countrys eather, indeed he has been a good secretary as to the design of yr bro for we cannot find yt any but he & B Fleming has known of ye mater, this last has not been so disingenuous as he but has not don his part, far from it we know a great daill wch we must not seem to know or take notice off it at this time & now its our business to have our designess come as little abroad as possible, so if you heare of it its best to seem to be indifferent yt since you hope one will get it yt will be as good a county man as yr brother its all to you...

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Further Reading – Italy


Further Reading- Scotland


-- 'Women as informants in the reconstruction of geographically and socioculturally conditioned language variation and change in the 16th and 17th century Scots', Scottish Language. 20 (2001): 20-46.


ODNB: Hamilton references


ODNB: Eglinton/Livingstone references.


