

—— Ingmar Söhrman, »The Official Letter. Remarks on Style and Editing. Count Hernán Núñez' Letters to the Spanish Dowager Queen, Mariana de Austria«

—— A B S T R A C T ———

Epistolary writing consists of contemporary testimonies of political and cultural events and linguistic usages and it is vital to have access to good editions. There are two main groups of epistolary writing: informal and official letters. This article focuses on the characteristics of an official letter from the late 17th century.

There are three basic prerequisites for any kind of written communication: *Purpose*, *Style* and *Distinctive character*. The main purpose is to transmit a message that will be read by several people who might be unknown to the sender and the letter is often filed in archives. The style of an official letter is often very elaborate and even if the purpose and style are basic when analyzing texts every written message has its own distinctive character that could be seen as stylistic but not always so like in the case of diplomatic letters where some parts of the text can be codified.

All these characteristics are dealt with in this article, which is based on letters that the Spanish ambassador to Sweden in 1671 wrote to the Dowager Queen of Spain.

—— Ingmar Söhrman is Professor of Romance languages, especially Spanish, Dept. of Languages and Literatures, University of Gothenburg.

—— Keywords: editing, Spanish, official letter, diplomatic letter, epistolary writing, codified, style, orthographic.

—— <http://lir.gu.se/LIRJ>

■—Ingmar Söhrman—■

■—THE OFFICIAL LETTER. REMARKS ON STYLE
AND EDITING. Count Hernán Núñez' Letters
to the Spanish Dowager Queen, Mariana de
Austria—■

■—Historical letters are of the utmost importance for our understanding of times and language varieties long gone, since epistolary writing consists of contemporary testimonies of political and cultural events and linguistic usages that we can now only study from a perspective coetaneous to us. This means that it is vital to historians, philologists and researchers who deal with literature and culture (among other subjects) to have access to good editions of old letters of different kinds that can illustrate how a certain era was perceived by its contemporaries and use this to get a better and more coherent idea of a historical event.

However, there are many different genres of letters¹, and the purpose of this article is not to present them all, but to identify the characteristics of the genre of official letters and especially formal diplomatic letters² as well as problems connected with the editing of this kind of epistolary writing, and I will therefore start with the question of defining what an official letter is – and at the same time focus on problems connected to the reading and editing of them.

Letters have until modern times always been handwritten (if they were not intended to be some kind of periodical which was a popular genre for spreading cultural news in the 18th century, especially in France³), which made reading them more complicated even at the time of first receiving the letter, although the writing in itself is often careful and clear, but not always. Furthermore, the condition of the letter today obviously affects our ability to understand and interpret the text correctly, and the letter has sometimes deteriorated significantly which makes reading and editing more complicated. Normally, only the original letter exists and no copies (and there never were any), so the one text is our only source, and this might be fundamental or at least very relevant to our understanding of specific historical events. This article is based on the letters that the Spanish ambassador in Sweden 1671, Count Francisco Hernán Núñez, wrote to the Dowager Queen of Spain Mariana de Austria and to some high-ranking official at her court. In the case of Hernán Núñez'

correspondence we are fortunate that this has been very well preserved and only rarely have a missing letter at the end of a line where the edge of the page has been destroyed. The letters⁴ are kept in the National Archives in Simancas (*Archivo General de Simancas*⁵). Sometimes there are ink spots due to corrections made by the writer. However there is one entire year missing (1672) of Hernán Núñez' correspondence, and why that is so is impossible to ascertain now. Unfortunately, this is not unusual for old collections of letters. The letters might have been misplaced or destroyed for some reason or by mistake. If there is no documentation on the subject the editor simply has to accept the situation.

On a very superficial level we can find two main groups of epistolary writing: informal (often private) letters⁶ and more formal official letters. Until the end of the Middle Ages epistolary writing was mostly formalized in terms of style and content, but it seems that the formalized structure became less significant and the role of the content grew more important as new epistolary manuals were published in the 16th and 17th centuries.⁷ As early as the year 1600 Battista Guarini⁸ tried to analyze epistolary writing by dividing it in two stylistic (*family [carte famigliare]* and *high style [carte elevate]*) and three thematic groups of which the first general group (*all themes*) applies to family letters and the two latter groups to high style letters (*unofficial [carte ufficiose]*⁹ that deal with social affairs (thus formal but not official), and things of interest [*carte negoziose*], which is what I would call an official letter). Whether or not the differences between them are scientifically or culturally relevant is not within the scope of this article. Its purpose is merely to point out what is specific for an *official* letter, and especially what is typical for diplomatic correspondence and the special kind of information that is given in this type of letters. A number of important questions arise: what are the consequences of these characteristics when it comes to style and language, what does this mean for the modern editing of these particular epistolary writings and to what extent can they be generalized? In this article only the formal diplomatic writings (and therefore possibly other official ones) are of interest, – and, furthermore, particularly in 17th century Spanish. The genre of epistolary writing is in itself a very specialized one.¹⁰

The difference between the formal, official and informal perspectives might seem trivial today when everything is published on Facebook and other social media and private life has become public in an unpredicted way. However, this is a very recent phenomenon, when stylistic differences seem to mean less, but this remains to be studied.

For many millennia letters have been the main way of communicating with somebody and whom it was not possible or

convenient to address directly, and the difference between these two genres – the formal and the informal – was considerable, if not enormous, depending on the writer's relationship to the receiver in a society that was much more segregated in terms of social classes than it is today.

First of all we must identify what the characteristics of an *official letter* are, and there seem to be three basic prerequisites for any kind of correspondence or written communication: *purpose*, *style* and *distinctive character*. Language can be seen as subordinated to style since the use of certain words or expressions is linked to stylistic considerations and in terms of the choice of a certain language, this is due to communicative traditions. Thus we can see that the Swedes wrote in Latin or French to Hernán Núñez with the exception of Carl Tungal, a Swedish diplomat, who actually wrote in Spanish.¹¹ At this time Latin, French and German were the most commonly used languages for international communication, although Italian and Spanish were not unknown to many high-ranking officials.¹²

The obvious purpose of any letter is, of course, communicative. According to Roman Jakobson's classical model of communication, which »refers to the process of transmission and reception of information (a message) between a source and a receiver«¹³ where Jakobson also points out the complications of interpreting the message *per se* and how the media (letter, telephone, conversation etc.) used for the transmission can complicate or blur the original message.¹⁴ In many cases the receiver is the only person who will ever read the letter, but this is not the case for official letters, and here we find one of the main characteristics of this genre. It will most likely be read by several people or at least be available for many, should they choose to read it.

The style depends on many things such as social writing rules,¹⁵ the personality of the sender and the relationship between the sender and the receiver. Ultimately, the distinctive character depends on this relationship and on the sender's linguistic and intellectual capacity and sometimes on specific external circumstances like political reality. These things could be discussed on a more general level, but here I will limit myself to what these three basic characteristics mean when it comes to defining and describing what an official letter is and how these could and should be interpreted.

Therefore, I will discuss these characteristics one by one and then give examples and show the consequences when we study official letters from early modern times. But first I will give some background information about political relations between Spain and Sweden in the 17th century, and about Hernán Núñez and the Dowager Queen of Spain. As I have already pointed out this article is based on letters that the Spanish ambassador to Sweden in 1671–1674, Count Francisco Hernán Núñez, wrote to

the Dowager Queen of Spain Mariana de Austria. Since the protagonists in the letters of the corpus could be considered to be largely unknown to most readers I will start by discussing these circumstances briefly. This background information only serves to give a context to the corpus on which I have based my discussion on the characteristics of the official letter as a genre in time and space, but it is easier to exemplify the argument if the reader has an idea of the corpus.

— HISTORICAL BACKGROUND —

Sweden and Spain were in similar political situations at the beginning of the 1670's. There were two under-aged young kings and their mothers, who were supposed to rule until their sons came of age but who for different reasons both had handed over political power to others. Nevertheless, they were, of course, all involved in the intrigues of the two courts.

King Philip IV had died in 1665 and his sickly son was the last of the Spanish Hapsburgs, Charles II.¹⁶ In Sweden Queen Christina had abdicated in 1654, and had been succeeded by her cousin Charles X Gustavus, a successful Swedish-German general and the first Pfalz king of Sweden, but he died in 1660. His son, the future Charles XI, was only four then and had just met his father for the very first (and only) time when Charles Gustavus died.¹⁷

The formal regents of the two countries were thus the Dowager Queens (Hedvig Eleonora of Holstein-Gottorp in Sweden and Mariana de Austria in Spain) but they had both ceded their power to favorites of questionable political standing, Count Magnus Gabriel de la Gardie in Sweden, brother-in-law to the late king Charles X Gustavus, and, in Spain Father Nithard, who was succeeded by the Marquis of Aitona and later by Fernando Valenzuela. The wills of the deceased kings had not been followed since there were other interests involved.

The history of these events is intriguing but this is not the place for further discussions on the matter. This background justifies the study of these particular letters and their future editing.

— WHO IS WHO? —

In order to study and possibly publish an official letter from ancient times or to refer to it as a historical source there are some basic questions that have to be asked, and they will serve us as we study the purpose, style and distinctive character of specific official letters, as is the case here. It is always evident that a historical document cannot be studied without a thorough knowledge of its socio-historical and linguistic context, although this is not always respected.

First of all we need to know what the relationship between the sender and the receiver was, – in this case we have an ambassador and the head of state that he represents, the queen of Spain. Then there is the question of their relationship. Was it merely formal, – or was it also friendly (or hostile) in some way? And, of course, was there a difference between the official and unofficial relationship between them? And finally, were there intermediaries (favorable or not to the protagonists)?

In order to find out more about the relationship between the protagonists of the correspondence we also need to know more about them as persons and as representatives of certain social roles. Obviously, it is easier to get an idea of the Queen's personality as she has been subject to several studies, being a person of reasonable historical importance in Spain. Our attention has to be directed toward the less well-known protagonist of our example – the sender. Was he just a military officer appointed as a diplomat, or does he have a more versatile personality? His name was Francisco de los Ríos, third Count of Fernán Núñez, which he modernized to Hernán Núñez (1644–1721).¹⁸

He first came to Sweden in 1670–1674 and then came back twenty years later, in 1694. There is no indication that he had any closer relationship to the Queen, so we have to suppose that it was a normal and formal.

Hernán Núñez was a renowned military officer, and he was also an interesting man of culture who wrote a book that contains his ideas of the world and in which he tried to enlighten his fellow countrymen on many important subjects. The book *El hombre práctico Ó Discursos varios Sobre su conocimiento, y enseñanza*, («The Practical Man or Talks on his Knowledge and Teaching»), was first published in 1680 and republished almost a hundred years later.¹⁹

As an example of the often dramatic style that Hernán Núñez used his lines on the importance of knowing history is enlightening:

— The study of history is one of the most useful and entertaining occupations that a prince or situated man can undertake [...] It is sufficient to read the general histories of each province, selecting the very best ones [...] in order not to commit such ridiculous mistakes as he who in a sermon said that Saint Augustine was born to oppose the deceitful Luther, knowing that many centuries separate them; and not to talk about Hannibal in America or Cortés in Africa... (Chapter XIII, my translation)

These things add to the understanding of the main protagonist of the official letters in question. Then there other people involved, such as the counselor Diego de la Torre etc., and

they must be identified and commented on in the editing but not in this article. My intention here is simply to show the necessity of taking the sender and receiver into careful consideration before interpreting or editing a letter, official or otherwise.

—PURPOSE AND CONSEQUENCES—

As we have seen the main purpose of an official letter is to transmit a message that will probably be read by several people. The receivers (readers) are not necessarily known to the sender, but they may be, and the writer is well aware of the fact that people other than the official receiver may read the letter, and he or she obviously has to take precautions and not write anything that could be used to his or her own disadvantage while still transmitting a clear message that will serve its purpose in the hands of the readers.

In the case of Hernán Núñez' letters it is clear that there are several contemporary readers since an introductory note or résumé of the content written (or at least signed) by high-ranking officials is attached to the letters. The letter is also filed, and after the date and the Count's name, somebody has in most cases also written the date of arrival underneath. If this is not done there this date is found on the cover. Thus we find headings like this:

— Stocolm. 3 dex.^{re} 1670
El Conde de Hernannuñez
Reçiuída en 19 de hen.^o 1670

— Stockholm, Dec. 3rd 1670
Count Hernán Núñez
Received on Jan. 19th 1670 [written by someone who is not the writer of the letter]

Two minor remarks are of course the spelling of *Stockholm* which varies in the letters and the added H to *enero* («January»). Since the H had already become mute in Latin the orthography, based on tradition, was not stable neither in Late Latin or Spanish, and sometimes the H was used in front of initial vowels that should not have an H.

The aim of the message is usually a request (or complaint) or information that the writer is obliged to send or possibly sends spontaneously in order to gain an advantage in the eyes of the reader. When it comes to diplomatic correspondence the sender (in this case the ambassador) is obliged to transmit all information that he considers of interest to his employer (i.e. the Queen).

The official letter will then be filed in archives (and remain there for posterity), and this is obviously one of the reasons for

indicating the date of arrival on it. This filing means, of course, that its content will or may be interpreted by people with unknown values and unknown purposes at unknown times, but what is important to the sender is that he or she and contemporary readers can refer to the actual letter and its content and that they do not have to rely upon the memory of the participants in a discussion or at a meeting. A letter therefore gives more credibility to a testimony of how things appeared to be at a specific moment in time than to memories recorded much later. They reflect the perception, but not necessarily an objective idea, of an event – (Official) letters as a literary genre, epistolary novels²⁰ are not taken into account here (cf. the presumed »official letters« in Montesquieu's²¹ *Lettres persanes* (1721) and José Cadalso's²² *Cartas de Marruecos* (1789) although the latter took the visit of the Moroccan ambassador Sidi Hamet al Ghazzali to Spain in 1766 as a starting-point for his novel, and informal letters such as we find in Henry Fielding's *Shamela* (1741)).

We could thus establish three main consequences of an official diplomatic letter as soon as it is sent to any kind of authority:

- Its content will be interpreted and used, and sometimes lead to political actions or measures. These might not be what the sender intended, but he or she will always have to remember that different political ideologies or personal motives can lead to contradictory interpretations and very different conclusions that might be deliberate or spontaneous.
- The content of the letter will be evaluated, as will the sender in relation to the use and effects of the message – and, possibly, it seems to be of a certain importance if its content coincides with the ideas or preoccupations of the intended reader.
- Finally, the sender must be aware of the strong possibility that the letter will reach the intended receiver with oral or written comments and interpretations made by others as is the case here.

In this particular case we are dealing with letters sent by an ambassador to the head of state of his own country, by whom he is employed (the Queen) and to members of the Queen's council (government), and there are therefore two ways of communication if we go back to Jakobson's model. In the following diagram we can see the first way which represents the theoretical and direct communication with the intended receiver, and below this, the real route through different hands on its way from the sender to the final receiver:

A diplomatic message's route from sender to receiver:

In this specific case there are also letters intended for one of the counselors, mostly Diego de la Torre, and the purpose is often somewhat different. They often deal with more practical matters like subsidies to the Swedish government, bribes to anti-French Swedish senators or the ambassador's wish to go back to his military career. These letters are mostly intended to gain support for his comments in the letters to the Queen and also for more personal matters but the tone still remains on an official level, never touching upon feelings or personal shortcomings, which means that there are different steps in the »officiality« depending on the formal and personal distance and the relationship between the sender and the receiver.

It is evident that the contemporary geopolitical reality influences, and must influence, not only the message itself but also the selection of themes and comments on the ongoing diplomatic (as is the case here²³) or political game that is being played. Thus, due to contemporary political events, war with France, etc. the Count Hernán Núñez is very much concerned with how he can outmaneuver French interests at the Swedish court in order to gain advantages for Spain or for the German emperor, who belonged to the same royal house as the Spanish king and whose cause was a main concern of the Spanish court, especially since the young king was physically weak and the question of his succession would obscure his reign and actually ended in a war (the War of the Spanish Succession) after his death in 1700.

— S T Y L E —

An official letter is often very elaborate as already stated by Guarini,²⁴ although it has to be borne in mind that writing even an informal letter at this time and earlier on took time and consideration, and that all letters required the writer to write in a much more conscious way than the writing of e-mails and text messages in our times. Considering the purpose of the letter and its immediate consequences the style of the letter was fundamental as it gives the letter the right (or wrong) impression of what the sender intended. In this case the ambassador is the Queen's representative and all initiatives taken must be based on her (and the official Spain's) interests as the count saw it. He is also much concerned with the interests of the German king and Roman Emperor.²⁵ In fact, Queen Mariana

was the Emperor Ferdinand III's daughter and also the Spanish king Philip IV's niece and later wife, so the links between the two realms were very close.

An official letter on this socio-political level had to contain a certain decorum and adequate prudence, which means that there were formal and compulsory considerations that had to be taken into account.

Greetings are always formalized and never personal. The writer must use a high degree of formality with the continuous use of the titles, not only referring to the receiver, but also to other persons like the Emperor or the various Swedish nobles and functionaries. This use is strictly adhered to and letters both to the Spanish Queen and to other nobles at the Spanish courts are full of *Su Magestad* (»Your/Her Majesty«), *en sus manos reales* (»into her royal hands«) etc.²⁶ However, in keeping with the contemporary use the letters always start with *Señora* (»[My] lady/Mistress«) without any pronoun when referring to the Queen but *Señor mio* (»My lord/Mister«) with the pronoun when referring to one of the nobles. A modern reader might find this strange, but these »simple« greetings were the formal greetings to sovereigns at this time. The reason for this is that originally the title *señor* or *señora* meant that a person with this title did not owe allegiance to anybody but God, and the title was thus equal to that of a king or a queen.

The tone is always kept very respectful. The writer concerns himself with the receiver's good health and these concerns are always present at the beginning of the letters: *deseo que la salud de V.d. (= usted) se continúe* (»I wish that your health continue [well]«). The formal pronoun *usted* »you« (not *tú* »thou«) is used except when writing to the Queen who is always *Su Magestad* (»Your Majesty«), spelt with a G instead of a J as it is spelt nowadays, but this was the customary orthography then.

The language is reasonably standardized although there was no Royal Academy or established linguistic norm at the time. The use of abbreviations is strikingly common, but rather formalized and consistent, and this is a usage that was frequent ever since the Middle Ages in Spanish and other European orthographies.²⁷ It seems to have spread after the introduction of word separation, which did not exist in earlier Latin texts as all the graphemes were written in a row without any separation such as can be seen in many monuments; cf. *Hospesquoddeicopaullumest*.²⁸ When the words could be read separately abbreviations could be used without complicating the understanding of the text.²⁹ Thus *que* (»which; to«) is almost always just *q*, and the adverbial suffix *-mente* is often reduced to the superscript characters *-te* such as in *Juntam^{te}* (= *junta-mente*) (»together with«) and »Her Majesty« and »Your Majesty« are *Su M^d* or *V.Mag.^d* (= *Su Magestad* and *Vuestra Magestad*).³⁰

Similar norms and writing formats were of course practiced

in other countries and languages, but even if they varied from language to language there were always sociolinguistic rules to follow in a formal letter of this kind.

—DISTINCTIVE CHARACTER—

Although purpose and style are basic when analyzing texts, every written message has its own distinctive character that could often be seen as a stylistic feature but this is not always the case, and I therefore suggest the following features as typical distinctive characters for official and especially diplomatic letters:

The content consists of general subjects that concern certain relationships, which are not always official but which are important for the interpretation of what is taking place on the »surface« in the diplomatic game. These have to be considered as being relevant for the receiver and/or could be answers to questions that had been asked in previous letters to the sender.

- A restricted number and themes of personal issues are referred to, such as the work or survival of the writer (arrival of the salary and subsidies for the embassy etc.) or his future fate and career, but nothing that goes outside this official sphere of an employee, however prestigious his position was as is the case here. Otherwise the themes are political in some sense or relate to a citizen from the ambassador's country – or relate to someone of the same religion or faith that initiates some kind of relationship or/and responsibility.
- The official letter is often written by a secretary, but sometimes by the sender himself. This can be hard to deduce if there are no other letters by the same hand that can be attributed to a certain person without doubt.
- Diplomatic letters are sometimes codified, although it is sometimes hard to understand why certain things are considered classified and others are not. This is a feature that with few exceptions is only found in diplomatic (and military) messages, but it usually catches the reader's eye and interest.

These very general observations have been exemplified by letters in Spanish, and of course, different cultures can have formal discrepancies but as a whole it seems reasonable to think that these rules are fairly similar in terms of purpose, style and distinctive character, at least in European official correspondence.

After these general comments let us now take a more detailed look at the letters written by Hernán Núñez and what problems arise when editing these texts.

 EDITORIAL PROBLEMS

When it comes to editing letters there are some necessary and sometimes difficult questions to be asked and resolved. Letters and legal documents only appear in their original versions. At least, this is mostly the case, and there is thus no need to trace older versions and establish a stemma like in many literary, religious and legal texts and in most chronicles. In the case of a letter there is, of course, only the original, and we can read it and edit it if possible. I have discussed problems of conservation and readability earlier. Thus there is no need to see if there are textual differences or added paragraphs in different copies like those found in literary documents and chronicles. So we end up dealing with one single version and if this is incomplete or hard to read there is no hope that we might find another version to compare with the version we have. This gives us confidence but it also has its disadvantages. The text is in the state it is in and we have to cope with it in its present form, although there may be references to lost parts of the text that could help us to get an idea of what else could have been included in the letter. Sometimes these lost pieces turn up unexpectedly, but that is very rare.

After these very general remarks I will examine some problems that have to be dealt with when publishing an old letter, and that illustrate the editing and the consequences of this. An editor must regard general contextual questions like situating the writer in time and space and also identifying the receiver. This is mostly easier to do in an official letter than in a private one, and in the example discussed here that has not been a problem, but in the text itself there are often references to things or persons that are not documented elsewhere or are unknown today, and then the research almost turns into a detective story, which is very stimulating and gives an enormous amount of satisfaction if and when the research leads to new knowledge.

In a couple of letters Hernán Núñez is concerned with people in precarious situations like a Dutch painter whose family may be forced to convert to Lutheranism should the painter himself die in Sweden. There is also a case of a German Catholic priest who has been caught preaching and trying to convert Swedes to Catholicism and who has been taken into custody.³¹ There are other cases that might be more difficult to follow, and it is not always easy to identify these persons of minor importance from contemporary documents, i.e. it is often difficult, not to say impossible, to find out who these people were and what they had done or intended, but the researcher must try to do this since it adds value to the editing and gives us new knowledge about the historical reality at the time.

Furthermore, there are mere orthographical traditions and innovations, which I have commented on earlier. The very

structure of the page is designed so that comments and deciphering can be written on the same page. As Paluzie y Cantalozella writes: »Para el Rey ó la Reina se ponen en pliego entero de papel dejándoles un buen márgen y sin rubricar« (»For the King or the Queen you use an entire sheet and leave a good margin and /do not /use section titles«).³²

As is often the case in handwritten texts ever since the Middle Ages there are abbreviations used for greetings such as *S^{ra}* = *Señora*, »My lady« or *S^r mio* »My Lord«. Majuscules can sometimes be extremely elaborate symbols and they can often be difficult to decipher. An example of this is found at the beginning of example 1, below, where the letter *S* takes a highly elaborate form at the very beginning of the letter.

Orthographic variation is also a complication, since the writer sometimes shortens the words using conventional habits but does not do so consequently. Thus, we may sometimes find references to a Spanish nobleman called *Monterrey* abbreviated to *M^{te} Rey*.³³ This is a fairly simple example, but these abbreviations can sometimes be more difficult to interpret, especially if the full name is not written anywhere. The months can also be written in different abbreviated ways such as »October« – *octubre* in modern Spanish which is sometimes written *occt.^{re}* with two c's or *8.^{re}*, referring to the Latin word for »eight« *octo* which is reduced to a number in the text, but the Latin meaning is »the eighth month«.

Then, of course, there might be orthographic mistakes or misinterpretations when there are foreign names and words in the texts. In the letters we find *Stockholm*, modern Spanish *Estocolmo*, written as *Stocolmo*, *Stokolmo*, *Estocolm*, *Stocolm* and in a comment by somebody else in one of the letters *Stolcham*.

In modern German and also in Swedish texts from the 19th century we find majuscules used in nouns. In Spanish it was the tradition since the Middle Ages to write *M* as in *Mar* (»sea«), but it became more and more frequent – but not consistently so – to use other majuscules which were mainly used in nouns. There are also orthographic traditions such as the *schwa*-sign (◊), which is used to separate thousands from hundreds in numbers as can be seen in example 2 below.

There are often many orthographic fusions, often just a hiatus (vowel meeting) like in *desta* = *de esta* (»from/of this«). It is always a preposition + a determiner. They are even more frequent in fusions without a hiatus, *alos* = *a los* (»to them« (masc. plural)), *alas* = *a las* (»to them« (fem. plural)), which could be mistaken for *alas* (»wings«) etc. These fusions are also very frequent in examples such as *porladilacion* = *por la dilacion* (»by the dilation«), *delagente* = *de la gente* (»from/of the people«) and *quesitubiere* = *que si tubiere* (modern *tuviere*) (»as if /s/he had«).³⁴

There are many words that have fallen into oblivion or changed semantically which means that an editor must identify these words and explain them to a modern reader, but this is hopefully an expected problem that concerns all older texts.

In an official letter, there is one more feature that can complicate the reading, and that is the existence of codified sections. Sometimes the editor is lucky and there is a »translation« of the codified sections as is the case in example 1. What is sometimes difficult to understand is why certain messages are codified and others are not. The importance of secrecy is obviously different from what a modern editor or reader would think, and we can only speculate as to why that is so.

— CONCLUSION —

We can thus conclude that an official letter such as those from Hernán Núñez will have certain – mostly orthographic and stylistic – characteristics besides being linguistically elaborate and using a formal style that was obviously well established at the time being since there are no deviations from these »rules« in our corpus. In addition to these characteristics there is also the use of certain features such as codified sections that presumably make them different. In terms of their purpose we also find obvious concerns for specific political topics of interest to the employer, as well as social references to the addressees and other superiors involved, such as the Queen in this particular case. The letters must also have been intended for reference later on as they were filed in archives and reread by unknown readers in times to come, and, of course, they may also have political consequences, but these are assumptions that will be taken into account in the editing of the text.

Some remarks show sociological differences between cultures, and the writer's lack of cultural knowledge and »false« interpretations could then lead very far and be most entertaining for a modern reader, but these remarks give a good idea of how social and political events were viewed by contemporary eyes, although the information sometimes may have been interpreted erroneously. ■

■ ENDNOTES

1 Susan Whyman, *The Pen and the People. English Letter Writers 1660–1800*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press (2009).

2 Cf. Creutz, Gustaf Philip, 1731–1785, *La Suède & les lumières. lettres de France d'un ambassadeur à son roi, 1771–1783*/Comte de Creutz: correspondance établie, présentée et anotée par Marianne Molander Beyer, Paris: Mische de Maule (2005), which is a study similar to mine although it deals with France a hundred years later.

3 Cf. the introduction to Grimm, Friederich Melchior von, *La correspondance littéraire 1^e janvier – 15 juin 1761*; texte établi et annoté par Ulla Kölving, *Studia Romanica Upsalien-sia*, 22, Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1978.

4 *Estado, Legajo 4024–4026 antiguo*.

5 <http://www.mcu.es/archivos/MC/AGS/index.html>

6 Stina Hansson, *Svensk brevskrivning. Teori och tillämpning*, Göteborg: Litteraturvetenskapliga institutionen, Göteborgs universitet (1988).

7 Pedro Martín Baños, *El arte epistolar en el Renacimiento europea 1400–1600*. Bilbao: Universidad de Deusto (2005), 607–616.

8 *Il segretario*, Venice (1600).

9 It might seem strange that *ufficioso* means »unofficial«, but this is the case.

10 Molander Beyer's edition of the Swedish ambassador Creutz' correspondence in late 18th century discusses problems connected with this genre very similar to ours. See note 2 for bibliographic information. Molander Beyer gives a brief idea of her editing principles on p. 29, but all her comments on the conditions and contemporary realities as well as linguistic remarks are given in the notes to the edition.

11 His few letters are kept among Hernán Núñez letters in Simancas.

12 It was not unusual that learned people spoke and even wrote Spanish at this time. Cf. Ingmar Söhrman, *Sverige och de romanska kulturerna*, Uppsala Multiethnic Papers 18, Uppsala (1989), 36–38.

13 David Crystal, *Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*, 4th ed., Oxford: Blackwells, 72.

14 »Linguistics and Poetics« in Thomas A. Sebeok (ed.), *Style In Language*, Cambridge, Mass 1960, 350–377.

15 Estéban Paluzie y Cantalozella, *Arte epistolar con el título de Guía del artesano*, Barcelona (1858).

16 F.L. Carsten (ed.) *The New Cambridge Modern History*, vol. V, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1961), 380–383; Antoni Simón Tarrés, »El reinado de Carlos II: el gobierno de la monarquía« in Victor Álvarez (ed), *Historia de España. La España de los Austrias I. Auge y decadencia del Imperio*

español (siglos XVI–XVII), Madrid: Biblioteca El Mundo (2004), 539–592.

17 Göran Rystad, *Karl XI. En biografi*, Lund: Historiska Media (2001), 19–20. In Sweden Finnish was also an important language since Finland was part of the Swedish realm and Charles XI was supposed to study this language as well. Cf. Carsten (note 14), 526–542.

18 The initial Latin F turned into H in Spanish in the 15th to 17th centuries. Cf. *hierro* < *fierro* < Lat. *ferrum*.

19 Lately it has been reedited again in Córdoba: Publicaciones Obra Social y Cultural Cajasur (2000).

20 Cf. Anna Rueda, *Cartas sin lacrar : la novela epistolar y la España ilustrada 1789–1840*, Madrid: Iberoamericana/ Frankfurt am Main: Verweurt (2001).

21 Charles Louis de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu, 1689–1755.

22 Spanish writer and officer, 1741–1782.

23 In the letters Hernán Núñez is trying to outmaneuver the French ambassador all the time as he is seen as the enemy.

24 *Op.cit.*

25 Henceforth referred to as *the Emperor* as it was one person with two different crowns.

26 In Spanish the third person (*usted*) is used to mark politeness, not the second as in English (*you*) or French (*vous*), and thus the possessive pronoun is *su* (*sus* in plural) = her.

27 Sánchez-Prieto Borja, *Cómo editar los textos medievales. Criterios para su presentación gráfica*. Madrid: Arco/ libros (1998), 71–103.

28 = *Hospes quod deico paullum est* («Stranger, my speech is short»), a famous epitaph on Claudia's grave. In many Latin inscriptions the words were separated by a point but not with a space, which gives a better overview of the text for the human eye.

29 Tom Finbow, «Iberian Latin goes Spanish: Towards a Psychophilology of Iberian Late Latin», seminar given at the University of Gothenburg on December 13 (2011).

30 Luis Escribano e Iglesias, *Teoría e Historia de la Escritura y Nociones de Paleografía*, Valladolid: Maxtor (2009 [1915]), 175–183.

31 Cf. the first point in the earlier section on «religious sympathy».

32 Estéban Paluzie y Cantalozella, *Arte epistolar con el título de Guía del artesano*, Barcelona (1858), 97.

33 Cf. note 17 on the work of Luis Escribano e Iglesias.

34 Sánchez-Prieto Borja, *Cómo editar los textos medievales. Criterios para su presentación gráfica*. Madrid: Arco/ libros (1998), 99.