

## ON CERTAIN LINGUISTIC ASPECTS OF LETTER WRITING OF THE NEW PERIOD

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### INTRODUCTION

Collections of letters of writers and artists form part of the corpus of letter writing. As an important part of a writer's legacy, letters are often included in complete collections of his or her works. The letter writing is also called epistolary literature (1,204). Although the letter writing genre is considered secondary, it contributes to the examination of the writer's legacy.

Letter writing as a literary form was used in Armenian literature as early as the 5th century. M. Khorenatsi included many paper-letters in his "Armenian History". We know of the existence of G. Parpetsi's "Paper", N. Shnorhali's "Papers" and so on. The literary letters of the New Period present an interesting linguistic panorama.

At first glance, it may seem that the authors touch on personal issues in the letters, sometimes so minute and insignificant that a higher calling is ruled out. It should be noted, however, that some of the letters deal with practical issues related to the literary and cultural interests of the authors. The letters are written in different states of mind, sometimes very hastily. For example, Siamanto's letters are postcards comprising a few lines that give information about the poet's thoughts and plans for that day, often for that hour.

Our goal is to apply an interdisciplinary approach to unlock the inner contents of the letters of the New Period, to examine the structure and linguistic bases of the letters by Armenian writers and intellectuals, to identify the essential features of the genre.

With all this, it should be noted that the letters have a significant cognitive value, which is much greater than it may seem at first glance.

## THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL BASES

It is well known that especially in late XIX and early XX centuries, the news section entitled "Letters" presented various literary and social issues of contemporary interest and occupied a unique place on the pages of the Armenian press. For example, Raffi's famous letter series from Persia was published in the very first issues of "Mshak" newspaper. Raffi's contribution to the development of modern literary Armenian language is well known. Literary scholar A. Terteryan compares him with the best actresses of the Armenian stage, in whose performance the musicality and sometimes also the roar of the Armenian language could be heard (2,177). Noteworthy is Aghayan's and Raffi's remark that it is "Mshak" that paved the way for language development. Gh. Aghayan, referring to the substantive basis of Raffi's letter series, retorts that "we will imbibe from Grabar or Old Armenian whatever is drinkable, we will eat whatever can be eaten and digested, but we will neither eat nor drink its indigestible elements" (3,83). In effect, the writer's letter series served as a platform for the development and discussion of vital and political issues.

Correspondence of writers is of great importance for the history of the Armenian literature and culture. In the letters, the authors touch on various issues determined by the field of activity, the degree of intimacy and the range of interests of each of them (such are the letters of A. Tsaturian, Nar-Dos, but also Z. Yesayan, Hamastegh, other Western Armenian writers and others). These letters reveal the author's state of mind and mood. For example, the letters of Western Armenian writers (Siamanto, G. Zohrap, R. Sevak) in the first years were hopeful and joyful, while the letters on the eve of the war expressed the forebodings of the impending tragedy.

What are the linguistic building blocks of letters? The author of the letter, as a linguistic individual, presents various life situations, personal opinions and feelings. It should be noted that the structural choice of sentences in the texts of letters depends primarily on the style of the authors. The letters bear the personal stamp of the author. Letter writers are free from compulsory grammatical norms and are distinguished by their creative possibilities as well as individual stylistic aspects.

Nevertheless, there are certain semantic-structural features that characterize this literary type.

Letters essentially have two dimensions: elements of both

monologue and dialogue are present. Monologue-based passages are characteristic of letters of the New Period. Often the authors themselves categorize the given part, for example "Did you understand the point of this monologue?" (8, 28)<sup>1</sup>: In a number of letters, strands of dialogue representing the "interlocuter" can be discerned, for example, "You write again that "Nor Dar" is asleep, that conservatives are like this, like that, etc. These are the kind of issues for the proper coverage of which I need many newspapers" (8, 163).

The form of address, the first and second person uses of pronouns and verbs, the distinctive tone characteristic of the author's speech are clearly emphasized in the strands found in letter writing (4,104-105).The proper nouns used in the original texts of letters deserve a closer examination. Letters contain not only personal names, but also city, street names and addresses (5,29). The days of the week are often presented. "On *Friday*, when I was with him, he still had not received anything from you" (8, 30). "This will be decided by *Monday*" (8, 46). "I can't come tomorrow (*Wednesday*)" (8, 65) and so on.

In his letters addressed to M. Barkhudaryan, writer A. Tsaturyan uses a number of place names from the Transcaucasus: *Caucasus, Tiflis, Caspian Sea*, as well as names of Russian cities, such as *Moscow, Petersburg, Petrograd, Yekaterinodar, Kislovodsk*, etc.

The stylistics of the letter writing genre is interesting. As linguist O. Babayan notes, publicist books and letters mostly contain metaphors and comparisons, because while having public speech elements, they emulate more closely the stylistics found in fiction (6,112).Aristotle highly prized the skillful use of metaphors. He noted that this is a sign of true talent, because "to find natural metaphors is to be able to notice the similarity of objects in nature" (7,202).We read in one of the above-mentioned letters of A. Tsaturyan that "The contrast between Nar-Dos and Muratsan is the scale of the Alps. Whereas Nar-Dos is a modest boy, Muratsan is as haughty as the Assyrian Bel (8, 27). People are often compared to animals. "I am running after them like a cat" or "I got dog tired" (8, 21-26), etc.

The corpus of letters writing attributed to the New Period makes a frequent use of certain words and word combinations, i.e., *to receive, to be*

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<sup>1</sup>The examples are sourced from "Literary Heritage", Volume A., (Yerevan, 1940).

*late, to write, to greet, to speak, letter, response, dear, address, hand, from the bottom of one's heart, etc.*

Letters tend to make a frequent use of combinations with the word "god" as a constituent component, e.g., *thank God, to thank God for..., may it be God's will, may God be with them, for God's sake, God knows best, etc. Somatic phrases are actively used, e.g., to fall into the hands of someone, to give in, to lay one's hand on something, sweet eye, to keep an eye on something, to turn a blind eye or deaf ear, to lend an ear, words from the heart, my lips are sealed, to bang one's head against a brick wall, to have all to oneself.* Other phrases include: *to tie up the loose ends, none the wiser, to cut it short, a black cat crossed me path (in literal translation "a dog barked at my luck"), caught like a rat in a trap, to throw to the wind, pen pusher, to rule out, to burn incense, sister of charity, deprived of both church and liturgy, on a rocky road, to pass like smoke, literary patriarch, etc.*

Proverbs and idiomatic expressions have a wide currency in various strands of letter writers' thoughts, e.g. "you cannot tell a book by its cover"(in literal translation, "A snake is beautiful on the outside, a person is beautiful on the inside."), "a wolf in sheep's clothing", "out of the frying pan into the fire", "no amount of polishing will ever turn a shard of glass into a diamond", "to overstay one's welcome", "Plato is dear to me, but dearer still is truth", "there is safety in numbers", "money cannot buy happiness", "you can't master your future if you're a slave to your past" (in literal translation, "the carriage of the past will not take you far in life"). Other idiomatic expressions include "to search with Diogenes' lantern"<sup>2</sup>, as deaf and mute as Zechariah<sup>3</sup> and so on.

Questions are frequently employed in letters, e.g. "How's your family?" "Do you also remember my prophecy?" "Is Hovhannes in Nor Nakhichevan or Etchmiadzin?" "How was your journey?" (8, 38, 10, 25).

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<sup>2</sup>The famous Greek philosopher Diogenes of Sinope, known as the old man who lived in a barrel, on one occasion came out of the barrel, took his old lantern and, after lighting it, walked the streets of Athens with it in broad daylight. When he was asked why he was walking around with a lit up lantern during the day, Diogenes replied that he was looking for a man. In other words, with the lantern, he was not looking for a specific person, but for people with human qualities that are so rare in society. Hence, the phrase "to search with Diogenes' lantern" means searching for the truth and the real essence.

<sup>3</sup>The idiomatic phrase is related to the episode of the birth of John the Baptist, i.e., a man who knows the truth but pretends to be deaf, as the story about Zechariah goes (according to the Gospel of Luke).

In sentences with mixed intonation (interrogative and exclamatory), the addressive role of the *vocative* is often emphasized. "And do you remember, Yuri, you were so desperate at the beginning of the summer?" (8, 38).

In a number of letters, interrogative sentences occur in a succession. "There is complete desolation around me. Who is left here? Who should I go to? Who should I spend time with? With whom shall I sit down for a meal? Who should I talk to so that he understands me?" (8, 27).

Letter writers sometimes briefly present the *landscape* of the place where they live. "Kislovodsk is a very poetic place. Pity that rains should spoil everything." Layers of *portraiture* are also found in various letters. "He was tall, thin, black-haired and a very good man" (8, 36, 44).

Some letters contain descriptions of different people, books and journals. "*Anahit*" can perfectly supply both the much-needed enlightenment and nourishment to Armenian public both thanks to your efforts and especially thanks to the literary splendor and intellectual fertility of its birthplace" (8, 45).

We often come across letters that are so heartfelt that they even pique the interest of a stranger. Such are the letters of famous people to their children. Classic examples of letters are Charlie Chaplin's letter to his daughter Geraldine, Jack London's letter to his daughter Joan, A. Isahakyan's letter to his son Vigen, H. Tumanyan's letters addressed to his children, etc.

An open letter is one of the types of letters. It has its addressee or audience, but it is presented publicly because the author raises fundamental questions. An open letter is of publicist nature and employs accessible vocabulary. It has to be noted that statements with a capacity for generating public resonance are given precedence. "I have received your letters, both the open and closed ones" (8, 60).

In fact, as is common in the studies of letter writing, there may also be so-called fake letters (pseudo-letters). A. Pushkin's poetic concept, the writer's monologues were reflected in the letters sent to his intimate interlocutor A. Smirnova, which were published after the latter's death. They were published by the author's daughter, O. Smirnova. However, a few years later, it was revealed that some of the letters were forged. In such cases, letter writers are faced with certain constraining factors.

Selected letters of Arshil Gorky, one of the greatest painters of XX

century, were first published in a special issue of "Ararat" magazine (Boston, 1971). It is believed that some of the letters contain subsequent additions and the originals of several notes are missing. There is also a hypothesis that these were not simply missing or that there were some reasons for their absence, but that these were composed by the artist's nephew K. Mouradian. On one occasion, the latter stated that the letters in his possession contain unfavorable comments about some people, and he did not want the letters to be presented to the public (8,6).

The corpus of literary correspondence attributed to the New Period in terms of its space and time distance includes:

a) facts and current news, b) biographical fragments from the lives of writers and artists, c) opinions on literary-linguistic issues. All this is presented in a unique linguistic and stylistic form.

## **STUDY METHODS**

A number of linguistic methods were used in the study to address the identified substantive issues: structural, descriptive, stylistic.

Using the structural method, we examined the possible types of relationships between the linguistic elements of the original texts of letters. Using the descriptive method, we studied the elements of the language system of letter writing. A strictly linguistic analysis of the letters as texts was carried out using the stylistic method. The relations between the form and content of the text, the style of the letter writer, etc. were studied.

## **CONCLUSION**

As a result of our analysis of the topic, we drew the following conclusions:

1. Letters of writers are important for the history of literature and culture of a given nation. The letters touched upon issues, which, albeit of private nature, convey the concerns of the public at the time, they convey to the reader the author's state of mind and mood.

2. Letters are two-fold in their structure. They have both dialogue and monologue layers. In letters there is usually no effort or exertion, no gestures.

3. The stylistics of letter writing, while containing elements of public

speaking, has significant distinctive linguistic and expressive features (contrast of personal pronouns *I* and *you*, abundance of metaphors, idioms, etc.).

4. We classify part of the corpus of the literary letters as literary nonfiction because they contain accurate images of reality.

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**Ключевые слова и словосочетания:** письмо, основы языка, лексика, словосочетание, пословица, поговорка, крылатая фраза, метафора, открытое письмо, фальшивое письмо.

**Галстян А. В. - О некоторых лингвистических аспектах письма нового времени.** - В древности общение между людьми осуществлялось посредством голубей. Почтовый голубь служил человечеству сотни лет. Голуби использовались в качестве средства связи со времен Древней Греции. С их помощью доносились имена победителей Олимпийских игр. Люди всегда испытывали потребность передавать известия своему родственнику, другу, находящимся далеко. Письма имели откровенный и свободный характер.

Художественные письма интересны по своему содержанию и структуре. Данный литературный вид использовался в армянской литературе еще в V веке.

Литературная переписка нового периода включает в себя множество вопросов, затрагивающих писателей и художников, что определяется сферой деятельности, кругом интересов и степенью близости писателей. Содержательной основой писем представляли собой различные жизненные ситуации авторов письма, личные размышления, авторское настроение и т.п. Структурный выбор составляющих текст предложений, точное и уместное употребление словосочетаний зависит прежде всего от стиля авторов. Авторы писем свободны от обязательных грамматических норм и отличаются своими творческими возможностями и индивидуально-стилистическими особенностями.

Язык письма другой. Используются различные цепочки слов: названия городов, религиозные словосочетания, словосочетания, крылатые фразы и т. д. Часто указываются конкретные дни недели. В письмах присутствуют элементы монолога и диалога, проявления вопрошания, их чередующиеся течения.

В некоторых частях письма используются характеризующие слова. Кратко представлены литературный портрет и пейзаж.

В письмах используются разговорные слова и фразы.

Литературные письма бывают разных видов: письма писателей, письма известных людей детям, открытые письма, фальшивые письма и т. д.

**Հիմնաբառեր:** Նամականի, լեզվական հիմքեր, բառապաշար, դարձվածք, առած-ասացվածք, թևավոր խոսք, փոխաբերություն, բաց նամակ, կեղծ նամակ:

**Ա. Վ. Գալստյան – Նոր շրջանի նամականու լեզվաբանական առանձնահատկությունների մասին:** Հին ժամանակներում մարդկանց միջև հաղորդակցությունն իրականացվել է աղավնիների միջոցով: Փոստային աղավնին հարյուրավոր տարիներ ծառայել է մարդկությանը: Աղավնիներին որպես կապի միջոց օգտագործել են դեռևս Հին Հունաստանում: Նրանց օգնությամբ տեղ էին հասցնում օլիմպիական խաղերում հաղթողների անունները: Մարդիկ միշտ էլ կարիք են զգացել լուր հաղորդելու հեռվում գտնվող իրենց բարե-



կամին, հարազատին, ընկերոջը: Նամակները գրվել են անկեղծ և անկաշկանդ:

Իրենց բովանդակությամբ և կառուցվածքով հետաքրիր են գրական նամակները: Հայ գրականության մեջ գրական այս տեսակն օգտագործվել է դեռևս 5-րդ դարում:

Նոր շրջանի գրական նամականին ներառում է գրողներին և արվեստագետներին հուզող տարբեր խնդիրներ, որոնք պայմանավորված են նամակագիրների գործունեության ոլորտով, հետաքրքրությունների շրջանակով և մտերմության աստիճանով: Նամականու բովանդակային հիմքերը ներկայացնում են նամակագիրների կյանքի տարբեր իրավիճակներ, անձնական մտորումներ, հեղինակների տրամադրություն և այլն: Տեքստերի կազմիչ նախադասությունների կառուցվածքային ընտրությունը, բառամիավորների դիպուկ և տեղին գործածությունը նախևառաջ կախված են հեղինակների ոճից: Նամակագիրներն ազատ են քերականական պարտադիր նորմերից և առանձնանում են իրենց ստեղծագործական հնարավորություններով և անհատական-ոճական կողմերով:

Տարաբնույթ է նամականու լեզուն: Գործածական են տարբեր բառաշղթաներ՝ քաղաքների անուններ, կրոնաժխական բառամիավորներ, դարձվածքներ, թևավոր խոսքեր և այլն: Հաճախ ներկայացվում են շաբաթվա կոնկրետ օրերը: Նամակներում առկա են մենախոսության և երկխոսության տարրեր, հարցականության դրսևորումներ, դրանց փոխհաջորդման հոսքեր:

Նամականու որոշ հատվածներում բնութագրական խոսք է կիրառվում: Մեղմ ներկայացվում են գրական դիմանկար և բնանկար:

Նամակների մեջ գործածվում են խոսակցական բառեր և արտահայտություններ:

Գրական նամականին առանձնանում է տեսակներով՝ գրողների նամակներ, նշանավոր մարդկանց նամակներ՝ ուղղված զավակներին, բաց նամակներ, կեղծ նամակներ և այլն: