

UDC 80

FEMALE EPISTOLARY DISCOURSE: PRAGMALINGUISTIC AND GENDER APPROACHES

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Summary. The article investigates the pragmatic peculiarities of the female epistolary discourse, of love letters in particular. The analysis of the emotive concept “love” conducted by the author makes it possible to interpret the female perception of men, to whom they feel or might feel affection, to describe the women’s stereotypes of the males. The article also gives details on the female addressers choice of linguistic means for the verbalising of the concept “love”. This concept coexists in the chosen type of discourse with fear and hope, female self-esteem and psychological strength. A female turns out to be not just a “fair sex” representative full of emotions, not just the one whose actions are induced by feelings, but an official, administrative figure capable of taking vital decisions and deprived of any fear to resolve dilemmas.

Keywords: concept; addresser; addressee; epithet; metaphor; simile; hyperbole.

Asking the questions What do women seek in love? What linguistic means for persuasion of the object of their affection do they use we launched our present investigation in search for the peculiarities the female love letters and “love style” correspondence have. Having analysed the love correspondence in the framework of U. Doyles book “Love Letters of Great Men and Women” we came to know that women are desperate to have emotional stability and deep belief that the feelings from their men would be eternal: “I tremble for what we are doing. Are you sure you will love me for ever? Shall we never repent? I fear, and I hope. I foresee all that will happen on this occasion. I shall incense my family to the highest degree. The generality of the world will blame my conduct, and the relations and friends will invent a thousand stories of me” [6, p. 188]. Thus love coexists with the fear and hope. This hope is present even in the case women know that they would be cast off by the family and friends. A woman is not afraid to be gossiped and ridiculed about as long as she is the only one involved in the scandal. But when it comes to the family being involved, she hesitates about the faithfulness of the beloved one as being chastised both by the society and the close family is a thing that’s hard for her to bear. It wouldn’t be an exaggeration to say that love in this case exists not for the sake of the loving couple

being happy together and leading life full of joys and deprived of sorrows but against all the impediments. The latter make the emotion stronger: “I will be only yours, and I will do what you please” [6, p. 188]. So, on the female conceptual level “love” is inseparable with the concepts “family”, “dignity”, “self-denial”, “hope” and “fear”.

Love in the heart of a woman is shared with the feelings to a man, to the country and her family as the unit that brought her up. Longing for having them three altogether in her life a woman addresser suffers from the days that are too long and nights that are sleepless. The time lingers to pass making the woman understand that it is a feeling to a man, his presence by her side in particular, that makes the world evolve, makes it move: “The great distance between us, makes the time appear very long for me. It seems already a month since you left me. The great anxiety I feel for my Country, for you and for our family renders the day tedious, and the night unpleasant. The Rocks and quick Sands appear upon every Side” [1, p. 195]. A female is not just a “fair sex” representative full of emotions, not just the one whose actions are induced by feelings, she is an official, administrative figure capable of taking vital decisions and deprived of any fear to resolve dilemmas. The only fear she submits to is the one that is provoked by the lack of trust towards her beloved. In all other

affairs she is brave, tolerant and wise. Women of the past are even able to declare the rights for vote and for equality with men: "I long to hear that you have declared an independency – and by the way in the new Code of Laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make I desire you would Remember the Ladies, and be more generous and favourable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the Husbands" [1, p. 199]. Such a disclosing of males nature gives ground for further liberalisation and freedom the women will have in all coming centuries. Women look for love interlaced with the feeling of protection and trust: "Regard us then as Beings placed by providence under your protection and in imitation of the Supreme Being make use of that power only for our happiness" [1, p. 199].

The women tend to become independent in the choice of a man, the latter is to take a female as a gift from heaven, not as a burden with whom a dowry might come. We even can state that the females self-consciousness develops into such independent forms that a woman feels free to discuss the matters of her family's contribution to her future husbands matters and, what's more surprising, feels free to make him understand that in the case of his being unable to follow her family's will he can never again trouble himself with the visits to her house. A woman is polite in correspondence, her style and communicative intentions are absolutely clear, her style is simple but precise: "And I want you to understand clearly that my father refuses to part with any more money than one hundred [pounds] and fifty marks in this business, which is far from fulfilling your wishes. For which reason, if you could be content with that amount and my poor person, I would be the happiest maid on earth" [7, p. 159–160].

Women expect delicacy from men in the matters of love and marriage: "When you talk of love you offer an insult you are insensible of – your friendship confers honour; but your love – retain it for some worthy fair, born to the high honour of becoming your wife, and repine not that fate has placed my lot – in humble life" [9, p. 210]. The females are seeking for intriguing ways of being made revelations about men's feelings to, anything

direct and impudent is taken by them as an insult or as humiliation, or even as an offence. Love for women means "being unreasonable" [10, p. 214] and intelligent, it is the phenomenon that is capable of self cure: "But I know, I feel that we shall love each other all our lives from our heart, from our intelligence, that we shall endeavour, by a sacred affection to cure ourselves mutually from the ills we have suffered for each other" [3, p. 248]. Women-addressers even admit that love can be the "proof of stupidity" or in some cases can get into "a milk-and-water affection" [10, p. 214]. According to them, love that brings a couple to the marriage makes the people feel and act in the same way, it makes them stronger and more united: "I began to think that there was something in the assertion of man and wife being one – for you seemed to pervade my whole frame, quickening the beat of my heart, and lending me the sympathetic tears you excited" [10, p. 216].

Love correspondence helps us not only understand what women look for in their men, what ideal of them they have, but also it gives us clear images of what females are ready and willing to be in the marriage, their self-identification is obvious in these examples: "I am going to be really a very meek-tempered Wife; indeed, I am begun to be meek-tempered already. My Aunt tells me, she could live for ever with me, without quarrelling – I am so reasonable and equal in my humour" [4, p. 243]. Women are desperate to be "warm and faithful friends" [8, p. 229], the objects to attract men's thoughts and affections: "But when you are alone, when you feel the need to pray and to shed tears, you will think of your George, of your true comrade, of your sick nurse, of your friend, of something better than that. For the sentiment which unites us is combined of so many things, that is can compare to none other" [3, p. 249].

The periphrases women resort to while addressing the men are "my friend", "my dear Sir", "my Valentine", "my dear angel", "my child", "the one whose behaviour and character excite women's warmest esteem and regard" [8, p. 228; 4, p. 243]. Women often refer to God in love correspondence. He is believed to send this feeling to them and giving vent to their love and other

positive emotions women suppose themselves to be acting in the face of Lord, thus they are utmost sincere and frank, they are free from any sly intentions, they are either for or against the relationships with men, but are definitely never in two minds, they are deprived of any hesitations: “I will frankly confess that your behaviour and what I have seen and heard of your character has excited my warmest esteem and regard, and be assured you shall never have cause to repent of any confidence you may think proper to place in me, and that it will always be my endeavour to deserve the good opinion which you have formed, although human weakness may in some instances cause me to fall short. In giving you these assurances I do not depend upon my own strength, but I look to Him who has been my unerring guide through life, and in whose continued protection and assistance I confidently trust” [8, p. 228].

What is of interest here, is that female love correspondence is rarely abundant in emotive means for verbalizing the concept of love: most frequently the epithets are used, then there are some occasional cases of metaphors, similes and hyperboles. For example: “we tow, you know have everything before us, and we shall do very great things – I have perfect faith in us – and so perfect is my love for you that I am, as it were, still, silent to my very soul. <...> I am fast shut up like a little lake in the embrace of some big mountains, you would see me down below, deep and shining – and quite fathomless, my dear” [5, p. 302–303]. Taking into account the emotional colouring of the sentences we should point out that about 64 per cent of the letters contain exclamatory ones. The noteworthy characteristic of the love epistolary discourse created by women is that they tend to introduce more complex and compound sentences that predominate over the extended simple ones: the women’s objective is not in the lexical intensification of the things said, but is in attracting greater attention to the train of their love and affection thoughts, as a result there is great number of detachments, rhetorical questions and

questions-in-the-narrative: “Do you know what I was thinking last night, when you asked me, and I couldn’t tell you? – Only that the way you’ve spent your emotional life, while I’ve hoarded mine, is what puts the great gulf between us, and sets us not only on opposite shores, but at hopelessly distant points of our respective shores ... Do you see what I mean?” [2, p. 281].

So, the analysis showed that women in love correspondence are not only picturing the ideal of a man they are eager to be with, but also ask themselves what they can give to the male and this question is always answered. The pragmatic objective of the women in the love epistolary discourse is to make the males understand that they can be friends worthy of trust, lovers capable of everlasting affection and faith, and finally the companions.

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