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The internationalization of our *Horizons* journal is not to be taken as the furthest accomplishment of our University publishing activity. Just as the scientific thought does not approve of limitations of exhaustive achievements, so is every newly registered success of the *Horizons* editions going to give rise to new “appetites” for further objectives to reach.

Last but not the least, we would like to express our sincere appreciation for the active part you all took in the process of designing, creating, final shaping and publishing the scientific journal. Finally, it is with your support that *Horizons* is on its way to attain its deserved, recognizable place where creative, innovative and intellectually autonomous scientific reflections and potentials will be granted affirmation, as well as an opportunity for a successful establishment in the global area of knowledge and science.

Sincerely,
Editorial Board

CONTENT

<i>Ljuben Tevdovski, PhD, Zoran Ilievski, PhD, French revolution, archaeology and their imprints in the contemporary French and European identity</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Marika Baseska Gorgieska, PhD, Blazo Zdravkov, MA, Implementation of marketing research methods for product sales forecast on the specific case study</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>Zoran Janevski, PhD, Shtefan Bojnec, PhD, Uros Godnov, PhD, Tatjana Petkovska Mirchevska, PhD, Biljana Angelova, PhD, Monika Angeloska Dichovska, PhD, Improvement of business competitiveness through developing G2B e-services in Slovenia and Macedonia</i>	<i>33</i>
<i>Mimoza Serafimova, PhD, Biljana Petrevska, PhD, Entrepreneurship and financing: the evidence of Macedonia</i>	<i>45</i>
<i>Emilija Mateska, MSc, Snezana Obednikovska, PhD, Consumerism and consumer protection in the Republic of Macedonia</i>	<i>57</i>
<i>Ajtene Avdullahi, PhD candidate, Obstacles to small and medium enterprises</i>	<i>67</i>
<i>Besim Mustafa, PhD candidate, The impact of non-formal education on employee performance in SME's in Kosovo</i>	<i>77</i>
<i>Elena Gjorevska, PhD candidate, Entrepreneurial perception of the ecosystem: spotlight on Republic of Macedonia</i>	<i>87</i>
<i>Viktorija Trajkov, PhD candidate, The role of advertising on the political campaigns in the Republic of Macedonia</i>	<i>109</i>
<i>Tina Satieva, PhD candidate, Event management in the context of integrated marketing communications</i>	<i>119</i>
<i>Vera Karadjova, PhD, Risk of off-balance sheet activities – measurement and management</i>	<i>129</i>
<i>Snezana Dichevska, PhD, Contemporary methods of measuring the credit risk in banking operations</i>	<i>139</i>
<i>Jagotka Strezovska PhD, Biljana Ivanovska, PhD, Viktorija Krstovska, The importance of the scientific research of the languages for special purposes</i>	<i>147</i>
<i>Jasminka Kocoska, PhD, The role of dramatization in acquiring life skills among students</i>	<i>157</i>
<i>Zoran Nikolovski, PhD, Language planning and language standardization</i>	<i>165</i>

<i>Jovanka Denkova, PhD, The epistolarity as a genre in the modern Macedonian literature for children (“Shareni pisma” – coloured letters by Violeta Tancheva-Zlateva)</i>	<i>177</i>
<i>Valentina Ilieva, PhD, Jovanka Denkova, PhD, Simona Monavcheva, MA, Kristina Ilieva, The importance of listening and comprehension skills in listening exercises in German language classes</i>	<i>187</i>
<i>Silvana Neshkovska, PhD, Discourse connective and and its Macedonian equivalents a and u.....</i>	<i>199</i>
<i>Violeta Janusheva, PhD, Substitution of international words with domestic words in the Macedonian standard language</i>	<i>209</i>
<i>Stela Bosilkovska, MCI, Daniela Andonovska Trajkovska, PhD, Sound alternation in connected speech</i>	<i>219</i>
<i>Valentina Nikolovska, MA, The influence of the assessment criteria on the students’ success</i>	<i>233</i>

THE EPISTOLARITY AS A GENRE IN THE MODERN MACEDONIAN LITERATURE FOR CHILDREN (“SHARENI PISMA” COLOURED LETTERS BY VIOLETA TANCHEVA-ZLATEVA)

Jovanka Denkova

Železnicka bb, Filološki fakultet, Univerzitet "Goce Delčev" Štip
jovanka.denkova@ugd.edu.mk

Abstract

This paper examines the issue of the epistolary genre in children's literature. First, an attempt is made to define the genre, then to point its characteristics that separate/differentiate it from other types of non-fictional prose (autobiographies, memoirs, diaries, etc.), which highlights the most important feature of the letter as a literary genre, which is its dialogical nature. This paper also presents the different classifications of this genre.

Key words: letters, literary genre, sender, recipient.

INTRODUCTION

From all types of non-fictional prose, none is less subjected to critical definition and categorization as it is the case with the letter. What distinguishes the epistolary genre from other realistic-autobiographical fiction, such as diaries, is the desire/demand for exchange. Thus, in the epistolary exchange the reader of the letter "is asked for" a response and thus contributes as a writer in this type of narration, which suggests the existence of some kind of "epistolary pact" between the sender and the recipient of the letter.¹

ATTEMPT TO DEFINE THE GENRE

According to the definition, the letter is a form of communication that expresses thoughts, feelings, describes a series of events or philosophical discussions. The most important characteristic of the letter as a literary or a semi-literary genre is its dialogical nature. Regardless whether the letter is of personal or business nature, whether it's formal or informal, it almost always requires a certain response from those to whom it is addressed.²

¹ Janet Gurkin Altman, *Epistolarity, Approaches to a Form*, Ohio State University Press: Columbus, 1982, p.89.

² Pismo kao književna vrsta, <http://www.scribd.com/doc/40240424/Pismo-kao-knji%C5%BEEvna-vrsta>, accessed on 01.03.2014

According to various on-line sources the epistolary form is the form of letters written/indicated to someone else, and "an epistolary novel" is a novel written in the form of a letter or series of letters written by one or more characters. Such form allows the author to omniscient viewpoint, but still to change the viewpoints among several characters throughout the narration.³ In the Dictionary of Literary Terms⁴, the term "epistolar" implies "a set of templates for letters and addressing which with small changes can be used on various occasions", and "epistolary novel" implies - "a novel in letters."

Several types of letters were distinguished in ancient literature. By studying the epistolary genre, Milorad Pavić notices *literary* and *non-literary form* and concludes that epistolography will gradually get its rightful place in literature as a real literary kind and will lose the status of unintentional/accidental literary activity, which is usually found in the Baroque era.⁵

According to Elizabeth Campbell, the epistolary novel is a novel written in the form of letters, exchange of letters between two or more correspondents, one or more letters sent by a correspondent to one or more recipients.⁶ Ruth Perry, however, expands this definition, indicating that the epistolary form requires the deeper truth that people keep locked deep down, in their subconscious.⁷

Accordingly, the epistolary novel relies on the subjective viewpoint⁸, in other words, it is a literary genre in which prevails intimate provenance.⁹ This means that it presents the intimate point of view of the character, his/her thoughts and feelings without the interference of the author and the course of events takes place with dramatic immediacy. Also, the presentation of events from several points of view, gives the story a dimension and capacity. Although the method is often used in sentimental novels, it is not limited to them. Shortcomings of this form were detected from the very beginning. Depending on the need of the author of the letter, whether he/she expresses his/her virtues through it, vice or weakness, these acknowledgements were subject to suspicion or derision.

The letter as a literary genre is found in the middle between the private and public discourse¹⁰, a high degree of individualization in the discourse is typical for it, the attention is directed towards the narration and description of personal feelings and psychological states. The epistolary communication situation consists of a sender and a recipient (except in the private communication). In the case of official letters, they are with stereotyped content and consist of dating, naming the recipient at the beginning of the letter, explaining the reason and occasion for writing the letter, and finally, the signature of the sender which explicitly expresses the degree of honesty, because it is written to trustworthy people who can recognize the potential frustrations and intimate dilemmas of the author.

CLASSIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GENRE

³ Literary terms and definitions, http://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/lit_terms_E.html, <http://epistolary.askdefine.com/>, accessed on 01.03.2014.

⁴ Rečnik književnih termina, Institut za književnost i umetnost, Nolit, Beograd, str.179.

⁵ Milorad Pavić, Istorija srpske književnosti i baroknog doba (XVII i XVIII vek), Nolit, Beograd, 1970.

⁶ Elizabeth Campbell, Re-visions, Re-reflections, Re-creations: Epistolarity in Novels by Contemporary Women, *Twentieth Century Literature* 41, 1995, p.332-348.

⁷ Ruth Perry, *Women, Letters, and the Novel*, New York, AMS, 1980.

⁸ Epistolary novel, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/190331/epistolary-novel>, accessed on 01.03.2014.

⁹ Magdalena Koh, Does it exist a 'generic pact'?: About intimistic genres in prose works of Serbian female writers at the beginning of 20th century. *Zbornik Matice srpske za književnost i jezik*, 51(3), 695-708, 2003.

¹⁰ The Letter as Literature,

<http://gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/courses/detail.FA2011.WRTNG-UG1326.001.html>, accessed on 01.03.2014

There are three types of epistolary novels: monological (letters of only one character), dialogical (letters of two characters) and polylogical (three or more characters who write letters). Crucial element in polylogical epistolary novels is the dramatic procedure known as "contrary to reason": the simultaneous but separate correspondence of the characters - villains that create dramatic tension.¹¹ According to other sources we distinguish: private letters (which talk about intimate situations and primary existence), open letters (the recipient is the audience in general, oriented towards the social, political or cultural space, and the subject expresses its viewpoints and theses) and appeals (with emotional origin, but addressed towards the public through the media and suggest feedback from the receiver).

Therefore, we need to try to define the nature of the epistolary literary genre more closely in terms of literary theory. Like any other text, the letter can be defined as a written linguistic message. In order to realize the message a sender and a recipient are necessary. According to Jakobson's terminology in order to complete the communication model context, code and contact (media) are also necessary. That linguistic scheme is not negligible, because it will be used in literary theory by structuralists, semioticians, advocates of the modern theory of discourse, speech act theory etc. Jakobson's model could confirm that the nature of the definition of the letter is autoreferentiality. The uniqueness of this literary genre is that it can be a whole by itself!

The more systematic and detailed reading of the letters, will reconfirm that they are not necessarily looking for an answer and recipient, but although the code does not necessarily simulate a recipient, the communication code still exists. The writer/author of the letter has in front of himself/herself a fictional interlocutor, recipient. The letter sometimes relies on an imaginary recipient – the reader. Accordingly, several common situations in letters are pointed out:

- the letter as a direct conversation, unburden by informative function
- the letter as a conversation with someone absent ("how to talk to you")
- the letter as a life-like presentation of the absent ("how I look at you")
- the letter as an expression of friendship
- the letter as a reflection of the social reality.¹²

Ruth Perry points out several characteristics of this genre. One is that the use of the procedure of exchange of letters as a framework (cadre) contributes for a dose of credibility of the work. Another feature that she suggests is that the moving power of correspondence is an obstruction which typically occurs between two enamored (lovers), i.e. the epistolary narration almost always functions according to one kind of formula: two or more people, separated by an obstruction of various kinds are forced to keep their relationship through letters. Furthermore, Perry emphasizes that the protagonists are prevented from acting directly and the only way to overcome the difficulties is by writing about them and hoping for a solution that will bring the separated together again. And finally, Perry also identifies the seduction as a common theme in the epistolary novel. She points out that the process of seduction refers to the psychological rather than the physical domain. Namely, she believes that seduction is considered as an attempt to change the opinion of the other, as an attempt to penetrate into his/her subconscious, to identify the beliefs, and to convert the original intentions. Also, Perry emphasizes that typically the epistolary novel ends with love or death, i.e. the final contact between the separated characters can be seen not only as a reward for those who have proven themselves in loyalty, search or other virtuous qualities, and unlike it, another possible ending of the epistolary novel is the death of one or more characters. These alternatives of rendezvous or death correspond with the paradigm of novel written in letters, especially if one of the characters stops writing

¹¹ Types of epistolary novels, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epistolary_novel, accessed on 01.03.2014

¹² Dubravka Brezjak-Stamać, Poslanice Marka Marulića benediktinki Katarini Obirtić, Kolo, br.1-2, Časopis Matice Hrvatske za književnost, umjetnost i kulturu, 2013, accessed on 01.03.2014 at <http://www.matica.hr/kolo/386/Poslanice%20Marka%20Maruli%C4%87a%20benediktinki%20Katarini%20Obirtić%20C4%87/>

letters and to resolve the separation in which the characters have spent their fictitious lives, trying to overcome the difficulties.¹³

According to the nature of adolescent literature, Wasserman¹⁴ points out that it is common for young people who are in the period of adolescence, to turn in conflict situations towards their inner world. On the journey to the world of adults, they often feel doubt and despair at the same time, mixed with a sense of hope. Therefore, Wasserman considers that their personal thoughts and words, as a form of expression, find their place very well in the construction of their identity in the literature for youth. One of the methods used by writers of literature for youth in order to cover all topics that adolescents face (physical changes, their sexuality, relationships with the parents and friends, philosophical way of thinking about themselves, the world and their place in it) is the epistolary form or the form of letter writing.

An important segment in the epistolary genre is the style of addressing, which has a purpose to express respect to the listener (the addressee) and to emphasize the mutual behavior of both sides, as well as the degree of closeness and levels of communication. The addressing consists of two elements: from whom and to whom. The introduction can be different: a simple and direct and to consist of only one sentence and it can be short and immediately goes to the point.¹⁵ It usually occurs in the case of overwhelming and tumultuous emotions, sudden feelings and major mental disturbances, such as anger, victory, defeat ...¹⁶

Janet Gurkin Altman¹⁷ in the book "Epistolarity" indicates six important aspects of the epistolary genre and along with analysis of specific texts, dedicates a whole chapter on each of them. The first aspect is the *intermedial nature* of the epistolary genre. Namely, the epistolary genre functions as a connector of two remote points, as a bridge between the sender and receiver of the letter, the author chooses whether to emphasize the distance or the bridge. The mediator role of the letter in the epistolary narration derives from its position. Namely, the letter is a phenomenon which stands halfway (either-or/neither-nor). As a means for communication between the sender and the recipient, the letter partly fills the abyss between the presence and absence; the two characters who "meet" through the letter, neither are totally separated, nor are totally united. The letter lies halfway between the ability for a complete communication and the risk of communication breakdown. The second aspect of the epistolary genre, according to Altman, is *the degree of trust between the sender and the recipient* and here it indicates more variants: confidential love letters, friendly letters etc. The third aspect is the reader, whose appearance is sufficient to differentiate the epistolary form of addressing from other forms of narration in the first person. Thus, it suggests the existence of *external* and *internal reader*. The term "internal reader" implies a specific character represented throughout the course of the narration, whose reading of the letters can affect their writing, and under "external reader" we mean, the overall audience that reads the work as a final product and has no impact on the writing of individual letters. The fourth aspect is the discourse in the epistolary genre, which differs from other types of discourse in three things: 1. the uniqueness of the I-you relationship; this stems from the dialogical nature of the epistolary genre, as well as from the fact that the pronouns I-you are reversible here, or more precisely, in the epistolary genre, "you" in the text (receiver), in the next becomes "I" (sender); 2. Present tense; as well as the author of the diary, also the author of the letter is "anchored" in the present from where he directs his gaze towards the past or future events; and 3. time polyvalence; the time aspect of any given statement in the epistolary form is relative from several aspects: the time of the event, the time when the event is recorded, the time when the letter was sent, received, read, re-read, etc. The fifth aspect

¹³ Ruth Perry, *Women, Letters, and the Novel*, New York, AMS, 1980.

¹⁴ Emily Wasserman, *The epistolary in young adult literature*, *The ALAN REVIEW*, The Assembly on Literature for Adolescents of NCTE (ALAN), 30.3, spring 2003, p.48-51
<http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/ALAN/v30n3/pdf/wasserman.pdf>, accessed on 02.03.2014

¹⁵ Nela Savković-Vukčević, *Retorika i stilistika u pismima i poslanicama crnogorskih vladika Danila, Save, Vasilija i Petra I Petrovića Njegoša*, *Lingua Montenegrina*, god. IV/2, br.8, Institut za crnogorski jezik i književnost, Podgorica, 2011, str.129.

¹⁶ Branislav Nušić, *Retorika*, Beograd, 1966, str.87.

¹⁷ Janet Gurkin Altman, *Epistolarity, Approaches to a Form*, Ohio State University Press: Columbus, 1982.

is *the dynamic in the ending of the letters*, and here Altman discusses the following relationship: inner writer - inner reader, as an important factor that affects the overall structure of the correspondence, which in turn becomes particularly evident in the dynamics in the ending of the letters. The ending of the letters can have two options: 1. Using conventional endings, and 2. The letter to end with an open form in which the writer is always in dialogue with the possible interlocutor. Ultimately, all epistolary narratives end with silence, but in some works, the silence is more motivated unlike in other works. As a very frequent reason for discontinuation of writing letters is death (tragic ending), but also other reasons that prevent the writer to write, and in the case of comic endings of the letters, the most common is the case when epistolary communication ends because the writer has no one to write to, after the correspondence ended with a marriage. Thus, the tragic and comic unraveling, suggest two polarized sides: full attendance (reunion) - complete absence (death).

The sixth aspect is what Altman calls "*an epistolary mosaic*" and that title implies more characteristics of the epistolary genre: 1. Multiple plots 2. Impaired timeline due to non-chronological sorting of letters, 3. Multiple correspondents, each giving an individual tone to the letter, and 4. Gaps/intervals that exist between letters and may contribute to the structure of the narration. These gaps have been called "dead time" by novelists and theorists.

THE EPISTOLARY NOVEL "SHARENI PISMA" (COLOURED LETTERS) BY VIOLETA TANCHEVA-ZLATEVA¹⁸

The novel "Shareni pisma" by Violeta Tancheva-Zlateva is an authentic Macedonian literary work for children. The characteristic that makes this work exceptional, at first consists in the epistolary form, in which thirty four letters by the nephew Stephan addressed to his great-grandmother in the village Borievo are being written. In this novel, there is only a sender who sends the letters and not a receiver or anyone who would answer them. In fact, the sender doesn't even wait for a response, therefore the communication is self-directed. Thus, it is an epistolary novel with monologue elements, having in mind that only the letters from one person are being represented.

Secondarily, this work is explicit because of the fact that the "author" of the letters is just a child, a baby starting from its youngest years to direct its abstract letters to its great-grandmother. These abstract letters include the daily experiences in Stephan's life, such as: the appearance of his first tooth, his crawling around the apartment, the steps with the play-pen, the first fall because of his unsecured tiny legs, the repulsiveness against the food, the first hair-cut in the barber shop along with the fear and his struggle not to burst in tears, watching his favorite cartoons (Tom and Jerry, Noddy etc.), his first days in the kindergarten, his first birthday, the acknowledgement of the world around him, around the building where they lived, observing people and their behavior and his ecological behavior towards nature. This novel reveals what it really means to actually enter and live up with the thought of one child from an adult's point of view, to make an attempt (successful, of course) to reveal the secret of what is actually happening in the "poor soul" of a helpless child who barely starts his unsecured steps in life.¹⁹ The child is an interested observer of the world around him, the behavior of the grown-ups and the relationships between them.

Though he is addressing the readers of the youngest ages, as Gorjan Petrevski suggests, it is just a camouflage. When one thinks better and analyzes deeper, it looks illusive, some illusion that wakes-up

¹⁸ Violeta Tancheva-Zlateva, *Shareni pisma*, Gjurgja, Skopje, 2008.

¹⁹ Gorjan Petrevski, "Sharenite pisma" by Violeta Tancheva-Zlateva, Afterwords for "Shareni pisma", Violeta Tancheva-Zlateva, *Shareni pisma*, Gjurgja, Skopje, 2008, page 101.

inside us, the readers, so that it speaks on an “unknown” language that not everyone can understand but everyone can feel.²⁰

Through the entire letter a pleasant family harmony can be felt, where the center of the universe is the little Stephan accompanied with his parents and his grandmother. The principle aim of writing these letters is to visit his great-grandmother in Borievo or convince her to come and visit them. That is the reason why in many letters Stephan says: “It is very important for me that you and grandma and grandpa come from Borievo. I am starting to forget you. When I lie down in my tiny bed, I oppress my eyes and I call you. But, you are running away from me and...” (27); “Can’t wait to see you” (28); “Why don’t you come and visit us? And stay for a few days? You’ll come visit and we’ll spend some time together. One encounter means a lifetime. That’s what grandma Cena says. And when I only think since how long we haven’t seen each other! A lifetime must be a big deal.” (32); And maybe that’s why he feels so attached to her. “Dear grandmother, I know you understand me. My father says to grandma Cena that *old people are just like children*. I think it is about time that we too find understanding in someone!” (52).

He is a witness of his father’s longing for the village he was born at, of the constant lottery playing hoping they will get some money to buy a car and finally be able to visit Borievo: “He is just sitting and staring pointlessly. Just to keep his eyes open. I know he is travelling to Borievo.” (19).

With reference to that, the author again reminds the readers of the well-known truth that the children understand more than the adults think. This is especially emphasized when they inform him that he will have a little sister and is told by his grandmothers different stories of who will bring the child: “Grandma Cena says we’ll have to catch her from the river Vardar. Dear God! As if it was a fish. I’ve walked with my father thousands times near the river and never seen babies swimming in it” (81). Another funny story he hears is that the stork will bring the baby: “The stork is just about to bring Jovana! As if I haven’t seen storks before! How are they supposed to bring babies at people’s houses when they are lazy! They sit on the chimney-pot, on grandmother Paca’s unfinished house all summer long... But, I’ve never seen a stork caring a baby! Only once, in a cartoon. And my mother says that in cartoons anything is possible. Weird grandmothers! If they want me to believe them, they should decide what lie to tell me?” (81-82); or when the author speaks about the food and how the child is supposed to be fed: “She still thinks I’m a baby and helps me while eating” (73). “Today mom made me one of her *specialties*. Something green. With two little eyes saying “hello”... Salty pudding with spinach and corn, spiced with an egg and sour cream... I am “dying” to eat something like that!” (39); about the first haircut in the barber-shop: “If I weren’t a man I would start crying” (56); about the feeling of embarrassment: “If it weren’t for the girls playing on the playground, I swear I would start crying... I didn’t want the girls to laugh at me. They are so Barbies! As if they’ve never fallen!” (48-49) etc.

In the seventeenth letter addressed to his great-grandmother, Stephan informs his grandmother that his mother is writing a book about him, which suggests that the outer factor of the letter is the mother/the author whose name appears on the cover of the book, which also connects this work to the autobiographical prose: “These days mom is constantly writing something... She puts the pen in her mouth and tells me off because I put something in my mouth too... Some day when you grow up, you can read what you did and the way you were raised... Not all children have the luck to have a book written on them - added the father. I look at them oddly! How can you describe what growing up means? And how can one read about it? Does that mean that the boy in the book won’t grow up together with me? Too much tangled things! One cannot understand anything” (51-52).

The title of this work seemingly directs that it is a metaphor, but in the letter number seven, there is the following explanation: “As you can see, grandma, I have used the whole paper. You must be wondering how I got it. I stole it from the pile of papers next to the phone... Next time I will try to steal a paper with different color. That way you can show off to your friends that you receive colored letters. Not all grandmothers receive variegated letters from their nephews, do they?” Furthermore, in the letter number

²⁰ Gorjan Petrevski, “Sharenite pisma” by Violeta Tancheva-Zlateva, Afterwords for “Shareni pisma”, Violeta Tancheva-Zlateva, Shareni pisma, Gjurgja, Skopje, 2008, page 100.

nine, the desire for colored ball appears again, as present from the great-grandmother for the first birthday when there will be a colored cake too. This constant use of the adjective *colored* is completely normal because it matches the colorfulness of the children`s world.

With coming to the world of his little sister Jovana, the writer of the letters, being the older brother, briefly tells the most important events of his sister`s growing older and announces their visit for her birthday: “Wait for us in your dreams tonight grandma! And prepare the big crystal vase for the biggest flowers in the world!” (98).

In regards to the addressing in this work, most of the time the letters begin with “Dear grandmother” which points to a feeling of mercifulness and closeness that Stephan feels, and only in few of them the old, classic closure is being used: “...Many hugs! Yours sincerely, Stephan!” (52); “Until then, many greetings and hugs from your grandson, Stefan” (74); “Lots of love! Your grandson, Stefan” (98).

What is interesting in this novel is the structure of the twelfth letter that begins with the classical opening “dear grandmother”. In this letter, the grandson informs his grandmother that he also wrote a letter to the Sun, where the letter illustrates the very sun: “Please tell me where does the sun live. Which town should I address this letter to?” (60).

CONCLUSION

According to the abovementioned, it can be concluded that the epistolary genre has its ancient historical basis. Based on the intention of the author for communication with either a real reader or with an imaginary reader, the dialogical nature prevails in it, as well as the subjective point of view, or more precisely, the intimate provenance. This paper confirmed that the definitions for this literary genre, its theoretical conceptions, characteristics and classifications, are numerous.

The novels that were analyzed in this paper all showed different characteristics. The first novel, “Shareni pisma” by Violeta Tanceva-Zlateva, is in form of a monologue, written by a child at very young age, but conceived in form of letters written to his grandmother.

But despite all that, the fact remains that the epistolary genre is a specific narrative form that offers many perspectives and opportunities for further research.

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