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PRIVATE CORRESPONDENCE IN EARLY MODERN ENGLISH: FAMILY, FRIENDSHIP AND LOVE LETTERS

The Tudor period in England was marked by significant social, economic, and cultural transformations that notably influenced communication methods, particularly letter-writing. The era's political shifts and religious conflicts rendered correspondence essential for both the nobility and the emerging middle class. This importance intensified in the 17th century, particularly following the establishment of public postal services by King Charles I in 1635. This initiative greatly enhanced the speed and reliability of letter exchanges compared to earlier private methods.

The article classifies Early Modern English correspondence into three primary categories: private, semi-official, and official letters. It highlights the communicative functions and socio-cultural contexts associated with private letters, providing a comprehensive understanding of their significance during this period.

Private correspondence in Renaissance England is analyzed in the following article with a specific focus on key types of letters according to Early Modern English epistolary practices: familiar, friendly, and love letters. It explores these letters' linguistic and stylistic features, highlighting their emotional, persuasive, and diplomatic tones. Through the analysis of letters from Elizabeth Lyke, Arthur Grey, and Catherine Howard, the article contrasts the rhetorical strategies employed in family, friendship, and love letters. Elizabeth Lyke's letter emphasizes familial duty and emotional persuasion; Arthur Grey's letter adopts a formal and diplomatic tone to maintain cordiality; and Catherine Howard's letter reflects romantic passion and vulnerability.

The article sheds light on Early Modern English society's evolving norms and values by analyzing the linguistic characteristics, including vocatives, archaic grammatical forms, and formulaic expressions.

Key words: Early Modern England, correspondence, letter-writing, private letters, love letters, friendly letters.

Statement of the problem. In the 16th and 17th centuries, England experienced significant transformations in social structure, the economy, and cultural life, which led to the evolution of communicative practices, particularly written correspondence. Influenced by political events such as dynastic changes, religious wars, and the establishment of parliamentary traditions, letter-writing became an integral part of life for both the nobility and the bourgeoisie. In the 17th century, correspondence gained special significance due to changes in social and infrastructural conditions. Notably, in 1635, King Charles I of England made the state postal service accessible to the general public. This reform significantly facilitated the exchange of correspondence, as previously, the delivery of letters depended on private arrangements or courier services, which were often unreliable and time-consuming.

At the same time, the cost of postal services remained high, complicating regular use for many people, especially those from lower social classes. As

a result, many continued to rely on friends, acquaintances, or random travelers for letter delivery. This informal method of correspondence posed risks such as letter loss or interception.

Letters became not only a means of resolving business matters but also a tool for maintaining social ties and exchanging news and ideas. One reason for the growing popularity of letter-writing was the increase in literacy levels across different social strata. Early Modern English society gradually reached a new level of literacy due to expanded access to education, making writing a more accessible communication tool for a larger population. Women, who previously lacked educational opportunities, increasingly participated in correspondence, reflecting changes in their societal roles. Letters serve as valuable sources of information about the everyday life, customs, and beliefs of early modern England. They provide insight into the private lives of both historical figures and ordinary people, revealing their thoughts and feelings.

Analysis of recent research and publications.

Since the late 20th century, sociolinguists, social historians, and literary scholars have shown increasing interest in letters and epistolary communication as social and cultural practices. Renewed academic interest in letters has led not only to scholarly studies but also to the publication of letter collections and specialized bibliographies (Daybell 2005a, 2006a; Daybell and Gordon 2012). These resources have expanded the data and analytical tools available to researchers and highlighted the relevance of letters in understanding socio-cultural issues such as literacy rates and women's education in past eras. The study of historical correspondence also sheds light on orthographic variation and linguistic changes in earlier periods. Most scholarly works are focused on the entire Modern period, as this era marked the height of letter-writing across Europe and beyond, with many studies concentrating on the 18th century (Postigliola et al. 1985). This century is often viewed as the peak of epistolary significance as a form of communication and self-expression. However, it is during the Early Modern English period that correspondence began to acquire characteristics that became typical of epistolary practices throughout the Modern period.

The typology of early modern English letters reflects the multifaceted social, economic, and cultural contexts in which they were produced. Academic inquiries into the typology of early modern English letters are based on the nature of the relationship between the addresser and the addressee, as well as the purpose and style of communication. There is no consensus in contemporary linguistic studies regarding the classification of early modern English letters, as the phenomenon of letter-writing in the 16th and 17th centuries was highly diverse and influenced by numerous factors. Discrepancies in classification approaches arise from various aspects affecting letter typology. The primary characteristics that distinguish letter types are the degree of formality and the target audience.

According to Alexander T. Bergs, there are two types of epistolary discourse: private (or personal) letters and business (or official) letters. Sumadi supports a similar classification. Private letters are informal and emotional, intended for personal communication between relatives, friends, acquaintances, or close individuals. In contrast, business letters are formal and address legal, commercial, political, or administrative matters. As Bergs notes, certain social relationships and roles do not allow for private letters. For instance, John Paston I's letter to King Henry IV in 1449 is an example of business correspondence [2, p. 210].

Meanwhile, Floriana Popescu identifies three types of letters, distinguishing private letters while also treating semi-official and public letters as separate categories. Semi-official letters address matters between social circles with certain connections but not close personal ties. Public letters are directed toward a broader audience or higher officials and often serve political or societal purposes [6, p. 391].

The classification of early modern English epistolary discourse remains a topic of debate due to the blurred boundaries between "private" and "public" in medieval Europe. Social structure during this period was collective in nature, where individuals were perceived as integral parts of a community. Many aspects of life considered private today were under constant public scrutiny. The concept of privacy, as understood today, began to take shape during the Renaissance with processes of individualization but only acquired its modern meaning in the 19th century. The boundaries between personal and public life in the 16th and 17th centuries were so indistinct that applying contemporary categories of "privacy" or "publicity" to this period is challenging [1, p. 80].

The essence of the above suggests that it is impossible to definitively classify letters as either "private" or "official" due to the complex dynamics of their use and perception in Early Modern English society.

For example, a letter addressed to a single recipient often did not remain within the bounds of private communication. During the delivery process, it could be read by others – family members, secretaries, or even third parties involved in the delivery. Additionally, many letters were read aloud, especially those concerning socially or politically significant issues, making them partially public despite their formal status as private documents.

Thus, modern linguistics lacks a unified classification of Early Modern English letters, highlighting the need for further research in this field. Developing a typology of letters represents an important contribution to the study of the history of the English language and epistolary discourse.

Based on the criteria of formality and social context, Early Modern English letters can be divided into four types: private, official, semi-official, and public. Each type possesses distinctive features that determine not only the style of expression but also the structure, thematic content, and purpose of the correspondence.

Task statement. This article aims to examine private correspondence in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England, focusing on familial, friendly, and love letters, as well as their key features, stylistic

characteristics, and social functions. By exploring this topic, we gain insights not only into how the English wrote and communicated in the past but also into the socio-cultural changes that shaped their written communication.

Outline of the main material of the study. This article pays particular attention to Early Modern English private correspondence, as private letters reflect not only daily life and interpersonal relationships but also the social norms regulating communication during this period. As Tone Hellesund notes, the analysis of private letters allows researchers to reconstruct fragments of life and reveal the emotional and social dimensions of communication [5, p. 247]. In the 16th and 17th centuries, letter-writing served as a means of expressing personal feelings and thoughts, fostering emotional bonds, and allowing the analysis of both individual experiences and broader communicative strategies in Early Modern England.

Collecting and analyzing factual material, three main types of private letters can be identified: family, friendship, and love letters. Each type has unique characteristics and serves specific functions, reflecting Early Modern English correspondence's emotional, social, and rhetorical strategies.

Family letters are characterized by emotional warmth, a desire to maintain family ties, and the transmission of everyday news. They often include wishes for health, expressions of care, and moral support. Elizabeth Lyke's letter to her daughter Bess is a vivid example of family correspondence. This letter exhibits a high degree of emotionality through affectionate addresses, gratitude, and concern for her son's financial situation. It employs repetition "*good daughter*", epithets "*great candnesse*", hyperboles, and an argumentative style to persuade her daughter to provide financial assistance to her brother. The letter combines a personal and persuasive tone, emphasizing family solidarity and expressing fears that family land might fall into the hands of outsiders. It exemplifies Early Modern English familial epistolary discourse, intertwining emotionality, logical reasoning, and the sociocultural context [3].

Friendship letters played a key role in the Early Modern English period. They, in contrast to family letters, served as a means of maintaining social contacts, exchanging opinions, and discussing current events. A relaxed style and humorous elements were commonly used in the following period. Arthur Grey's friendly letter, in contradiction to Elizabeth Lyke's

family letter, adopted a formally friendly, polite, and restrained tone, which was typical for English correspondence in the 16th century. It employs euphemisms "*I am very sorry that I cannot*", diplomatic explanations, and conventional politeness formulas "*Yowres euer wholly*" to maintain cordial relations despite the inability to fulfill a request. Unlike Elizabeth Lyke's letter, which demonstrates rhetorical pressure, repeated requests, and personal sentiments, Arthur Grey's letter is formal and relies on reasoned refusals and the avoidance of blunt expressions [4].

Love letters, as the most emotionally charged form of correspondence, are distinguished by the use of metaphors, compliments, and expressions of deep feelings. These letters reflect both the writer's personal emotions and the period's cultural ideals regarding love and romantic relationships. Catherine Howard's letter stands out as the most intimate and emotional, representing the genre of Early Modern English love letters. It conveys intense feelings through hyperboles, contrasts, and symbolic vows of loyalty. In contrast to Elizabeth Lyke's letter, which, despite its emotionality, remains pragmatic and persuasive: "*I heartilie preye you good doghtter sum what to streyne your selfe for my sake*", Catherine Howard's letter is deeply personal and filled with longing and despair: "*I never longed so much for a thing as I do to see you and to speak with you*". Conversely, Arthur Grey's letter is diplomatic and formal, using euphemisms and official language to politely decline a request "*I am very sory that I cannot according to your request pleasure this Gentleman*" [7].

While Catherine Howard's letter embodies romantic passion and vulnerability, Elizabeth Lyke's letter emphasizes familial duty and persuasion, and Arthur Grey's letter reflects the restraint and hierarchical nature of official sixteenth-century correspondence.

Conclusions. The study of Early Modern English private correspondence reveals the multifaceted nature of communication during this period. Familial, friendly, and love letters served practical purposes and reflected broader cultural values, emotional bonds, and social hierarchies. The distinct rhetorical strategies and linguistic patterns in these letters highlight the complexity of interpersonal relationships and the role of epistolary practices in shaping social interactions. This analysis contributes to a deeper understanding of historical communication and the ways in which private correspondence mirrors the cultural and linguistic dynamics of early modern England.

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Куц А. Г. ПРИВАТНЕ ЛИСТУВАННЯ В РАННЬОНОВОАНГЛІЙСЬКОМУ ПЕРІОДІ: СІМЕЙНЕ, ДРУЖНЄ ТА ЛЮБОВНЕ ЛИСТУВАННЯ

Період Тюдорів в Англії ознаменувався значними соціальними, економічними та культурними трансформаціями, які помітно вплинули на способи комунікації, зокрема на листування. Політичні зміни та релігійні конфлікти цієї епохи зробили листування важливим засобом спілкування як для аристократії, так і для середньої ланки суспільства. Його значення зросло у XVII столітті, особливо після заснування публічної поштової служби королем Карлом I у 1635 році. Ця ініціатива суттєво покращила швидкість і надійність обміну листами в порівнянні з попередніми приватними методами доставки.

У статті кореспонденцію ранньонновоанглійської мови класифіковано на три основні категорії: приватні, напівофіційні та офіційні листи. Особлива увага приділяється комунікативним функціям і соціокультурному контексту приватного листування, що дає змогу глибше зрозуміти його значення в цей історичний період.

Приватне листування в епоху Відродження в Англії аналізується в межах цієї статті з акцентом на основні типи листів згідно з епістолярною практикою ранньонновоанглійської доби: сімейне, дружнє та любовне листування. Досліджено лінгвістичні та стилістичні особливості цих листів, зокрема їх емоційне, переконливе та дипломатичне забарвлення. На прикладі листів Елізабет Лайк, Артура Грея та Кетрін Говард у статті порівнюються риторичні стратегії, які використовуються в листах сімейного, дружнього та любовного характеру. Лист Елізабет Лайк підкреслює почуття родинного обов'язку та емоційного впливу; лист Артура Грея вирізняється формальним і дипломатичним тоном для збереження доброзичливості; лист Кетрін Говард відображає романтичну пристрасть і вразливість.

Аналізуючи мовні характеристики, зокрема вживання звертань, архаїчних граматичних форм і шаблонних виразів, стаття проливає світло на еволюцію норм і цінностей суспільства ранньонновоанглійської Англії.

Ключові слова: листування, написання листів, приватні листи, любовні листи, дружні листи.