

Summary

Transylvanian collection of private letters from the 20th century

The theoretical, methodological and science-historical frame of the research of the letters by stating the results that define the interpretation revealed the connections defining this study in a skeleton of research history that follows the diachronic approach. The letters, besides their value as documents, provide a context for the individual to represent his/her course of life and enabling self-representation. The self-reflexive trait of the correspondential genre makes it possible to outline the contexts of letter-writing. By exteriorising the social relations the characteristics of the correspondential sphere can be disclosed. The theory of object research analyses the course of life of the letters and provide additional information for the analysis of the relations of secondary contexts.

The basic sources of interpretation are the collection of private correspondence belonging to Júlia Sigmond (born in Transilvania, Turda, 1929) and Balázs Becze (born in Transilvania, Lazarea, 1912). Beside the letters dating from the second part of the 20th century, for control purposes and additional information the source material also includes the interviews created about the letters and other collections of private correspondence from the 20th century.

The letter provides numerous possibilities of representation for the author. During interpretation my aim was to analyze the representations of self, of the micro-society and of the everyday events. The author is a mediator who conveys his/her own or other's stories through a well defined representational process. In the autographic letters the individual present in the letters can be defined by physical traits, and on the other hand it builds itself up through discourse. As a member of numerous subsystems of the social structure the individual present in the letters fulfils and accepts different roles and represents itself through different norms, models and stereotypes in roles enforced by culture. The individual in the letters does not have a uniform shape, but appears in one of the modes of representation appropriate for the given situation. The self-representation of the letter writer is achieved according to the regularities of communicational relationship and of the given conversational situation (usage of textual clichés, topic selection, linguistic phrasing, and aspects relating to content). As author of the letter the individual appears in a role analogue to the *good letter writer model*, and regarding the correspondence the individual must meet requirements concerning contents, layout, style and aesthetics and furthermore must fulfil the roles of mediator and caretaker of the relationship. The author provides a self-portrait modelled after a person capable of creation and corrects on a linguistic level the self-image he/she wishes to communicate by formulating the flaws of creation.

In the letters the determinative events of everyday life appear embedded into the letter writer's interpretation. These recorded events might focus on a person or be event of a

more general character. In the letters everyday life appears in the author's interpretation. The relayed reality and the subjective thoughts that accompany this reality also depend greatly on the conversational situation and the embedding of the relation between the author and the addressee. Concerning the experienced events, the letter writer proposes a subjective reality, the degree of which is defined by the relation between author and addressee. The letter relates the important events comprising a relatively short time span, so letters are a great tool for visualizing the activities that define everyday life and cognitive structures, both of which are linked to the individual, subjective interpretation of greater historic / political / industrial events for the respective time, thus providing a low level view of the events that take place in the given community.

The letters accumulate new meanings through inheritance from one generation to the next one. The heirs shed light on those primary and secondary meanings that adhered to these objects throughout the years; the recontextualisation that is due to these factors is greatly influenced by the generation gap as well. The relationship towards the letters, as exteriorised memory, as medium containing and conserving information varies from one generation to the other and from the degree of relationship of the descendants.

By validating the above mentioned factors concerning the individual and its letters, interpretation reflects on the practice of writing that is based on the correspondential tradition and varies from one individual to the other, and focuses besides the letter-writing's historical aspects on its biographical, socio-cultural and individual aspects as well.