

“My dearest Mamma”: Mutual Reception between Epistolary Communicators

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Abstract

The epistolary dialogue between Winston Churchill and his mother, Lady Randolph, is a polyphonic unity, incorporating letters carrying “coded” messages which serve for different functions: communication exchanges, autocommunication and mutual reception while reflecting a bond between both correspondents. The article presents a new approach to the concept of mutual reception between epistolary communicators, based on the conducted research of the epistolary dialogues between the son (Winston Churchill) and his mother. The concept of mutual reception is determined here as an ability to “tune” into an emotional wavelength of the epistolary communicator in order to build mutual communication links for keeping the epistolary dialogue flowing. It is argued that the epistolary text represents an *intertextual* unity, constituting a part of a communication system – an epistolary dialogue, involving interplay between two individuals and creating their mutual epistolary space with the *metalanguage* to understand which and to discover means for conveying mutual reception is the objective, pursued in this research. The study of Winston Churchill’s unique style of epistolary writing will contribute to future research on related issues.

Keywords: mutual reception, autocommunication, epistolary dialogue, intertextual unity, metalanguage, genre

1. Introduction

1.1 Statement of the Problem

It is believed that letters are “intellectual products of the specific nature...chronicle of the time presenting both self-portraits and portraits of people – from situational miniatures to monumental works – filled with unique fragrance of epochs, human personalities, polysemic, unpredictable and multifunctional border phenomenon” (Kotsiubynska, 2009, p. 11) which is worth researching. It has been argued by many dedicated scholars that an epistolary of a writer is a complex polyphonic unity, incorporating confluence of different epistolary sub-genres or genre–style modifications. Due to this fact, it can serve as a material for reflecting of the writer’s character so that we can reconstruct the psychological portrait of the author, on the other hand, the writer’s epistolary provides the canvas for decoding and identifying the traits of the addressee’s portrait as well. Since the epistolary text represents the character of the writer as a live companion, it lets a researcher see the writer’s portrait through the prism of an epistolary companion. This is one of the unique features of the epistolary genre, a kind of a written dialogue at a distance. The letter of a writer is aimed immanently at the other text– the response of the addressee, making a certain closed circle: the writer – the addressee, thus providing a cyclicity of epistolary communication. This leads to the thought that epistolary genre suggests two models of reception –the addressee’s and the author’s self-reception, which involves different levels of self-experience: emotional, mental, spiritual and physical. Both these concepts in convergence create solid ground for developing mutual reception as the key to maintaining the epistolary dialogue.

1.2 Research Significance

The major part of a voluminous family epistolary heritage of Winston Churchill is composed of Winston's letters to his mother Jennie, Lady Randolph Churchill, which, despite decades of studies; continue being debated among scholars and literary critics. We argue that an epistolary dialogue between Winston Churchill and his mother is a polyphonic unity which incorporates communication (interactional / transactional) exchanges in the form of letters, representing their mutual epistolary space, a *metalanguage* and the level of mutual reception. The primary issue to start with is to determine the dominating features of revealing mutual reception, which is interaction between the writer and the recipient through epistolary forms, in order to produce insight into their characters and the specific epistolary world created by close, yet sometimes controversial communicators. So, a common *metalanguage* for two epistolary communicators gives the text a shade of secrecy, impermanence as well as makes it a hermetic unit worth researching.

Between 1881, when Churchill was six, and 1921, the year of Jennie's death, mother and son were prolific letter-writers. *My Darling Winston* is an illuminating collection of private correspondence between Winston Churchill and his mother, Lady Randolph Churchill, compiled by David Lough and published in 2018. It is the first-ever edited selection of the forty-year correspondence containing more than eight hundreds letters and notes which may serve as an invaluable material for researching. Besides, our study incorporates examination of the earlier published collections of letters, revealed in *Winston S. Churchill. Companion Volume I. Part 1, 1874–1896; Part 2, 1896–1900*, collected and edited by Randolph Churchill, the heir, who represents his family epistolary treasure trove of his father's letters and correspondences between family members including his mother, Lady Randolph Churchill. Most critics often referred to the role of Jenny Jerome in shaping Winston Churchill's personality as a mentor; emphasizing Winston's dependence on Jennie, especially in money matters. David Lough in his introduction to the book emphasized the role of Winston's American mother as "the woman whose worldly advice and loving encouragement first set him on the path to power" (Lough, 2018a, p. 3). Steve Donoghue, a founding editor of *Open Letters Monthly*, a critic and also a book reviewer, has recently made an enthusiastic commentary on a new volume from Pegasus Books, *My Darling Winston: The Letters between Winston Churchill and His Mother*, claiming that "they're each slaves to a second and very loud kind of love, love of the limelight, love of hearing their names on the lips of other people" (Donoghue, 2018, para. 7). The comprehension underneath the love between a mother and a son and reasoning their controversies and disappointments – the core incentives which encouraged us to experience the epistolary world. Created by the two great personalities and shared in this valuable collection of letters, assembled by David Lough and Randolph S. Churchill, who cast the light on their relationship, social and private lives, which sometimes seem surprisingly opposing with their dark past.

1.3 Research Questions

This article begins by examining critical assumptions and theoretical approaches which have recently revealed in epistolography. Our views in this field are focused on the following issues presented in research.

1. Researching the letter as a polyphonic *intertextual* unity that constitutes a part of a communication system – an epistolary dialogue involving interplay between the two individuals.
2. Moreover, we will argue that the epistolary dialogues between both correspondents represent complete literary texts constructed of situational exchanges, which can be displayed as a response to an interactional situation or a request to continue epistolary communication but expanding to perfect argumentative works.
3. Discovering the writer's stylistic paradigm of the epistolary dialogue (with his mother), which is regarded as a literary text and presents a rich palette of genre and style modifications, incorporating extracts of narrative, meditations and critical reviews that organically interweave into the canvas of the letters, often smoothly pass into idyllic descriptions and emotion effusions is one of our primary concerns.

1.4 Research Objectives

Within the scope of epistolary dialogues this research identifies the connection between Winston Churchill's authentic manner of characterizing details and people due to his own vision of the situation, concentrating on the tiniest visual, hearing and psychological details and the ability to tune into an emotional "wave" of the recipient. The writer in his letters perfectly utilizes tools for disclosing the writer's self as well as portraying the recipient, by scrutinising her through a particular lens, thus, providing a receptive approach and a fascinating insight into her (the recipient's) inner world, which can be displayed with distinctive stylistic and literary devices. The objective of the research is to determine the dominating features of constructing mutual reception between the writer and the recipient in epistolary communication and also to explore the stylistic specificity of the epistolary dialogue between Winston Churchill and his mother.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Approaches to an Epistolary Text

For the last several decades literary studies have focused their approaches mainly on primary sources (archival materials, diaries, scrapbooks, etc.) and, in particular, on the writer's epistolary, which is not only a valuable biographical source of authentic information, but also is more interesting in terms of using the artistic word. Due to the non-disclosure requirement, writers feel unbound by the laws of artistic convention, therefore the narrative style of their letters in contrast with the narrative fiction becomes freer and easier. A particular correspondence itself, a real document, a live testimony, a reliable description of events, witnessed by the author himself, is more

intriguing to the recipient than the most successful fiction work. There have been numerous studies to investigate the nature and specificity of epistolary communication. However, the difficulties of the reception of the writer's epistolary text are determined by the need for studying a wide range of context involving fiction, biographical sources, diaries, memoirs as well as letters. Some authors conducted a qualitative analysis and compared the number of critical elements in the written text commentaries (Hromova et al., 2022). While reading texts, readers can understand non-physical concepts on the basis of their own actions and characteristics. (Soloviova et al., 2021). Image schemas are grounded on human's emotional interrelations which impact comprehension by incorporating contextual elements (Yesypenko et al., 2022).

Anna Il'kiv (2006), a researcher of the Ukrainian writers' epistolary of the second half of XIX – the early XX centuries, is convinced that the objective of the letter-writing process goes beyond the epistolary dialogue and turns into a creative process of self-reconstruction, so “letters become an artistic space for deployment of existential subjective strategy” (p.314). The author determines some dominating conceptual features of the writer's epistolary which should be taken into account by a researcher. She suggests studying the writer's letter from different views – “a letter as a metagenre, a psycho- text, an ego-text, a metatext and an *intertext*” (Il'kiv, 2006, p.314) in order to get more comprehensive insight into a theory of this polyphonic genre. This understanding is crucial, because the author has discovered a comprehensive approach to the concept of the *intertextuality*, proving in her study that “genre nature of an epistolary text enables us to apply the category of *intertext* towards the interpretation of a dialogue in letters” (Il'kiv, 2006, p. 11). Her research also clarifies the four categories of *intertextuality* of the writer's epistolary text such as: genetic, intentional, immanent and receptive.

Introducing a semiotic approach to the category of *intertextuality*, Kristeva (1980) claims, “Any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another” (p. 35). She interprets the concept of *intertextuality* which “replaces intersubjectivity and poetic language is read at least as double” (p.37). Plunging into the theory of dialogue by Bakhtin, Kristeva (1980, p. 39) argues that Bakhtin's dialogue is not only a language, conferred by a subject, but also “a writing, where one reads the other”, that is the voice of the other person. The key implication, drawn from Kristeva's study in relation to *dialogism* by Bakhtin, is that the researcher identifies in a writing form “a communicative self” that is in other words *intertextual*. Employing the concept of the receptive *intertextuality* as hypothetical opportunity of various interpretations of the letter, depending on either if it is read by the addressee or by another reader through their personal experiences, socio-historical backgrounds, presuppositional knowledge, we can state that epistolary of a writer often serves as an *intertext*, involving various contextual elements needed for researching. In this regard Yuriy Sheveliov (2083) claims, “Every letter is being born due to the co-game of two personalities, the writer and the addressee” (p. 19). This is significant, as it highlights one of the major factors specifying epistolary literature, while making it different from memoirs, diaries with their monologues and creating a specific atmosphere of live communication.

In the ancient epistolography a letter (a Latin word “*epistola*”) was determined as a semi-dialogue. The series of recent researches have proposed other approaches to interpreting the dialogue in letters. Janet Gurkin Altman (1982) found a revealing new set of responses emerging in the field of epistolary studies. In her extensive research of *Epistolarity* she concluded that “Epistolary discourse is a coded —although not necessarily an obscure—language, code of which is determined by the specific relationship of the “I- you”. Although, “epistolary discourse is marked by hiatuses of all sorts, it is also a language of gap closing, of writing to the moment, of speaking to the addressee, as if he were presence” (Altman, 1982, p.120-140).

A critical open question is whether the epistolary dialogue is able to form an invisible chain between the writer (I) and the recipient (You) in their mobile communication, his or her silent co-authorship which is the leading factor for mutual reception. In relation to efficacy of the suggested method V. I. Kuzmenko (2018) has recently represented his findings in further studying of the epistolary dialogue theory in a broad-scope monographic work, emphasizing “the writer's ability to be on the same wavelength with a recipient and the author's manner of reproducing the character of the recipient in his letters as an extremely rare phenomenon as well as the ability to perceive the speaker (the addressee) adequately” (p.17). In the light of reported approach, it is conceivable that the strategy of epistolary contact and consequently, the mutual reception between a writer and a recipient, to some extent, is always a compromise between the person who is writing a letter and someone who the writer is addressing to. So, the recipient is considered to be one of the most important factors, as he or she plays the key role in forming the basis for keeping a dialogue flowing. Moreover, the addressee may affect the construction of the plot and the composition of a letter, the selection of the vocabulary and some other parameters, because the writer is compelled to consider “the factor of the recipient, since “any speech act is designed for a specific model of the recipient...Speech processing occurs under pressure from the recipient factor” (Arutiunova, 1981, p.358).

2.2 Research to be Explored

A new approach to the theory of epistolary dialogue is needed in order to specify features of epistolary communication and the writer's tools to depict human relations that reframe traditional issues about literary form. Based on Winston Churchill's close attention to psychological reflections in the epistolary dialogical form, we restate the idea that each letter, which is appealing to the addressee, besides revealing the author's self- portrait, also reflects the character of the addressee, a specific person, being described through the prism of the author, in the author's view. This view promises to expand the discussion of unique relationship of the epistolary form to the theory of reception.

3. Methodology

Due to a critical discourse analysis of epistolary material which contributed to the effective processing of epistolary sources and

theoretical works on the problem, stated in the title of the research, as well as the methods of selection and classification of private correspondence, we were able to make theoretical and scientific generalizations and identify genre-style dominating features of the writer's private epistolary texts, using distinctive language elements and individual method of structuring epistolary texts and insights. Thanks to the recent literary studios of J. Altman, A. Ilkiv, M. Kotsyubynska, V. Kuzmenko, J. Kristeva, and other researchers of documentary and literary epistolary texts, applying the historical-genetic method, (for understanding the genealogical aspects of the writer's private correspondence, interpreting the letter as a polyphonic phenomenon) we made contextual and aesthetic approach in the study of the private epistolary forms of Winston Churchill as well as his addressee, which involved the study of the artistic and aesthetic value of the epistle: value as a source of aesthetic pleasure and creative inspiration designed to develop the aesthetic tastes of the recipient.

Evaluating the receptive and stylistic techniques of both correspondents, while exploring the artistic specificity of the correspondences, we could interpret epistolary texts through the prism of the addressee's creative thinking, taking into account the factor of the addressee, and discover tools of forming the receptive communication channels between epistolary communicators.

4. Results

4.1 Genre-modifications of Winston Churchill's Epistolary Dialogue with His Mother

Correspondence between Winston Churchill and Lady Randolph acquires definitely dialogic characteristics involving various contextual stories, motives and reflections that determine the contents. Mutual letters convey the subjective image of the epistolary recipient through the prism of the authorial mentality and reflection. After all, correspondence refers to communication, mutual interaction at a distance between both correspondents with different composition of the author's consciousness and a character. Psychological compatibility is the key factor for building trustful relationship and epistolary dialogue lasting for years. Each letter of this collection is addressed to a specific person (a mother) and is related to the previous one, so that the author can choose the subject of the correspondence and interpret his assertions, motives and emotional responses accordingly. Consequently, the thematic diversity of these epistolary dialogues comprises Winston's despair at the boarding school, his future ambitions, literary activities, money concerns, father's health problems, writing books, military adventures, army services, escape from a Boer POW camp, a swift career ascent to the First Lord of the Admiralty, his resignation and finally return to the cabinet in 1917.

Winston Churchill initiated his epistolary conversations with her mother for many reasons. One of them is that young Churchill lacked in his childhood those family personal talks which could provide the ground for building warm friendly relationship, consequently, he felt abandoned and forgotten by his parents. In an early book of his memoirs, Winston mentioned the description of her mother made by Lord D'Abernon which engraved in his mind and made "brilliant impression upon his childhood's eye. "A diamond star in her hair, her favourite ornament — its lustrer dimmed by the flashing glory of her eyes. Her desire to please, her delight in life, and the genuine wish that all should share her joyous faith in it made her the centre of a devoted circle" (W. Churchill, 1996, p. 4). The first excitingly described portrait is contrasted with the childhood memories found in his early letters mentioning mother's disappointment with his education and behaviour at Harrow school. However, young Winston adored his mother admitting: "My mother always seemed to me a fairy princess: a radiant being possessed of limitless riches and power...She shone for me like the Evening Star. I loved her dearly — but at a distance" (W. Churchill, 1996, p. 5).

With regard to some scientific interpretations of the star symbol, stating that "a star is a symbol of divine guidance, the spirit, enlightenment and wisdom" as well as the star of Bethlehem which possesses a protective force and "that not even death could overpower the light of the spirit which still shines in the darkness" (Eriquez, 2009, p. 123), we assume that in Winston's mind the mother's character was always associated with the Evening Star and represented nobility, guidance, good aura, shining out of the masses, though both correspondents were staying separated by long distances. Winston's letter describing *the addressee's portrait* comes into different genre and style colors and fills the content of the letter with subtext and symbolic associations. As for the Evening Star which is referred to the planet of Venus being seen in the western sky during sunset and is also visible in the eastern sky for about an hour before the sun comes up, this explains the hypotheses existing in several ancient cultures according to which Venus was considered to be a mythological figure and also "a symbol of love, femininity, and fertility" (Brittany, 2013, para. 1). Some people believe that its light has a mystical force and might be positioned as being protective and keeping out the evils of the world.

In terms of narrative this symbol introduces the romantic confusion, that is one of Winston Churchill's writing techniques, and in terms of its cognitive content it describes a kind of power which the writer might presume being on the one hand, a representation of guidance and wisdom, while on the other hand, having a mystical sense. Following a star on his life paths, pursuing his ambitions, while being guided by the wisdom of a great person, he reflected in the letters the way of crystalizing both his character and skills of a great writer. Acting as a close confidant in matters of politics, finance, literary and social life, Lady Randolph in her letters shows a strong tendency to read her son, Winston, a lecture or give him a good advice on what steps to take next (*a letter of advice*). Winston demonstrates his ambitious character in his striving to win a game, which is one of the similarities in mother-son epistolary communication. Emphasizing his willingness and firmness, Winston believed that the chosen path was right and in September 1897 he expressed his belief in the letter to his mother with confidence "I have faith in my star — that is that I am intended to do something in the world" (Lough, 2018b, p. 222).

The star symbol remains the principal theme of Churchill's correspondence and its emotional focus too, which is mentioned repeatedly by the author in relation to his bright perspectives, foreseeing a big change or turning point in his life, this sign was never seen as an omen of

sorrow. Young Winston felt optimistic about his political career when he wrote: “I feel plenty of confidence in myself now and am certain I shall do something in the world – if physical injury does not befall me” (Churchill, 1967a, p. 813). Optimistic outlook on life contrasted with reality of his service in India, Egypt and Cuba.

At the hardest for the whole family times of bankruptcy and father’s terminal illness Winston suffered from anxiety, due to the lack of good news from his mother about the real medical reports. He regularly dispatched letters in search of her admitting: “Darling Mummy, I do hope that you are keeping well and the fatigues of travelling as well as anxiety you must feel about Papa – are not telling on you. I can’t tell you how I long to see you again and how I look forward to your return” (November 2, 1894) (Churchill, 1967a, p. 531). As we can observe the rhetoric of the letters written at the time of his youth takes on an argumentative touch, expressing rebellious thoughts and willingness to take a challenge. While being entertaining and charming at times, the letters written in the period of 1890–1900 reveal to the great degree the spiritual intimacy and emotional link in the mother-son relationship, moreover, they also display an extraordinary blend of patriotism, ambition and mutual tenacity. The mixed feelings experienced by Winston at the time of his highest emotional challenges and striking military “actions” affected the tone and style of his writings. Feeling isolated and abandoned in the “godless land of snobs and bores”, he complained to his mother on October 26, 1896 about finding “no one worth speaking to or looking at – in the social circles of Bangalore” (Churchill, 1967b, p. 696). Equally feeling disappointed at not hearing from his mother, the author encounters with a situation which is difficult to overcome without her assistance (not only money matters concerns). Feeling discouraged and trying to hide his impatience, Churchill begged his mother in August 1897 to respond to his concern hoping she would notice. “Mamma – you are a dear. Do write long letters and believe me – every word will be appreciated. Perhaps, you will think this letter is pessimistic but I try in my letters to you to reflect my mind on the paper– and honestly I am disgusted about Malakand” (Churchill, 1967b, p. 778).

The dialogue written by an addresser is dependent on the addressee’s voice and the ability to tune into this dialogue. A mutual sorrow and loss, tragic experiences gained by both correspondents made their relationship closer and more reciprocal. In the process of communication both the writer and the recipient begin to show their perceptive insights into the causes and motives of their activities and behaviour, so the vital role will be played by the ability of one (a writer) to tune into a certain register of the narration, the internal state of his addressee, which depends on the need for corresponding with a specific recipient. It is a kind of invisible approach to the soul of the addressee, the reproduction of her complex emotions by analysing her (his) own feelings and actions as well as the behaviour of the recipient, external conditions and circumstances that caused such behaviour.

Researching the reception between the writer and a recipient as an ability to get involved into psychological contact in order to build trustful epistolary relationship, we can observe the differentiation in demonstrating such ability. This feature is manifested as a capability in a dialogic form to literalize interrogative and interpretive processes that characterize the reception theory for reaching contact by one party, whereas the other party can act ambiguously, by giving agreeable or disagreeable response. For instance, in reply to the letter of Winston Churchill his mother gives a positive evaluation to his achievements (a *letter of evaluation*), while her next letter incorporates a *disagreeable review, reproach and criticism*. Within the letter the writer expresses different thoughts and mixed feelings towards the actions and words written by the recipient. In the letter to Winston Churchill dated March 18, 1897 Lady Randolph wrote, “Darling, I lay awake last night thinking about you & how much I wanted to help you – if only I had some money I would do so. I am so proud of you & of all yr. great & endearing qualities. I feel sure that if you live you will make a name for yourself, but I know to do it you have to be made of stern stuff — not mind sacrifice & self-denials” (Churchill, 1967b, p.320). This letter can be broken into two narrative units as the writer creates several themes in two paragraphs. In spite of being short, this letter structures two passages like separate texts, revealing two discrepant displays of one character: opposing thoughts of the writer – criticism and reproach in the first paragraph, while the second one contains a satisfied appraisal and predictions for the future political situation, which the recipient is concerned about and which turned out to be accurate. The mother’s critical judgment regarding Winston’s extravagance in the main body of the letter is aimed at informing and educating him how to deal with money matters rather than judging him. Then the second theme which involves the recipient is delivering advice to the writer about his possible transferring to Egypt (a *letter of advice*). For this reason the writer applies a compelling argument in order to persuade him to follow her (mother’s) guideline: “I think you have changed your mind about Crete.....I think things are looking more serious in the Transvaal. You may have started for home” (Lough, 2018 a, p. 201) “His mother rebuked him for his political naivety,” as Lough (2018 a, p.199) states in his commentary to the chapter of this collection of letters.

What is striking in their correspondence is that the interval between sending a letter and responding to it could take several weeks, which let both correspondents explore the means for constructing a chain of communication links. The frequency of a letter-writing process is a distinctive factor and indicates Winston Churchill’s prolificacy and enthusiasm for writing “forcible” letters, in spite of two or three-week intermissions from the addressee. Epistolary dialogue is a very demanding process which requires confidence and respect between the correspondents as well as the great patience and knowledge of each other in order to act as equal communicators. The sender of the letter (Winston) adjusts his letter to please the addressee accordingly, he describes the scene of his being wounded without feeling regrets, but seeking emotional support or approval from the addressee and presenting arguments and views on his future perspectives in the parliament, entering it as a Tory liberal. Winston’s letters attract the reader with author’s expressiveness and firm positioning of his creed and convictions on subject matters, thus they serve as a canvas of his future speeches, trustfully shared with his addressee.

Churchill’s philosophic view on life, which was often criticized by his political opponents and by his mother as well, is manifested in the letter, written in November 24, 1896. The tone of language reminds an oratory speech which exposes two different worlds. The first representation of India is associated with “the poverty of the people” which is “extreme”, “the famine... and riots which can be

suppressed only by the free use of military & by frequent firing on the crowds” (Lough, 2018a, p. 222). The world of the “poor starving creatures” is contrasted with “civilization”. The combination of comparative and contrasting descriptive epithets to illustrate author’s own judgments and attitude performs the characterological and evaluative functions and create a new genre of Churchill’s letter. The *critical essay* as an epistolary form by Churchill features the effect of genre freedom incorporating author’s comments, reflections, assessment of the situation, frequent flowing of thought from concrete to abstract. It must have been done to convey the writer’s thoughts and attitude to the subject of discussion and persuade the recipient (a reader) to follow his judgments. In the following string of letters written in India between 1896-1897 Churchill expresses his further prospects to be a writer rather than a reader or a soldier. Expecting for his mother’s approval, he writes: “I am looking forward immensely to seeing civilization again after the barbarous squalor of this country. I do hope you will sympathize with my desire. ... I have every intention of returning to India on the expiration of my leave to complete my sentence. ..The 8 months I have been in this country have as regards Indian information & knowledge been utterly barren. Poked away in a garrison town resembles a 3rd rate watering place, out of season & without the sea, with lots of routine work and a hot trying sun – without society or good sport– half my friends on leave and the other half ill – my life would be intolerable were it not for the consolations of literature...” (Churchill, 1967 b, p. 753).

The fragments cited above prompt to appear the chain of associations which have minor intonations – “godless land”, “the barbarous squalor”– becoming dissonances to major tones within the context featuring the letter as a phantom of inseparability. In the letter to his mother dated November 24, 1986 Winston claimed: “Letters from England are here so precious that even bills are welcome” (Lough, 2018a, p. 224). This statement justifies Churchill’s bond with the homeland. In the last excerpt it is consonant with the returning to simple routine things: society, books, sport, his butterflies and holidays which constitute the family traditions.

Considering the criterion of bordering and diffusion of various literary genres and basing on a comprehensive analysis of Winston Churchill’s and his mother’s mutual letters, we could identify different genre modifications within a singular letter, highlighting clear author’s contentions, internal struggle and thoughts. These genre modifications of family letters represent a combination of lyrical effusions with an epistolary narrative, which contributes to a more complete characterization; revealing the writer’s inner thoughts to the addressee, setting up an emotional contact between the writer and the addressee (a *letter of appeal*, *epistolary narrative (story)*; *war chronicles*, *autobiographical inclusions*, *lyrical poems*, *a letter-sermon*, *a letter of prophecy*).

The results of the study clearly indicate the dominating features of the mother-son epistolary dialogue which contribute to creating the appropriate level of mutual reception between epistolary communicators.

- emerging intra-genre convergences within an epistolary genre,
- creating the subjective image of the epistolary recipient;
- the writer’s perceptive insights into the addressee’s nature, causes and motives;
- thematic diversity of the epistolary dialogues;
- the spiritual intimacy and emotional link in the mother- son relationship;

4.2 Family Epistolary Discourse as a Dominating Feature of Creating a Mutual Reception Space

It is important to stress the role of *family discourse* incorporating the inventive amplitude of affectionate appeals inherent to Churchill’s family epistolary which can tell a lot about the writer’s character and his psychological type. The letters between the mother and the son illustrate the family values, the prose and ethics of the mother-son relationships and, certainly, their *metalanguage*. The family communication licenses the high level of directness and informality, although family politeness prevails in the mother-son correspondence to the great extent too. Lady Randolph in her letters to Winston sets the tone of family politeness, teaches the rules of conversational management paying homage to her son’s independence in many issues except for money matters. Winston in his letters does not neglect the power of mother’s control and shows respect to his American mother’s set of rules and behaviour in society, however, he marks a strong tendency not to live by the rules.

Speaking his mind and appealing to his mother, the person who shared his opinion although repeatedly cautioned him to refrain from criticizing military service, looking for balance and coordination of his intentions or actions, he relies on his mother’s good sense and wisdom which provide the native with additional forces to overcome difficulties. Developing his philosophy of a peacemaker and a winner, he claims: “I should never care to go home to England, unless we are victorious here” (Churchill, 1967 b, p. 1143). Here and elsewhere Winston Churchill’s use of inner-speech (internal monologue) or *autocommunication* technique by constant appealing to himself requires the voice of the other person to question. Considering the factor of the addressee, the writer reveals his internal thoughts to the recipient, as well as using emotional messages of a request, warning or reproach. Everything revealed is filled with the writer’s own experience, multiplied by burning thoughts, which gives these private correspondences universal importance and at the same time decreases the distance between the author and the recipient, makes their relationship trustful and sincere. These appeals are caused by the writer’s attempts to prove his significant position or mission in his life. By sharpening his thoughts, he adds more emotions and confessions to these short passages of monologue speeches inserted into a composition of his letter. “The whole frontier is in a blaze ... I am of adventurous disposition and shall enjoy myself not so much in spite of as because of the risks I run. At any rate I have decided – and having taken a hand I shall do my best to play a good game”. (Churchill, 1967b, p. 781). The mood of the letter is enhanced with the combination of contrasting narrative and vibrant character-making epistolary devices, which take the honourable part in the main body,

without destroying the whole composition of the letter, apart from the sequence of other structural elements of a letter. Due to this factor, the epistolary work is imbued with deep human feelings causing the recipient to be on the same wavelength which means feeling the same emotions.

As far as the structure of the epistolary body is concerned, the epistolary salutations and farewells / closing remarks indicate the level of interactional links between the two participants, stressing the level of familiarity and close family connections. In anticipation of future interaction Winston starts his long letters with typical for him “My dearest Mamma,” while at an early age he used to refer to his mother for advice or support addressing her as “My own darling Mummy”. The writer preferably concludes his letters: “With best love & kisses I remain, Ever your loving and affectionate son Winston” (October 21, 1894) (Lough, 2018a, p. 109), whereas the next pile of letters, written later between 1898–1903 years, show fading the intimacy in their contents, although, the closing remarks still keep the familiar tone of comfort inherent to the family circle: “Ever your loving son Winston S C” (1898). This can explain the level of respect for motherhood and devotion to family values as well as love that will never fade in spite of “living in stirring times” (Churchill, 1967b, p. 777).

The recipient’s level of interactions is clearly demonstrated with supportive phrases: “Take care of yourself my darling – I am looking anxiously for a letter from you...Yr loving Mother J.R.C.” (September 9, 1897) (Churchill, 1967b, p. 785). This statement delineates the two levels of the interactional relationship. The response of the recipient is governed by the established social rules, prescribed etiquette and educational background. As result, response in an appropriate manner with feeling of sympathy and implication of maternal love highlights mother-son interaction at the private and social levels. Both correspondents show a tendency to avoid “ritual” of naming, by closing a letter with subscriptions expressing sentiments as well as using abbreviated names and initials instead of their full names. Due to these identifiers the letters are easily recognized by a reader. This observation lets comprehend the time and level of closeness between the two correspondents. The effect of establishing interactional links is also achieved to certain extent by the set of communicative (rhetoric) and language tools and which is immensely indicated with the ability of both communicators to utilize stylistic devices. The next section provides the coverage of stylistic tools for achieving an appropriate level of mutual reception between both correspondents and thus, creating a unique style of letter writing.

4.3 The Writer’s Stylistic Paradigm of Mother -Son Epistolary Communication

A thorough reading of the revealed patterns of the archival epistolary heritage, belonging to Winston Churchill and his mother, provides the opportunity to explore one more distinctive feature in relation to writer’s stylistic paradigm – the specific essence of a human being (the writers “alter ego”) and his literary world, which deserves a careful attention, since it plays an incredible role in presentation of the true epistolary characters and their *metalanguage*. In arguing that the *metalanguage* is related to the style of letters as well as it serves as the identifier of the writer’s individual style, we draw on works of some literary philosophers and their speculations in order to get more insightful approach to the concepts mentioned above. Alfred Tarski’s emphasizes that “we derive *semantic terms* (referring to *object-language* or the language of expressions) to be introduced into *meta-language* only by definition,” by justifying the fact that “the *meta-language*, in its non-logical part, is ordinarily more comprehensive than the *object-language*” (Tarski, 1944, p. 352). In this study we refer to the term of *metalanguage* which is attributed to the true thoughts of the writer and the recipient, hidden in their words, phrases, utterances. Since it often occurs at the epistolary dialogue stage, and the process of researching the style of written correspondence requires tracing the speech of both communicators to read their thoughts by reading between lines. With regard to it, Bakhtin claims that “any utterance is a link in the speech communication chain”, emphasizing “the expressive aspect of the utterance as a second factor, which defines the structure and the style of the speaker’s statement, in other words the speaker’s subjective emotional evaluative position towards the semantic content of the saying” (Bakhtin, 1979, p. 263-264).

The language of the epistolary dialogues between Winston Churchill and Lady Randolph specifies Winston Churchill’s individual style in relation to the performance of quotations, borrowed from Samuel Johnson’s and George Bernard Show’s literary works. These concise language borrowings and figures of speech in convergence with the author’s narrative techniques weave the epistolary canvass. This has both characterological and comic functions. It enables us to hear the writer’s and addressee’s contentions and create the circle of associations in relation to the semantic content. For having a conventional reader engagement, the utterance needs to be interpreted by a recipient (a reader). With a view to this, the author and the addressee are bound to design the strategy for mutual communicative and receptive approaches, encompassing imagination, perception and writing techniques: stylistic, expressive language and rhetoric devices. Following his own strategy of maintaining receptive dialogue, Winston Churchill illustrates his mastery in epistolary rhetorical speech which is full of playful metaphoric and aphoristic expressions displayed to the great effect in these writing passages too. It will be wise to consider the concept of Arnold (2006, p. 83), who determines the stylistic function as “an expressive potential interactions of language devices in the text, in which the great role is played by emotive, expressive (imaginative, amplifying) and evaluative connotations of language units” (p.84). Focusing on expressive potential of these units and their interactions in the text, it is necessary to investigate their role in conveying ideas and emotions in a certain text or communicative context. In his letter to Lady Randolph dated October 12, 1897 from India Winston expresses his irritation with the Daily Telegraph disgraceful offer, claiming that all his “hard work had been in vain”. Winston declares his commitment in a strong opinionated voice admitting: “I regard an excellent opportunity of bringing my name before the country in a correct and attractive light – by means of graphic and forcible letters as lost” (Churchill, 1967b, p. 812). By quoting Samuel Johnson’s aphorism in this letter, he gives the coverage of this situation in a comic light. “No one but a blockhead ever wrote except for money” (Lough, 2015, p. 42). This applicable metaphoric epithet conveys author’s intention to realize his ambition. Thus,

expressing ironic self-criticism while disguising his true thoughts and by trying “to avoid alluding to any of my own experience” (Churchill, 1967b, p. 811), the writer shows his tendency to agree with his mother’s admonishment: “You will, of course, have to be discreet if you sign it & leave as much personal out of it as possible” (J. S. C to W. S. C, November 25, 1897) (Churchill, 1967 b, p. 825).

Jonathan Rose (2015) argues, “In Winston mind, the boundary between reality and theatre had been dissolved” (p. 39), justifying Winston’s fearlessness at the battlefield with an assertion: “Because that was his role”. Rose’s argument seems opposing to our assumption, since Winston’s statement: “I shall do my best to play a good game” (Churchill, 1967b, p. 781) can have double implication. Further the writer presents his ideas and speculations about his future plans in the following letter to Lady Randolph dated September 19, 1897, which is attributed to “Private”. Winston relies on his mother’s clairvoyance while giving account of his personal experiences with the Cavalry: skirmishing and retirement: “I was perhaps very near my end. If you read between the lines of my letter you will see that this retirement was an awful route in which the wounded were left to be cut up horribly by these wild beasts” (Lough, 2018b, p. 231).

On appealing to his mother alone, Winston expresses an effusion of evident disgust to tribesmen and frontier life, by emphasizing the contrasting images of the two different worlds in order to achieve antithetical effect and bring forth judgments: “Europe is infinitely remove – England is infinitely small – Bangalour is a speck on the map of India – but here everything is life size and flesh colour” (Lough, 2018b, p. 232). In response to his appeals she inferred to the writer’s modesty “All your fears of valour I am sure to come out & people will know. Let it be from others & not from yourself. One must be tempted to talk of oneself in such a case – but resist. Let them drag thing out” (Churchill, 1967b, p.832).

The process of self-discovery and expressing Winston Churchill’s personality provides constant and indirect reference to the addressee, events happening around and comparing the present with the future. Being aware of the fact that his letters will be read and evaluated by a meticulous reader (his mother), Churchill refers to an allusion figure, using it as a parody form in order to give a piece of historical significance by other textual elements and drawing the recipient’s attention to deciphering the allusive codes based on his or her background knowledge. Referring to the character of Uncle Sam Churchill asks rhetoric question: “Is it likely that the cute Uncle Sam will pick our Asiatic, African & European chestnuts out of the fire for us” (Churchill, 1967b, p. 947). Imagery in this context has a sharply evaluative connotation and allegoric dimensions to convey complex ideas or concepts in the way they are striking to the reader. By spicing up his epistolary dialogue with ironic or aphoristic words and sharp remarks, Winston Churchill illustrates his mastery in achieving his goal in order not only to make his language more vivid and attractive for posting. The purpose of such figurative speech is clearly observed from the content of the letter so as to cast further light on his attitude to the forward policy of Chamberlain. The writer emphasises his arguments by introducing harsh short allegoric sentences adapting them to a specific situation and transforming phrasal units. Due to this technique, the content and the form of what is said are deeper and more expressive.

The author’s world of artistic reflections and reminiscences fills the contents of letters written in the time of warfare. In the letter to his mother dated December 2, 1896 the writer recalls the most thrilling experience in his life during the battle taken place in Cuba a year ago, when the author was for 4-5 hours under fire. The writer vividly describes that day admitting, “It is for days like that – days punctuate as it were the monotonous drawl of existence that I would live” (Churchill, 1967 b, p. 914). He closes this letter with the citation from Alfred, Lord Tennyson stating: “Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay”. Churchill refers to Alfred Lord Tennyson’s quotation from *Lockley Hall*, where Cathy is alternative historical name for China in English and which is also regarded as a “domain of poets” (Dennys, 1867, p.125). Picturing India as an ambivalent image which is woven of contrasting interpretations of reality in its metaphoric or symbolic dimensions, the writer finds it difficult to get accustomed to the “tedious world” and dreams of leaving it. By employing epithets with negative connotations (e. g. “ominous”, “barren”), which correlate with negative associations related to the character of India, the author summarizes his experience both of a soldier and a writer.

In Winston’s correspondence the author’s position is in the foreground. In spite of the fact that the addressee’s point of view has a right to exist independently, the writer masterly subordinates the recipient’s reflections and motives to his own using such devices as joking, satire, irony or parody. The best pattern of such context can be observed in one of Winston’s letters from India, where he boasted about his ability of “keeping the audience in constant laughter” admitting, “my harangue was a success” (Churchill, 1967b, p. 683). By employing metaphorical expression, he compares his first steps in the army as “a duckling among chickens”, who could show his skills not only in drilling, but in fighting in order not to feel ashamed in the field of war. Churchill sometimes applies a masking effect to hide his true self, thoughts and negative emotions. An attentive reader will have a great opportunity of discovering the writer’s true thoughts (his other ‘I’), an epistolary character of the writer, which is complex and created in the mother-son epistolary interior. Through the prism of the writer’s self-characterization technique and stylistic figures we receive a portrait of the human being (the writer) with his inner thoughts and feelings, but more fully the writer’s character is revealed through the recipient’s evaluations and responses to the behavioural motives and actions of the writer. This luckily seen portrait of the writer which sometimes seems to contrast with stereotyped is one of the major missions to be carried out by a researcher. “I am not blind to the tawdry and dismal side of my character” (Churchill, 1967 b, p. 840), as Winston stated in one of the most compelling letters to his mother, which reveals the author’s world of both psychological and artistic reflections. This period in Churchill’s life should not be dismissed by a researcher, since this can explain the writer’s internal struggle with himself, feeling of emptiness and apathy to social or political events. As result of such changes in personality’s mood and attitude towards reality, both the recipient and the audience (a reader) could observe sudden effusions of feelings contrasting with critical reviews in convergence with epistolary narrative. His speculations about his mission and position during the war declared by Turkey on Greece lead him to the idea of changing his plans. Seeking his mother’s approval and support in making a decision to go to the front as a special

correspondent, he turns to her for advice in his following letter from Bangalore dated April 21, 1897, where he wrote: “Which side to go on. This is, my dearest Mamma, must depend on you. You must decide... These arrangements I leave to you and I hope when I arrive at Brindise I shall find the whole thing cut and dried” (Churchill, 1967 b, p.755).

The author’s anticipation of receiving “an amiable if not a hearty welcome” from his mother justifies the bond between the mother and the son, which, however, was not always strong: “Darling Boy, how I wish that you were with me & that we could have a good talk about everything ... I am looking forward to the time when we shall live together again & all my political ambitions shall be centered in you”, she wrote on December 24, 1896 (Churchill, 1967 a, p. 718). Lady Randolph’s letters to Winston are moderate and frequently devoided of sentiments or affectionate expressive words, but they illuminate the light of love and when needed, they could be both teachings and touching, filled with care and appreciation. “My dearest Winston, I am intensely proud of you, & apart from this, my heart goes out to you & I understand you as no other woman ever will...your political career will lead you to big things” (Lough, 2018b, p. 368). This statement sounds like a prophecy, but it also conveys a feeling of emotional comfort the mother shares with her son and a confidence in her son’s perspectives, so as her rulership will be lasting. Notably, the letters from Lady Randolph, written at the most challenging period of maturing Winston’s personality, were very vital for Churchill, as the strength of messages written by his mother had a double effect on Winston’s emotional development as well as shaped his political views and aesthetic tastes. Since the 1900s the correspondence between the mother and the son has become rare occasional interactions, several months’ interval could have affected their frank conversations, though sometimes Winston reminded his reciprocal connections claiming: “I do not forget you. ...Naturally we see little of each other. Naturally that makes no difference to our feelings” (Lough, 2018 b, p. 390).

Winston’s letter delivers two reciprocal functions which are conveyed with an anaphoric structure in order not only to achieve an artistic effect, but also emphasize the writer’s intention to express indirect apology for breaking off the epistolary dialogue, although the recipient maintains an emotional contact at distance. Paying tribute to his mother for her role in his political and literary career, in his first letter since his escape from an army camp in Colenso, Churchill expressed his admiration and proud of her, due to her courageous steps she took in order to help her sons, while she was occupying the post of a chairman of the committee “American ladies” in London: “My dearest Mamma, I am so glad & proud to think of your enterprise & energy in coming out to manage the Maine. Your name will be remembered with affection by many poor broken creatures. Besides it is the right thing to do, which is the great point” (January 6, 1900) (Churchill, 1967b, p. 1143). In anticipation of “the greatest battle” (elections) Winston heightens the sense of this event with employment of rhetoric technique, by repeating the word “great”. A combination of soft irony with sympathetic tone prompts to synthesize the positive feelings of invincible spirit and mutual efforts for achieving sustainable cooperation between the writer and the recipient.

5. Discussion

The paper proposes a new approach to the interpretation of the epistolary dialogue as a polyphonic genre formation which presents various genre modifications of the family letters (*a letter of guardianship, a letter of advice, a letter of request, a letter of the addressee’s portrait, a letter of prophecy, et. c.*), interweaving with the passages of the perfect critical reviews, essays and lyrical effusions as well. There is no clear genre demarcation between family mother-son mutual letters. The composition of their epistolary complex condenses a wide range of cross-genre epistolary forms: *a letter of rebuke, a letter of criticism, a letter of (approving) evaluation*.

Thanks to the epistolary genre versatility, Winston Churchill’s letters to his mother offer the precious material for revealing the writer’s character, so that we can reconstruct the psychological portrait of the author. Moreover, the writer’s epistolary text serves as a canvas for decoding and identifying the addressee’s character, her inner thoughts and motives.

The paper also addresses the issues related to the writer’s individual style and his ability to employ different stylistic elements in order to reach an emotive contact with his recipient. The intention of the writer is to fine-tune the perception of what is covered in the letter and deliver his ideas to the addressee. The recipient’s perception and interpretation of the writer’s letter will depend on the ability of the writer to find the most appropriate language and emotional tools to peer into recipient’s thoughts in order to reach a psychological effect and also to help the addressee produce equal reception and, consequently, cooperation in maintaining the epistolary dialogue.

Winston Churchill was greatly recognized for his style of writing epistolary passages which present a rich palette of genre modifications, containing passages of the writer’s self-analysis and reminiscence, giving us a valuable insight into both characters of a writer and a recipient. On exploring Winston Churchill’s stylistic paradigm of the epistolary dialogue with his mother, we highlight the author’s style of describing his military experiences with expressive literary elements, using not only narrative descriptive techniques but also a literary tool of characterization to represent people, inner thoughts and surroundings, scenes of events, time and actions. Every item keeps print of individuality. Thanks to his mother, who encouraged him to read as much as possible, Churchill’s reading affected both his writing style and his views of the world. The descriptions of front scenes, military operations and warfare settings – all of this is passed through the writer’s vision of the situation and his attitude towards the events revolving around. Sometimes he expresses irony towards his harsh routine soldering. His thoughts as he admitted, “are more concerned swords – lances – pistols and soft-nosed bullets – than with bills and bye elections” (Churchill, 1967 b, p. 957).

The results of the conducted analysis of Winston Churchill’s epistolary dialogue and his mother indicate the writer’s distinct style of communication with his recipient, the writer’s efforts in his reflections and comparisons moving the analysis into a larger system and discussing it with the addressee, his sincere passion for allegoric and symbolic figures, involving the utilization of increasingly emotionally coloured words along with figurative borrowings – all this creates unique semiotic system of mother-son epistolary

communication and affects the style and the composition of the letter as well. On the background of expressive richness, the aesthetic effect of the letter is also enhanced. In one of his letter to the mother Winston sincerely admitted to deliberately picking the “right” words in order to charm or amuse the audience. He was often criticized for his pompous language by his mother and the critics as well. However, the language of the epistolary dialogue of Winston Churchill with his mother illustrates the perfect pattern of the epistolary literary text and may provide the field for further investigating for researchers of the epistolary genre and literary critics as well.

6. Conclusion

As it can be seen from these epistolary dialogues the key factor which becomes obvious is that in case, when the two communicators maintain long-lasting epistolary contact, hence, they have a strong relationship and their mutual interactions demonstrate an excellent ability to reason and foresee the wishes and responses of each other so a particular message encoded by the writer can be easily understood and decoded by the recipient. Each of the correspondents can be identified by his or her distinct way of structuring messages, using specific language elements and individual method of perception. The message code, sub-text and other language stylistic figures identify the writer’s character, epistolary style, an internal emotive or artistic world of the author and add the mystical elements to mother-son correspondences. More dominating factors of conveying mutual reception in the epistolary dialogues between Winston Churchill and his mother are highlighted in the successive paragraph.

Epistolary dialogue between Winston Churchill and Lady Randolph is a complex subtle communicative substance, but a tangible dialogue involving the system of interplay between two individuals and creating a psychological portrait of the recipient in the letters. Moreover, the writer generates the brand of a receptive epistolary dialogue by picturing his self-character, surroundings, actions as well as portraying the recipient through a particular lens, by ‘reading her mind’, thus, providing a fascinating insight into human’s ethics and values.

Appealing to the heart of the addressee, Winston’s letters can sound louder than ever and find greater audience more extended in time. These homely epistolary conversations attract the researcher with the writer’s distinctive style of epistolary narrative and his sharp ironic utterances which let discover the writer’s epistolary *alter ego*, while making corrections to the stereotyped character of the writer as well.

The results of the research show that the letter-writing process is a channel which can fulfil the communicative, emotional and literary purpose, while providing a source of emotional support and a vehicle for mutual receptive insights into the inner world of both the writer and the recipient. Moreover, the writer’s private letter is intended for a specific addressee and unlike a fiction work reveals the subjective character of a particular person. Therefore, Winston Churchill’s private correspondence should be studied comprehensively, taking into account the fact that the writer’s letters are not a single fact of literature, but a holistic systemic communication process.

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