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On the Genre Context of *Letters from Turkey* by Kelemen Mikes

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Abstract. Translated into several languages, Kelemen Mikes' *Letters from Turkey* is one of the masterpieces of 18th-century Hungarian literature. This paper explores genre-historical contexts of the *Letters*, with particular regard to French epistolary works published between about 1620 and 1720. The paper distinguishes five main types of the literary use of the epistolary form: 1) editions of letters missives; 2) epistolary theories and manuals of letter writing; 3) fictional or partially fictional letter collections and letter series; 4) letters in the novel; 5) epistolary novels. The paper argues that the French epistolary tradition emerging at the same time as the *Letters from Turkey* or earlier was much more complex than Hungarian research has so far assumed. This epistolary culture is one of the primary genre contexts for *Letters from Turkey*. It appears that Mikes must have had knowledge of epistolary manuals and florilegies that were used for learning the French language, and often included letters and phrases applicable in letter writing as well. In the French source material, we find several examples of the defining features of Mikes' work: fictional or semi-fictional collections of letters based on one voice, a direct, chatty tone, epistolary turns of gallantry, fictionalization of the addressee, and the depiction of the situation of exile. There is a wide range of literary devices that give the appearance of real correspondence, many which were used by Mikes.

Keywords: Kelemen Mikes; Hungary; Turkey; epistolary fiction; epistolary theories; epistolary novel

Kelemen Mikes' *Letters from Turkey*, originally titled *Letters of Count E… P… written in Constantinople by K… M…*, is one of the enigmatic works of 18th century Hungarian literature translated into several languages.[1] The collection of 207 fictitious letters was created between 1717 and 1758 at the court of the exiled Transylvanian prince Ferenc Rákóczi II in Turkey, mostly in Tekirdağ on the northern shore of the Marmara Sea.[2] The author was Rákóczi's court chamberlain, and the

1 See, for example, Mikes, *Letters from Turkey*; Mikes, *Lettres de Turquie*; Mikes, *Briefe aus der Türkei*.

2 The critical edition of the work: Hopp, ed., *Mikes Kelemen Összes Művei, vol. I* (hereinafter MKÖM I).

fictitious addressee was Countess E. P., who had been placed to Constantinople.[3] The letters, which are composed for one voice, focus on the critical moments in the life of Rákóczi's court, the personal story of the narrator, developments in European politics and diplomacy, and Ottoman customs and relations. The turning points of the story that came directly from Mikes' biography, such as his longing for Zsuzsi Kőszegi, her marriage to Count Miklós Bercsényi or the death of Prince Rákóczi, are organically integrated into the narrative. They are all related to the genesis of the work, the real and the fictitious chronology of the letters. The letters often include autobiographical details, as well as inserted translations, historical, moral-philosophical, economic, and pedagogical reflections, and a high number of short narratives. They are characterized by a light, conversational tone and varied turns of gallant courtship.

The letters, which loosely follow one another and often change their subject matter, owe their coherence to the story of the exiles' lives, which runs through the entire collection and forms a homogeneous narrative. The exiles' stay in the Ottoman Empire, initially thought to be only temporary, turns out to be permanent due to political, diplomatic and other reasons, and the hope of their return to Hungary with Turkish help gradually fades away and finally disappears. Some of the members of the court leave or die, and the Moldavian campaign launched with the participation of the prince's son József ends in failure. Mikes becomes the leader of the community but, in the end, he is left almost completely alone. The mood of the letters ranges from hope through different degrees of disappointment and rebellion to resignation and a complete acceptance of fate.

One of the unresolved issues of the collection is the problem of genre.[4] Some scholars emphasize the careful composition of every single letter and the lack of compositional virtues of the collection as a whole,[5] while others argue for the interpretation of the *Letters* as an epistolary novel.[6] The validity of the latter view is strengthened by the fact that Mikes was in Paris between 1713 and 1717, at the time of the boom of the French epistolary novel, and his knowledge of literary letters was largely drawn from the French epistolary tradition of the 17th and early 18th

3 Hopp, *A fordító Mikes Kelemen*; Tüskés, "Autobiographische Ungarnbilder."

4 Tüskés, ed., *Író a száműzetésben*; Tüskés, ed., *Literaturtransfer und Interkulturalität im Exil.*

5 Király, "Mikes Kelemen levélformája"; Zolnai, "Mikes Törökországi Leveleinek"; Zolnai, "Mikes és a franczia"; Zolnai, "Mikes Kelemen"; Zolnai, *Mikes eszményei*; Hopp, "A levélműfaj"; Hopp, "A Törökországi Levelek műfaji"; Hopp, "Mikes Kelemen utolsó"; Hopp, "Le genre épistolaire à l'époque"; Hopp, "Le genre épistolaire et ses rapports"; Hopp, "Eredetiség – utánzás"; Hopp, "La question d'imitation"; Hopp, "Lettres persanes et Lettres de Turquie"; Hopp, "Le genre épistolaire hongrois"; Hopp, "A magyar levélműfaj"; Hopp, *Un épistolier et traducteur.*

6 Barta, "Mikes Kelemen"; Kovács, "Mikes Törökországi levelei," 52. Kovács, "L'Apprentissage de la diplomatie," 219–24; Pál, "Levelezés és levélregény határán," 77; Bódi, "A Törökországi levelek mint levélregény," 67; Hopp, "A Törökországi Levelek műfaji," 144–5.

centuries. According to recent French research on the letter genre, the varieties of the literary letter form are much richer than Hungarian research has assumed in the context of *Letters from Turkey*.[7] Therefore, previous knowledge of genre and ideological-historical contexts should be supplemented and clarified, and it is worthwhile to include additional authors, works and genre groups in the study.

In this paper, I will distinguish and analyse five main groups of works in the French epistolary tradition, published in print between about 1620 and 1720, giving typical examples thereof. The presentation within the groups is structured chronologically, considering transitional forms, genre variations and interactions. Rather than well-known compositions, such as *Les Provinciales* of Pascal and *Les Lettres persanes* of Montesquieu, I concentrate on less-known pieces.

Editions of missives

The fashion for publishing French-language collections of letters dates to the first decade of the 17th century,[8] but the first influential collections are associated with Guez de Balzac. The two collections published in 1624 and 1627 show that Balzac created new rhetorical figures and forms of expression for letter-writing, while developing previously unknown ways of speaking of the 'I'.[9] The collections mark a change of media: the missives written in the national language move into the world of book printing, which transforms the text, changes the readership, and modifies the genre characteristics. Balzac's letters, letter extracts, and phrases were later included in several collections.[10] The painful, plaintive and bitter tone, the forced withdrawal from the world and the negative assessment of loneliness are partly explained by the author's exile. In terms of the depiction of exile and internal emigration, the letters are comparable to those of other exiles, notably Saint-Évremond and Bussy-Rabutin, and the corresponding motifs in *Letters from Turkey*.

7 See, for example, Demoris, *Le Roman à la première*; Versini, *Le Roman épistolaire*; Viala, "La Genèse des formes"; Altman, *Epistolarity*; Grassi, *L'Art de la lettre*; Haroche-Bouzinac, *L'Épistolaire*; Bray and Strosetzki, eds, *Art de la lettre*; Calas, *Le Roman épistolaire*; Melançon, *Penser par lettre*; Chamayou, *L'esprit de la lettre*; Silver, ed., *Femmes en toutes lettres*; Omacini, *Le Roman épistolaire*; Rabsztyn, *L'Écriture et le langage*; Melançon, "Diversité de l'épistolaire"; Ferreyrolles, ed., *L'Épistolaire au XVII^e siècle*; Cousson, *L'Écriture de soi*; Cadilhon, Figeac, and Le Mao, eds, *La Correspondance et la construction*; Giraud and Clin-Lalande, *Nouvelle bibliographie*; Bray, *L'Art de la lettre*; Bray, *Roman par lettres*; Fumaroli, "Genèse de l'épistolographie"; Vaillancourt, *La Lettre familière*; Lallemand, *La Lettre dans le récit*.

8 See, for example, Rosset, *Lettres amoureuses et morales*.

9 Balzac, *Lettres*; Faret, *Recueil*; Balzac, *Les Premières lettres*. Cf. Shoemaker, "Guez de Balzac," 58–134.

10 Bray, *Épistoliers*, 131.

The success of Balzac's collections encouraged the publication of various types of epistolary works. They include manuals, such as new editions of Jean Puget de La Serre's *Secrétaire de la cour* [Court Secretary] (1629),[11] anthologies of letters,[12] selections of letters written by women,[13] compilations of a single author's missives,[14] and novel-like collections of fictional love letters.[15] The Balzac contemporary Malherbe also planned to publish his letters.[16] Edited posthumously in 1630, the letters have many omissions and corrections compared to the manuscripts.

A typical example of a collection of poetic epistles is the mid-17th century compilation by Tristan L'Hermite.[17] It is divided into five parts: the seven dedicatory letters are followed by groups of comforting, love, heroic, and mixed letters. Tristan also includes seven letters addressed to him in the collection, which, in addition to the fairly authentic missives, comprises pieces demonstrating considerable literary inspiration. The composition is closely related to the poet's verse works, including the motifs used and the rhetorical shifts.[18] Common features of the letters include a striving for verisimilitude, the constant presence and concealment of the 'self', and the search for a balance between the poet's dependent position and his pride based on literary merit. The letters are often based on a central idea, which Tristan develops from impersonal reflections, his own experiences or from his principles. The fiction of intimacy is reinforced by the focus on the person being addressed. Tristan usually fails to name the addressee of his missives, using pseudonyms, initials or asterisks instead; the date is always missing, and often the place of dispatch is not indicated either. The literary ambition is underlined by the careful elaboration and the varied use of rhetorical forms. The significance of Balzac's and Tristan's collections lies primarily in the fact that they paved the way for the rise of fiction, the ideal of naturalness and immediacy in the genre of letters.

Vincent Voiture collected his letters, which were published only after his death, following Balzac's example. Voiture was one of the first to create the light-hearted, direct-voiced gallant letter type.[19] Another French poet and critic, Jean Chapelain did not plan to publish his letters, but his habit of preserving drafts and partially

11 See, for example, Puget de La Serre, *Secrétaire à la mode*.

12 Faret, *Recueil*.

13 Du Boscq, *Nouveau recueil*.

14 See, for example, Lannel, *Lettres*; Auvray, *Les Lettres*; Videl, *Lettres*; Fardoil, *Harangues*.

15 Scudéry, *Lettres amoureuses*.

16 Bray, *Épistoliers*, 130–1. A further posthumously published collection: Viau, *Nouvelles oeuvres*. Cf. Viau, *Œuvres complètes*.

17 L'Hermite, *Lettres meslées*.

18 Bray, *Épistoliers*, 178–86.

19 Voiture, *Les Oeuvres*; Voiture, *Lettres*. The critical edition of the family letters: Voiture, *Lettres (1625–1648)*. Cf. Lofton, "Vincent Voiture's Epistolary"; Costar and Voiture, *Entretiens*.

rewriting a lost letter's rough copy bring him somewhat closer to the epistolary practice of Balzac, Malherbe and Voiture, who consciously created a letter-writing oeuvre.[20] The significance of Chapelain's correspondence lies primarily in the availability of a considerable number of drafts and letters sent, and the possibility of comparing autograph drafts, copies of drafts made for documentation purposes, manuscripts written after dictation, missives sent, versions revised for publication and foreign copies.[21]

The group of exiled letter writers includes Saint-Évremond, who lived for a time in London and whose letters were first published in a volume of his collected works.[22] A copy of this volume was kept in the library of Ferenc Rákóczi II in Sárospatak.[23] For the gallant and the family letter, Voiture seems to have been a model for Saint-Évremond. The letters form an integral part of Saint-Évremond's oeuvre, related closely to his biography, while representing a literary quality in their own right. Complaining about exile only appears in the letters penned in the first years of his stay in London. In addition to reporting, Saint-Évremond also expresses personal opinions, but usually without passion. He mostly uses a direct tone and avoids moral reasoning, long circular sentences, artificiality, and polite formulas. In the letters written in the middle period of his exile, he strives for brevity regardless of the addressee; his tone is serious, reserved, and sometimes humorous, ironic or anecdotal.[24] One of the words Saint-Évremond often uses to describe the letters he receives is 'ingénieux', a term used to praise their originality and accuracy. A recurring motif of his writing is the undervaluation of his own works.[25]

Roger de Bussy-Rabutin, the third major 'exiled' letter-writer of the 17th century, has received attention in the Mikes scholarship because of his correspondence with his niece, Mme de Sévigné, who was about eight years his junior.[26] Of the many letters in the marquise's correspondence, his are the most numerous. In the text of the

20 Bray, *Épistoliers*, 127–39, 217–27.

21 Chapelain, *Les Lettres*; Bray, *Épistoliers*, 133–7.

22 Saint-Évremond, *Œuvres meslées*. Further edition: Saint-Évremond, *Œuvres meslées* (Amsterdam: H. Desbordes, 1691). Recent edition: Saint-Évremond, *Lettres*. Cf. Jaspers, *Saint-Evremond*.

23 Köpeczi, *Döntés előtt*, 171, 227, Pl. 80.

24 Viala, "Saint-Évremond"; Bray, *Épistoliers*, 387–90. Cf. Potts, *Saint-Évremond*; Vincent-Buffault, *L'Exercice de l'amitié*; Hope, *Saint-Evremond, the Honnête*; Hope, "Saint-Evremond and Bussy-Rabutin"; Hope, *Saint-Evremond and His Friends*; Rosmarin, *Saint-Evremond*.

25 Bray, *Épistoliers*, 391–8.

26 Sévigné, *Corespondance*. For the debates on the correspondence of Mme de Sévigné, see Beugnot, "Débats autour du genre épistolaire"; Duchêne, *Écrire au temps de Mme de Sévigné*, 11–28; Duchêne, *Madame de Sévigné*. For recent research, see Vanackere, "État présent"; Tsimbidy, *La Mémoire des lettres*.

memorial sent to the king in 1680, Bussy inserted, with some modifications, copies of some letters from Mme de Sévigné and her daughter.[27] His memoirs, including many letters and parts of letters, were first published in 1696.[28] Bussy's correspondence was published in four volumes in 1697–1698,[29] and new editions, with additional letters and replies, appeared in five volumes between 1700 and 1721.[30] The first two volumes are a selection of his correspondence with Mme de Sévigné. Mikes is highly likely to have known some or, perhaps, all of these collections. Between the correspondence of Bussy and Mme de Sévigné and *Letters from Turkey*, there are clear stylistic and motivic parallels which have only been partially identified.[31]

Falling into disfavor and living in exile are common themes in Bussy's correspondence with the marquise, his *Mémoires,* and *Letters from Turkey*. Other motifs the letters of Bussy and Mme de Sévigné share are their mutual appreciation of each other's writing,[32] their rivalry, debate, and bickering over various issues. Apart from the common features such as a conversational tone and light rhetoric, there are obvious differences. A good example of the two different styles of writing is the stories with similar themes that the two tell in different ways.[33] Some of the protesting, pleading, and demonstrative formulas can be paralleled with the corresponding turns in 17th century love letters.[34] Bussy's carefully preserved correspondence is essentially a collective work of which he was the main inspiration.[35]

Mme de Sévigné's letters to her daughter and to Bussy demonstrate a high level of epistolary awareness, a strong emphasis on individuality, alternating between a conversational and a chatty (*causeur*) voice, a flowing style and a breaking up of the formal framework of dialogue.[36] This is accompanied by a flexible use of language, a lively, personal voice, rambling narration, great thematic variety, a constant mix of

27 Bray, *Épistoliers*, 258. Cf. Lignereux, *La première année*.

28 Bussy-Rabutin, *Les mémoires de messire*. Edition used: Bussy-Rabutin, *Mémoires*. Cf. Mertens, *Bussy-Rabutin*; Duchêne, *Bussy-Rabutin*.

29 Bussy-Rabutin, *Les Lettres de messire*.

30 Bussy-Rabutin, *Les Lettres de messire*. The letters of Mme de Sévigné were first published in 1725 and 1734 separately.

31 Zolnai, "Mikes és a franczia," 26–7. Cf. Tüskés, "A Törökországi levelek"; Kovács, "Madame de Sévigné"; Kovács, "A Törökországi levelek"; Bányász, "A Törökországi levelek".

32 For the motif of letter praising, see Mikes' letters number 5., 39., 56., 59. and 75. MKÖM I, 13,61, 92, 100, 134.

33 Bray, *Épistoliers*, 336–7.

34 Bray, *Épistoliers*, 342–6.

35 Rouben, *Bussy-Rabutin épistolier*; Vanerecke, "Bussy Rabutin"; Bray, *Épistoliers*, 350. Cf. Bussy-Rabutin, *Correspondance avec le Père Bouhours*; Bussy-Rabutin, *Correspondance avec le Père Rapin*; Bouhours, *Pensées ingénieuses*, 150–78.

36 Lignereux, "La déformalisation". Cf. Kerberat-Orecchioni, *La Conversation*.

narrative and descriptive discourse, of impressions and moods, attention to detail, a direct grasp of the subject, an effort at being pleasant (*plaisant*) and delightful (*agréable*), and a frequent use of irony. In parallel with the *causerie* register, a new type of letter, the so-called *portugaise*, appears, which is particularly passionate in tone and intimate in nature, avoids the rules of *conversation* and is particularly suitable for the direct exploration of personal matters.[37] *Conversation* and *causerie* are the two main stylistic registers of the Marquise's letters. The terms are also used to distinguish the intended reading of the letters, but they should not be contrasted sharply. The term *causerie* refers to a less structured way of writing; the letter writer deals with less interesting issues in the absence of important topics, and often makes statements about himself.[38] This is exactly the style whose frequent presence distinguishes the tone and rhetoric of *Letters from Turkey*. As part of her epistolary politeness, Mme de Sévigné also consciously uses formulas for finding excuses for her own style, undervaluing the 'self' and valorising the addressee, while being well aware of the appeal of her own letters.[39] As with Mikes, her comments on the style of the letters she received can be interpreted in the context of her own writing.

With their varied content, narratives, most often called 'narration', 'conte', 'historiette' or 'petit conte', play an important role in these letters just as in *Letters from Turkey*.[40] The writer repeatedly refers to these stories as the 'salt' of the letter, belonging to a conversational register whose main function is to entertain, delight, surprise, and move. Reflections on free will, the love of God, and the ultimate graces appear in the letters, following religious and moral readings.[41] The formal opening and ending of the letter, including the request for a reply and the interest in the recipient's health, as well as the devices of dialogue and the suggestive integration of present events, show a close affinity with Mikes' writing. The themes that Mme de Sévigné and *Letters from Turkey* share are, among others, the suffering of misfortune, fateful providence and the aesthetics of letter-writing.

Letter theories and letter-writing manuals

From the mid-16th century onwards, theoretical discussions of the genre, manuals of love including letters,[42] letter-writing manuals (so-called *secrétaires*),[43] collections

37 Bray, *Épistoliers*, 264.

38 Nies, *Gattungspoetik und Publikumsstruktur*; Bray, *Épistoliers*, 275–82.

39 Bray, *Épistoliers*, 262.

40 Bray, *Épistoliers*, 296; Depretto, "Annoncer l'incertain". Cf. Réaux, *Historiettes*.

41 Bray, *Épistoliers*, 305–8.

42 See, for example, Barrouso, *Le jardin amoureux*.

43 See, for example, Durand[?], *Le Style et manière*; Chappuys, *Le secrettaire*; Jacob, *Le Parfait Secrétaire*. Cf. Charrier-Vozel, "Des règles de l'intime".

of letter samples, and works to help language learning and conversation played a significant role in the development of French epistolary literature and the dissemination of the rules and examples of letter-writing.[44] It is also thanks to these that by the middle of the 17th century the position of the so-called social (gallant) letter in literature had been consolidated, while debates continued about the principles of gallant aesthetics and the appropriate style of writing. The emergence of women writers and letter-writers significantly changed the character and aesthetics of a genre that had previously been cultivated by men.[45]

Madeleine de Scudéry's dialogue on letter-writing is particularly instructive for the transformation that took place in the second half of the century. It first appeared in volume IV of *Clélie* in 1655,[46] and in a modified form in the 1684 edition of her *Conversations*.[47] In the dialogue, Plotine, a proponent of correct speech, and his companion Amilcar express their views on the different types of letters and the way to write them. Madeleine de Scudéry distinguishes ten types of letters: 1) official, 2) consolatory,[48] 3) congratulatory and expressing common joy, 4) recommendatory, 5) salutatory, welcoming and paying homage, 6) communicating news, 7) 'serious', i.e., political or scholarly, 8) gallant, 9) love letters, 10) short messages (*billet*). She devotes a special section to newsletters, the main criteria of which are attracting the recipient's interest and stressing the novelty of the news. The typology is explicitly pragmatic and compares well with contemporary manuals. The presentation of the news received is a constant motif in *Letters from Turkey*. The originality of the dialogue lies in the fact that the comparison between the gallant and the love letter embodies two different rhetorical ideals and points towards a new aesthetic conception. While the main features of a gallant letter are playfulness, lightness, variety, brevity, wit, and the desire to please, a love letter is characterized by an intimate personal tone, expressing emotions and genuine feelings.

La Fèvrerie's treatise *Du Stile Epistolaire* [Of the Epistolary Style] was published in the year before the 1684 edition of *Conversations*, in the July 1683 special issue of the *Mercure galant*.[49] La Fèvrerie distinguishes between four types of missives: official, welcoming, gallant, and love letters, giving a description of each. While mocking the authors of earlier epistolary manuals, he notes: the gallant letter may

44 Cf. Marti, "Brieftheorie und Briefe"; Knapp, "Levélelméletek"; Knapp, "A Törökországi levelek"; Hargittay, "Lipsius Epistolica institutiója".

45 Cf. Melançon and Popovic, eds., *Les Femmes de lettres*.

46 Scudéry, *Clélie: histoire romaine*, 1122–49.

47 Scudéry, *Conversations nouvelles*, 503–52. The critical edition of the text with an introduction: Scudéry, *"De l'air galant"*, 139–58.

48 Cf. Baustert, *La Consolation érudite*.

49 La Fèvrerie, "Du Stile Epistolaire," 1–67.

be the most literary in nature, as it gives the widest scope for individual expression. A well-written letter is lively, natural, clear, and concise. The importance of the treatise is enhanced by its place of publication, which was one of the most widely read French journals.[50]

Letter-writing manuals are essentially didactic. In the last third of the 17th century, for example, Jean Corbinelli's compilation of turns of phrase, expressions, images, courtly formulas, and short extracts from letters by Balzac, Voiture, and other famous writers, without grouping or citing sources, was a case in point.[51] A more advanced concept is followed in Pierre Richelet's work, which was published several times, a selection of letters by twenty-seven authors, with the needs of the educated reader in mind.[52] Richelet presents the material in thematic and functional groupings, often only giving extracts from letters. He takes great liberties with the original letters: he rewrites, partially redrafts or shortens the text, omits personal references and obscure allusions, and changes the 'thou' form to the pronoun 'you'. He adapts the language to the tastes of the time, replacing the protocol with more elegant new formulas. Richelet supplements the letters with informative notes pointing out stylistic errors. In the spirit of a new aesthetic conception, he accuses Balzac of being sophisticated and contrasts him with Voiture's gallant style.[53]

Antoine Furetière's posthumous anthology of letters, published in 1690, is accompanied by theoretical considerations.[54] The collection contains letters written both by and to the author, but the function or type of letters, their authors and recipients are mostly unidentified. The same type of manual is represented by the compilation of René Milleran,[55] whose early 18th century editions supplemented the selection of letters with an "Instruction" of more than 200 pages with basic information on letter-writing.[56]

Certain other types of manuals also conveyed knowledge about letter-writing. For example, René Bary, in his rhetoric, first published in 1653 and going through several editions, deals specifically with the types of stories that can be inserted into letters and the way they are told.[57] Claude Irson's French language book contains

50 Cf. Bray, *Épistoliers*, 318–9.

51 Corbinelli, *Extraits de tous*.

52 Richelet, *Les plus belles lettres*. The fifth edition of the collection, edited by Antoine Augustin Bruzen de La Martinière (Amsterdam: Wetstein, 1721) contains, among others, the text of *Lettres d'une religieuse portugaise*. Haroche-Bouzinac, "Les Transformations."

53 Cf. Rollin, *Le Style de Vincent Voiture*; Bombart, *Guez de Balzac*.

54 Furetière, *Essais de lettres familières*.

55 Milleran, *Lettres familières, galantes et autres*.

56 Milleran, *Le nouvau secrétaire de la cour*. Cf. Bray, *Épistoliers*, 203–4.

57 Bary, *La Rhétorique françoise*.

a separate treatise entitled: *Méthode pour bien écrire et composer des lettres, que l'on appelle épîtres* [Method for Writing and Composing Letters, which are Called Epistles].[58] Some of the bilingual or multilingual grammars for travellers, which have contributed to the image of the 'honnête homme', include letters. In Jean Baptiste Thomasini's French–German–Italian grammar, for example, the chapter devoted to epistolary communication has a thematic structure similar to that of monolingual collections.[59] The manuals of conversation were primarily concerned with the rules of oral communication, but the rules proposed here could also be applied to correspondence. For example, Pierre Ortigue de Vaumorière, whose anthology of letters was kept in Rákóczi's library in Sárospatak,[60] emphasizes the principle of naturalness and lightness, while criticizing Balzac's sublime writing style.[61]

Fictitious or partly fictitious collections of letters and series of letters

Collections of love letters form one of the main lines of this group. Their principal sources of inspiration are translations and imitations of Ovidian heroids, the correspondence of Héloïse and Abélard, and Italian or Spanish compilations,[62] including letters from the Italian actress Isabella Andreini, who died in Lyon in 1604. An early example of works based on the Ovidian model contains translations of five Ovidian heroids.[63] At the beginning of the new edition of the collection, published in 1605, which is subtitled "A collection of formulas expressing the feeling of love", we find translations of two heroids.[64] The compiler of the collection gives an example through letters of the literary treatment of the two basic situations in love relationships, the beginning and the end.

The original correspondence between Héloïse and Abélard consists of five letters, from which a series of translations, adaptations and imitations were made in

58 Irson, *Nouvelle méthode*, 177–203.

59 Thomasini, *Triple Grammaire*.

60 Vaumorière, *Lettres sur toutes sortes de sujets*; Köpeczi, *Döntés előtt*, 228, plate 79. Cf. MKÖM I, 344; Hopp, "A magyar levélműfaj," 545–51; Zolnai, "Rákóczi bécsújhelyi olvasmányai."

61 Vaumorière, *L'Art de plaire* (revised edition: Amsterdam: H. Schelte, 1711). A further work, first edited in 1675, translated and edited in several times: Bernard Lamy, *De l'art de parler,* see Lamy, *Kunst zu reden*. Cf. Mevissen, "»Ein galanter mensch«."

62 See, for example, Croisilles, *Héroïdes ou épistres amoureuses*; Deimier, *Lettres amoureuses*; Malleville, *Lettres amoureuses*; Croisilles, *Les Epistres de l'Aurore*. Cf. Ovidius Naso, *Les Épistres héroïdes d'Ovide*; Chatelain, "L'héroïde comme modèle épistolaire"; Eickmeyer, *Der jesuitische Heroiedenbrief*; Prandi, "Brief-Gedichte und Heroiden"; Harst, "Verbriefte Ehe."

63 Desrues[?], *Fleurs du bien dire*.

64 Rigaud, *Les Fleurs du bien dire*.

the 17th century. The letters can be found, for example, in François de Grenaille's compilation of letters written exclusively by women, published in 1642,[65] linked to Jacques Alluis's novel published in 1675,[66] and associated with a history of lovers and two gallant tales.[67]

Isabella Andreini's collection of letters in Italian was first published posthumously in 1607.[68] Four of these letters were translated and included in the fifth edition of François de Rosset's collection of love and moral letters.[69] François de Grenaille included translations of some forty of the actress's letters in the anthology noted above.[70] The importance of these collections lies primarily in the fact that love letters are easily organized along novelistic lines. The works on love published between 1667 and 1669, now called novels or novelistic pieces—Guilleragues, Boursault, and d'Aubignac—have their roots in this type of compilation.[71]

Published in 1669, Gabriel Joseph Guilleragues' *Lettres d'une religieuse portugaise* [Letters of a Portuguese Nun], based on the love story of the canoness Mariana Alcoforado and the knight de Chamilly, is notable among the fictional collections of letters.[72] The first edition consists of only five pieces; the second, published in the same year, contains seven, and two series of five and six letters in reply. In subsequent editions, the number of letters increased to twenty-three, often supplemented by the letters of Anne de Bellinzani Ferrand, the story of the widow of Ephesus, and a Bussy-Rabutin translation of part of the letters of Héloïse and Abélard.[73] Its peculiarity is that it contains only fictitious letters—masked as real—from a nun in love, disguised as a real person.

Guilleragues ingeniously combines motifs of monastic life and the abandoned woman in love, erotic elements, and an elegiac tone, while sensitively depicting the birth, shocks, and the passing of a passion, with its inner conflicts and their resolution. His main innovation is to override the traditional codes of love discourse by using original rhetoric, emphasizing the desire for dialogue, imitating the passionate

65 Grenaille, *Nouveau Recueil*.

66 Alluis, *Les Amours d'Abélard*.

67 Cours, *Histoire d'Eloïse et d'Abelard*. Cf. Bray, *Roman par lettres*, 62–3.

68 Andreini, *Lettere*.

69 Rosset, *Lettres amoureuses et morales*, 338–40.

70 Bray, *Roman par lettres*, 191–204.

71 Bray, *Roman par lettres*, 66–7. Cf. Boisrobert, *Les Épistres du sieur*; Boisrobert, *Les Epistres en vers*.

72 Guilleragues, *Lettres d'une religieuse*. Recent editions: Guilleragues, *Lettres portugaises* (1983), 57–98; Guilleragues, *Lettres portugaises* (1990). Cf. Guilleragues, *Valentins*. See also Spitzer, "Les »Lettres portugaises«."

73 Bray, *Roman par lettres*, 117.

female voice, and employing a clear psychological schema.[74] The contrast between the disorder on the surface of the text and the underlying order can be equated with the difference between the artificial rules of the gallant letter and the higher expectations of the aristocratic readership. This helped to create a dynamic new form, the 'lettre passionnée' [passionate letter], which allowed the expression and understanding of complex emotions. The private letters and epistolary fictions inspired by Guilleragues use this rhetoric and tone, making an influence that can be traced up to Rousseau and Diderot.

In the same year as Guilleragues' work, the first collection of letters of Edme Boursault, secretary to the Duchesse d'Angoulême, was published.[75] This mixes three types of letters: 'lettres de respect' [letters of respect] are addressed to persons of secular or ecclesiastical rank, 'lettres d'obligation' [letters of obligation] are written by friends, while 'lettres d'amour' [love letters] are letters of gallantry in the traditional sense. The third type is represented by the correspondence of a lady called Babet. In the first edition, the latter series of letters was divided into groups of two to five, with shorter or longer gaps between the groups, but from the 1683 edition onwards the letters form a single unit, without a separate title.[76] It was only after Boursault's death that this series of letters was given the title *Lettres à/de Babet* in the collected editions of the author's epistolary works, and only in the early 18th century was it published as a separate piece.[77]

The series consists of a total of fifty-three letters, split roughly equally between Babet and her correspondent. The letters form a fictional dialogue between Babet, a merchant's daughter, and her lover, a bourgeois young man with an interest in literature. According to the story, the girl's father does not agree to the young couple's marriage and wants to marry her off to someone else, but the daughter protests and her father sends her to a convent. The scattered arrangement of the letters in the first collection shows that Boursault did not originally intend to create a continuous, novel-like story.[78] This idea was not realized until the second collection published nearly thirty years later.[79]

In the title of the second collection, Boursault draws special attention to the short narratives associated with the letters. He includes a section entitled 'Sept lettres de suite d'une dame à un cavalier' [Seven Consecutive Letters from a Lady to a Gentleman], which contains letters written by a high-ranking unnamed lady

74 Carrell, *Le Soliloque de la passion*; Calas, "Le désir du dialogue"; Bray, *Roman par lettres*, 356–7.

75 Boursault, *Lettres de respect*.

76 Boursault, *Lettres de respect* (Paris: T. Girard, 1683).

77 Boursault, *Lettres de Babet*.

78 Bray, *Roman par lettres*, 70–1; Bray, *Épistoliers*, 373–86.

79 Boursault, *Lettres nouvelles* (Paris: Vve de T. Girard, 1697).

to her knight. The lady's epistolary monologue ends with the knight's departure for England. The second edition of the second collection contains thirteen letters instead of seven, and the title is changed accordingly, but the outcome of the story is the same as before.[80]

The collection is prefaced by two introductory texts in which Boursault identifies himself as the publisher of the letters. In the first and last letters, he expounds on the question of letter-writing twice as an occasion for hypocrisy and draws attention to the possibility of lying. He does not openly claim his authorship, but merely implies it.[81] In the two series of letters, Boursault creates two fictitious female characters, obscuring the origins of the letters, while the fictitious framework is part of the love stories that emerge from the letters.[82] Boursault was one of the first to understand and exploit the potential of the dual nature of the genre, to question the origin and authenticity of letters.

Madame d'Aulnoy's *Relation du voyage d'Espagne* [Report on Travels in Spain] (1691) is a typical example of a travel narrative in the form of a series of letters, a mixture of fictional and semi-fictional elements.[83] The collection was inspired by the author's probable travels in Spain between 1679 and 1681.[84] It consists of fifteen letters, the first fourteen of which are dated between February and September 1679, and the last written a year later, on 28 September 1680 in Madrid. The letters are by a high-ranking French woman who is travelling with her daughter from the French-Spanish border to Madrid. The addressee is her niece, also anonymous, who is staying in France.

Madame d'Aulnoy looks at Spanish culture from a new perspective. She recounts the experiences of a woman exposed to the perils of travel, while painting a vivid picture of Spanish rural and court life and customs.[85] The narrative is rich in observations: it informs, for example, of travel conditions, accommodation, a whole range of villages, castles, churches, gardens and palaces, fashions, courtesies, diets, the secret sign language of lovers, and the peculiarities of widowhood. The narrator often contrasts Spanish conditions with the French way of life and social customs, while pointing out the virtues and faults of Spaniards. He is increasingly interested in the social situation of women, their way of life and the relationship between the

80 Boursault, *Lettres nouvelles* (Paris: N. Gosselin, 1699–1700). Recent edition of the 13 letters: Boursault, *Treize lettres amoureuses*.

81 Gevrey, "Aspects du temps"; Bray, *Épistoliers*, 383–4.

82 Bray, *Épistoliers*, 385–6.

83 Recent edition: Aulnoy, *Relation*. Cf. for example, Aulnoy, *The Ingenious and Diverting Letters*; Aulnoy, *Der Gräfin d'Aunoy Beschreibung*; Aulnoy, *Verbeeterde reize door spanjen*.

84 Aulnoy, *Relation*, 14.

85 Aulnoy, *Relation*, 10–5.

two sexes. He produces a large number of piquant anecdotes and stories about the love life of the Spanish court, and paints portraits of important personalities. The description of what is seen during the journey and the technique of comparing the two cultures is comparable to the corresponding passages in *Letters from Turkey*.

The letters establish a fictional dialogue between the narrator and the mysterious niece, which also echoes the procedure followed in *Letters from Turkey*. For example, pressing the addressee for comments on previous letters and meeting the addressee's expectations reinforces the dialogic nature of the communication. The personal voice, the confidential tone of the communications, the rapid transitions between them, and the references to the addressee all contribute to hiding the fiction. Besides the direct narrative, two further narrative levels appear from the second letter onwards.[86] One is set up when the traveller and his high-ranking companion are joined by three Spanish knights who engage the narrator in conversation and introduce him to the world of the Spanish aristocracy. The third narrative level consists of shorter and longer tales, short stories and historical anecdotes inserted into the narrative, which make up almost a third of the volume. They regularly interrupt the narrative and create a new type of relationship between reality and fiction. The histories are part of the traveller's gradual discovery of the Spanish reality. The narrator treats fictional histories and historical narratives on an equal footing, while integrating them into the presentation of the travellers' daily activities. Some of the histories inserted into the narrative illustrate the exemplary Spanish morals. Their insertion is comparable to the practice followed in *Letters from Turkey*. All this shows that fiction provides the framework for presenting historical, social, and cultural reality, while reality and fiction are closely intertwined.

Letter in the novel

From the end of the 16th century, the use of the letter in narrative works contributed to the spread of French examples and practices of gallant correspondence and increased the literary status of the genre.[87] The narrative use of the letter closely combines the characteristics of epistolary writing and fictional narrative. In the course of the 17th century, the letter becomes a genuine motif of the novel, often with symbolic meanings, including the circumstances of writing, sending, receiving, reading and

86 Aulnoy, *Relation*, 15–21.

87 For antecedents in the 15th, 16th and early 17th centuries see, for example, Piccolomini, *De duobus amantibus*; Piccolomini, *De duobus amantibus Euryalus et Lucretia*; Crenne, *Les angoysses douloureuses*; Bouchet, *Les Angoisses et remedes*. Cf. Verville, *Les Aventures de Floride*; D'Urfé, *L'Astrée*.

preserving, quoting the letter and commenting on its contents.[88] There are several variations in the way the letter is incorporated into the novel, its suggested reading, and the relationship of the author, characters and readers to the letter. From the middle of the century, the narrative use of the letter is intensified and differentiated.

An important milestone in the history of the epistolary novel is Bussy-Rabutin's *Histoire amoureuse des Gaules* [A Love Story of the Gauls], published in 1665, in which letters relating to amorous seduction indicate the form's suitability for pretense and manipulation.[89] In his key novel, epistolary communication functions as a complex mechanism, part of a strategy of conquest in love, which provides the opportunity to depict the psychology of love and the specificities of social relations. From real people, Bussy creates largely fictitious characters, linked by imaginary love affairs and intentions. He seems to be conscious of the fact that correspondence is an essential means of communication between members of the French aristocracy, and that love and politics are often closely intertwined. In several cases, he constructs and attributes fictitious letters to pseudonymous participants in the events. His favourite method is to reproduce the text of fictional or partly fictional missives, or to summarize their content. He often uses the triple pattern of seeing/meeting → dialogue → letter-writing, while the letter and the oral dialogue complement each other in the seduction process.[90]

Bussy unmasks the ways and negative consequences of using the letter as a form of pretense, while covering a wide range of letter types. The letter may be written in cipher or in the left hand to deceive the addressee, it may be anonymous[91] or coerced, it may be intercepted, copied and used as an incriminating document, and it may be written during a jealousy crisis. The letter gives the opportunity to experiment with different tones, but it is also noticeable that Bussy generally takes more care in the elaboration of his dialogues than of his letters. He covers a wide range of mail manipulation and nuisance situations, such as substitution, concealment, and delivery to unauthorized persons.

In an early example of the French psychological novel, *La Princesse de Clèves*, attributed mostly to Mme de Lafayette, a letter plays an important role, linked to a so-called secondary narrative (*récit secondaire*) that interrupts the plot.[92] In the

88 Bray, *Roman par lettres*, 75–85.

89 Bussy-Rabutin, *Histoire amoreuse* [1665]. Recent edition: Bussy-Rabutin, *Histoire amoureuse* (1993).

90 Bray, *Roman par lettres*, 375.

91 On the role of the anonymous letter in the novel, see for example, Boursault, *Le Prince de Condé*.

92 Lafayette, *La Princesse de Clèves*. Recent edition: Lafayette, *Œuvres Complètes*. Cf. Bray, *Roman par lettres*, 360. See also the Correspondance of Madame de Lafayette in Lafayette, *Œuvres Complètes*. For the literary topos of the lost letter, see Tane, "Figure(s)."

centre of the novel, at the end of Part II and the beginning of Part III, the intricate episode linking the two parts, in which everything revolves around a lost letter, accounts for about one-sixth of the total length. The main protagonists are the Duke of Nemours and the Princess of Clèves, but the princess's husband, her uncle, the crown princess, and the queen are also involved. In the episode, an anonymous 'gallant letter', believed to have fallen out of the pocket of the Duke of Nemours, who was courting the princess, or the duchess's uncle, the Count of Chartres, is delivered by the crown princess to the Princess of Clèves. The content of the letter, as read by the princess, refers to Nemours' unknown affair and arouses her jealousy. The prince manages to come clean to the princess, who confesses her feelings for Nemours to her husband. In the final scene, in preparation for the lovers' parting, the Princess of Clèves reminds Nemours of her first feelings for him and tells him that they will never see each other again.

The letter episode is central to the plot of the novel.[93] Its primary role is to heighten the tension, to make the Princess of Clèves aware of her feelings, to arouse her jealousy, and to show the complexity of the gallant courtly relations; the stakes are to reveal her hitherto secret feelings to her husband and the court. The emergence of the letter disrupts the normal course of epistolary communication, while altering marital and amorous relations and influencing events at court. It tests both the Princess of Clèves' attraction to Nemours and Nemours' friendship with the Count of Chartres. The episode faithfully depicts the close intertwining of private life and the court and illustrates the organization and functioning of the court aristocracy, where secret correspondence was indispensable.[94]

Robert Challe's novel *Les Illustres Françaises*, published in 1713, the year Mikes and Rákóczi arrived in France, is a good example of the serial, topical use of the letter motif.[95] Challe incorporates the texts of as many as thirty letters into the narrative; the number of references to letters exceeds three hundred.[96] Building on the narrative and epistolary traditions of the previous century, Challe presents seven love stories in which correspondence, sometimes in secret, is a constant feature. The letters and their references function as an important means of communication, dissimulation, and the textual representation of the relationships depicted.

The primary role of letters is to portray different emotional states and situations, while often contributing to the development of stories. They regularly interrupt the narrative and provide contextual information.[97] The stylistic quality, the

93 Morel, "Sur l'histoire."

94 Bray, *Roman par lettres*, 76, 360.

95 Challe, *Les Illustres Françaises* (1713). Recent edition: Challe, *Les Illustres Françaises* (1991).

96 Bray, *Roman par lettres*, 77, 382–3.

97 Bray, *Roman par lettres*, 383–5.

sincerity and the bold tone of the letters are a significant factor in the unfolding of passions. Common themes include the confession of emotions, break-ups, revenge, jealousy, and unjust accusations, but there are also motifs of letters rejected or burnt because of shame or contempt. The letter can be a means of naming, appointing, and shaming, or even the cause of a sudden death. The letters and *billet*s published textually represent different degrees of verisimilitude.[98]

Like the novelists noted above, Challe repeatedly addresses the hypocritical nature of the letter, the doubts about the sincerity of the letter's expressions, and the possibility of two or more readings. He provides an insight into the complex and varied methods of secret correspondence and the possibilities of defending and breaching the confidentiality of correspondence. He links the system of epistolary communication in an original way to the moral and emotional relations of the couples in the stories and to the organization of the novel. In a variety of forms, he illustrates the difficulties of young people's quest for self-liberation in writing and marks the transition from the intensive use of the letter motif in the novel to the so-called realistic narrative.[99]

Epistolary novels

According to a widely accepted definition, an epistolary novel is a composed series of fictional letters or fictional correspondence between two or more persons, in which the author or publisher claims the authenticity of the letters.[100] *Letters from Turkey* fully meets this definition. The major narrative possibilities of the genre include the direct voice, the absence of a continuous narrative, the combination of two or more perspectives, the tension between individuality and writing for two or more voices, the continuous play with authorial/publisher fiction and the representation of the reader as part of the plot. The works included here are important in this context because they help us consider the extent *Letters from Turkey* can be considered an epistolary novel.

Published in 1555, Étienne Pasquier's *Lettres amoureuses* is regarded as the prototype of the epistolary novel on love, and is part of a collection of gallant sonnets, elegies, and two dialogues on related subjects.[101] In its original form, it is a novelistic series of nineteen letters following antique patterns, added in the second edition to

98 Bray, *Roman par lettres*, 393–8.

99 Bray, *Roman par lettres*, 389–90.

100 Golz, "Brief.", 251–5. Cf. Beebee, *Epistolary Fiction*.

101 Pasquier, *Recuil des rymes*. Cf. Bjaï, "Vers et prose"; Daumas, *La Tendresse Amoureuse*; Millet-Gérard, *Le Cœur et le cri*; Bray, *Épistoliers*, 98–113.

Philippe Hubert de Villiers' translation of Girolamo Parabosco's gallant letters.[102] In the third and fourth editions, the number of letters increased to twenty-four.[103] The letters tell the story of an unhappy love affair, from confession of feelings and adoration of the beloved, through stages of complaint, impatience, scolding, jealousy, reconciliation and anger, to break-up.[104] Pasquier claims that the story emerging from the correspondence is self-inflicted, i.e., real. The literary character of the collection is evident, and it is in a sense a distant prequel to *Lettres portugaises*, written for a male voice, which was long without a successor.[105]

Published in 1667, the first epistolary work to include the term 'roman' (novel) in its title is *Le Roman des lettres* [The Novel of Letters] by François Hédelin, abbé d'Aubignac.[106] According to the story, two friends, Cleonce and Learinde, are in a country house reading and commenting on letters written and received by Ariste, which they intend to compile into a collection. Having read them, they decide that the collection they have planned is now ready to be published. In a dedication signed in Ariste's name, d'Aubignac calls the letters his own, maintaining throughout the ambiguity of the relationship between the author and the characters. The more than a hundred letters gradually reveal an extensive network of emotional relationships.[107]

Bernard le Bouyer de Fontenelle's work, published in 1683, is on the border between a fictional collection of letters and an epistolary novel.[108] Fontenelle was one of the first to use the practice of denoting names with a capital initial and asterisks in the title, a practice later followed by several French authors and, with dots instead of asterisks, also by Mikes.[109] The work contains a total of one hundred and eleven letters, called missives, addressed to forty-five different people. The letters are almost equally divided between male and female recipients, with one woman being the recipient of twenty-two letters.[110] The repeated use of the same initials, the omission of initials and discrepancies between editions often make it problematic to distinguish recipients. The absence of dates, addresses, closing formulas and signatures indicates a lack of form and weakens the real character of the letters. The knight d'Her*** of the title is an active participant in the love affairs that unfold from

102 Parabosco, *Lettres amoureuses*.

103 Pasquier, *La jeunesse*; Pasquier, *Les oeuvres meslees*.

104 Bray, *Roman par lettres*, 130–2.

105 Campanini Catani, "Quand l'auteur se fait personnage".

106 Hédelin, *Le Roman des lettres*. Facsimile edition: Hédelin, *Le Roman des lettres*. Cf. Hédelin, *Nouveau Roman*.

107 Bray, *Roman par lettres*, 71–2, 90.

108 Fontenelle, *Lettres diverses*. Critical edition: Fontenelle, *Lettres Galantes*.

109 Facsimile edition of the autograph manuscript: Mikes, *Constantinápolyban gróf P… E….*

110 Bray, *Roman par lettres*, 409–10.

the letters, an advisor and an observer or commenting witness in one person.[111]

Fontenelle's main intention is to entertain, and the moralistic objective is secondary. He depicts a variety of social and family relationships, typical love and marriage situations, with the world of Parisian salons at its centre. The structure and sound are both far removed from Guilleragues' work, for example, and the story and the nuanced drawing of emotions are largely absent. The main peculiarity is the deliberately careless use of the epistolary form and the arbitrary nature of editing, which draws attention to the work's transitory nature.[112]

Giovanni Paolo Marana's *L'Espion du Grand Seigneur* is considered to be one of the inspirations for Montesquieu's *Les Lettres persanes* and Mikes' *Letters from Turkey*.[113] It marks a departure from the love theme and the gallant tone of the epistolary novel, while also showing the exploitation of its satirical and geopolitical potential. The first edition of 1684, published simultaneously in Italian[114] and French, contains thirty letters, while the second edition of 1686, the final author's version, contains one hundred and two.[115] In subsequent editions from the early 18th century onwards, the number of letters increased several times over.[116]

According to the fictional framework story, the source is a collection of manuscript letters in Arabic found "by chance" in Paris, which Marana translated, summarized, annotated, and published. Marana identifies the writer as an educated Arab named Mahmut, who converted to Catholicism, worked as a secret agent in Paris on behalf of Sultan Murat IV, and regularly sent reports to Constantinople. Marana authenticates the missive nature of the letters with a variety of turns of phrase, designations, and a multitude of fictitious Turkish figures. The relationship between the writer of the letters and the recipients is both documentary and fictional.[117]

The work covers a period some forty to fifty years before its publication. Recurring themes include the Franco-Spanish conflict, naval battles, diplomatic issues, the situation in Venice and Genoa, and the power, social, commercial, religious, and political relations in the Mediterranean. The main subject, however, is an indirect apologia for the person and policies of Louis XIV. There is a constant tension between Mahmut's loyalty to his patrons and his desire to win the patronage of the French monarch.

111 Bray, *Roman par lettres*, 406–8.

112 Bray, *Roman par lettres*, 410–5.

113 Marana, *L'Espion du Grand Seigneur et*. Cf. MKÖM I, 666–7.

114 Marana, *L'Esploratore turco*.

115 Marana, *L'Espion du Grand Seigneur*.

116 Bray, *Roman par lettres*, 136–9.

117 Bray, *Roman par lettres*, 140–3.

Marana uses a peculiar double language; the dichotomy of pro-Ottoman and pro-French arguments runs throughout his work.[118] In judging the events, there are often various flashbacks and predictions, usually designed to glorify the king. Marana repeatedly raises the issue of the status of information and the credibility of news sources. With moralistic and satirical intentions, he adopts the literary type of the Eastern observer of European reality,[119] while creating a complex figure with an identity of his own, who is both a participant and an observer of events, and a real hero in the novel.

Alain-René Lesage's *Lettres galantes d'Aristénète*, published in 1695, is part of the courtly gallantry tradition. Its title recalls both Guillerages' work and the Ovidian heroid tradition.[120] Its main source, a Greek-language manuscript attributed to a fictional Greek author named Aristainetos,[121] collects erotic motifs from antiquity, divided into two books of fifty letters. The first Latin translation was by Josias Mercier and was first published in 1595.[122] Lesage uses the Latin translation as a source. In the revision, he omits the arguments, but keeps the names of the letter-writers and recipients, and often inserts salutations to emphasize the epistolary nature of the texts. He often colours, expands or shortens the original text. He modernizes the idiom and tone and tries to approximate the gallant epistolary practice of his time.[123] While depicting a variety of irregular or debauched love and marriage situations, he enhances the literary character of the letters with the taste of the time.

In 1740, Lesage published under a new title a substantially revised version of his earlier work, reduced to twenty-four letters.[124] He has constructed a new frame story in which Aristénète's letters, found while hunting in the countryside, are read by the local parish priest to a group of three ladies and three men. Lesage omits about half of the original collection, having rewritten a large part of the letters and adding short, dialogue-like comments from the mouths of the people listening to the readings. In the process of editing and rewriting, he has deleted or shortened excessively sensual passages and made stylistic corrections. The main purpose of the commentaries is to emphasize or explain the differences and similarities between the morals of the two periods.[125]

118 Bray, *Roman par lettres*, 146–56.

119 Guion, "L'Espion du Grand Seigneur". See also Boyer, *Lettres juives*.

120 Lesage, *Œuvres complètes*.

121 Sambucus, ed., *Aristainetu Epistolai*.

122 Aristainetos, *Aristainetou epistolai / Aristaeneti epistolae*. Between 1596 and 1639 four further editions were published. The first French translation: Aristainetos, *Les Épistres*. A selection of the letters was published in the following anthology: Marcassus, *Lettres polytiques*.

123 Bray, *Roman par lettres*, 421–5.

124 Lesage, *La Valise trouvée* (1740). Recent edition: Lesage, *La Valise trouvée* (2002).

125 Bray, *Roman par lettres*, 425–6.

Finally, we have two examples from the post-1720 period in the history of the epistolary novel which represent the type scored for a single female voice. The first, a novel by Crébillon fils was published in 1732, contemporary with the genesis of Mikes' work.[126] The *Lettres* consists of two parts: the first contains forty-one numbered letters, the second sixty-nine, but some are accompanied by one or two additional *billet*s. Here, too, the names are set off by initials and asterisks. The narrator identifies himself as the publisher of the letters, indicating that the original number of letters was five hundred, and he occasionally refers to 'omissions'.[127] Nevertheless, the narrative is continuous. The story that unfolds from the letters has a single thread: the young Marquise M*** is persistently courted by a friend of her husband's, Count R***, who eventually conquers her. The narrator also puts the story of the deceived husband into the mouth of the marchioness, while the character and behaviour of the count are largely obscured. Before her death, the marquise burns her lover's letters, with one exception. The letters are undated, mentioning only periods of time; the narrative is structured by the rhythm of the passion. The collection tells the story of a conquest from the point of view of the conquered woman.[128]

Crébillon gives a detailed story of the loss of the 'self', while drawing a wide range of emotions.[129] The main strength of the work is the faithful reproduction of the light, free and uncontroversial female voice. Again and again, satire and irony permeate the fiction. Crébillion draws primarily on the epistolary tradition of Boursault, Anne Ferrand, Guilleragues, Fontenelle, Richelet, and Mme de Lafayette, which he uses primarily in the form of reminiscences, imitations, and parodies.[130] The *Lettres* is a nuanced reflection on the volatile nature of love, the stages and dangers of an affair, the themes of duty and virtue, and the powerlessness of reason to deal with passion. Passion is depicted as the main cause of sin and misfortune. While criticizing the libertine ideology and language of love through indirect means, he makes a significant contribution to the renewal of the epistolary novel and the creation of a new genre model.[131]

Marie-Jeanne Riccoboni's work, published in 1757, the year before the date on the last letter of *Letters from Turkey*, is a sentimental epistolary novel of the type that imitates real love correspondence.[132] The novel provides a nuanced analysis of

126 Crébillon, *Lettres*. Recent edition of the version from 1739: Crébillon, *Lettres* (Paris: Desjonquères, 2010).

127 See, for example, Crébillon, *Lettres* (Paris: Desjonquères, 2010), 108.

128 Crébillon, *Lettres* (Paris: Desjonquères, 2010), 27.

129 Crébillon, *Lettres* (Paris: Desjonquères, 2010), 228–30.

130 Crébillon, *Lettres* (Paris: Desjonquères, 2010), 16–21.

131 Crébillon, *Lettres* (Paris: Desjonquères, 2010), 25–30.

132 Riccoboni, *Lettres*.

human nature in the light of the passion of love, largely using time-honoured topoi and formulas.[133] Riccoboni depicts the physical, mental, and social qualities of the beloved in great detail, using a variety of means to create the illusion of the presence or proximity of the "other". In Letter XXXI, for example, she mentions the pleasant fragrance of a letter she received from her lover, similar to the way Mikes refers to the delightful smell of the news he was writing in Letter 33 and the fine taste of the letters he received in Letter 75:[134] "Quelle lettre, mon cher Alfred, je ne saurais la quitter ! Que tout ce qui vient de vous, me plaît ! […] Je relis cette lettre charmante: je la remets dans ce portefeuille, que j'ai vu si souvent dans vos mains. Ah ! Qu'il sent bon ! il sent comme toi […]."[135]

Conclusions

1) The survey shows that the French epistolary tradition that preceded and inspired Mikes' *Letters from Turkey* is much more complex than Hungarian research has so far presumed. The history of epistolary genres, text and publication types is characterized by both continuity and change; the last third of the 17th century witnessed a differentiation and an intensification of various fictional and semi-fictional constructions. For the pre-1720 period, instead of the three types of publications/source groups hitherto considered by the Mikes research, five types/source groups have been distinguished, which may be extended with additional items, and new sub-types should also be considered. This extremely rich epistolary culture, which also inspired the English and German epistolary novels,[136] constitutes one of the primary genre contexts of and a stimulation for *Letters from Turkey*. The influence of the French epistolary tradition, together with the presence of ancient, biblical and contemporary sources, and further literary reminiscences prevailed in Mikes.

2) The study of genre history will help us better understand the characteristics and literary contexts of the Mikes letter form. Only the comparatist approach, with particular reference to the French context, is suitable for exploring meanings. It is worth looking for the possible antecedents, motivations, and parallels of *Letters from Turkey* in a broader context than has been assumed so far. In this paper,

133 Bray, *Épistoliers*, 102–3, 108–12.

134 "leg elöbször szép szinü, és jó szagu hirt irok, azután irom meg a csendülö hirt."; „akéd levelei, jó izüek, csak nem meg ehetném a papirost is. tudgya kéd mitöl vagyon az, attol hogy szerettyük egymást." MKÖM I, 48; 134. "But first I shall write finely tinted and sweet-scented news, then toll the bell"; "but your letters are flavoursome, and I could almost eat the paper. Do you know why that is? It is because we love one another." Mikes, *Letters from Turkey*, 56–7, 147.

135 Riccoboni, *Lettres* (lettre XXXI). Quoted by Bray, *Épistoliers*, 102.

136 Day, *Told in Letters*, 27–47; Nickisch, *Brief*, 40–1.

I have only taken into account printed works, many of which have been published in several editions and are not or not sufficiently known in the Mikes scholarship, although Mikes may have had access to them during his stay in France or Turkey. The affinities between the generic models and Mikes' work are diverse and of varying strengths. Mikes was certainly familiar with the manuals and epistolary florilegiums which help the study of French and often contain letters and phrases that can be used in writing letters.

3) The source material surveyed is a rich repository of stylistic devices, clichés, topoi, gallant turns of phrase, epistolary and self-construction techniques, motifs, and methods of fictionalization used in epistolary works. Beside the correspondence of Bussy-Rabutin and Mme de Sévigné, there are numerous examples of fictional or semi-fictional collections of letters based on a single voice, a direct, conversational or passionate tone, epistolary turns of gallant courtship, the fictionalization of the addressee, and the depiction of the situation of exile. A wide range of literary devices were used to give the impression of real correspondence, including a large number of them that Mikes also used. The insertion of histories and anecdotes in letters may be considered a common feature of the French epistolary practice, as well as in memoirs and moral literature. Their use, their dialogizing, and their meaning are essentially the same as in *Letters from Turkey*.

4) The systematic analysis of the content, the formal characteristics and intertextual relations of the source material presented may help identify further thematic correspondences, motif transpositions, textual contexts, and possible sources of rhetorical devices, and may take us closer to Mikes' work. The possibility cannot be excluded that some of Mikes' remarks and turns of phrase previously thought to be original are also paraphrases, imitations, or adaptations.[137] Therefore, the relationship between authenticity and imitation in *Letters from Turkey* is more complex than described so far and requires further research. The identification of new models, sources, and textual parallels does by no means diminish the originality of the work.

5) *Letters from Turkey* is not an 'inclusion',[138] but a modern work in both concept and detail, in conformity with the epistolary literature of Western Europe, including the French epistolary tradition, and is comparable to many of its works. The presence of the three French authors in exile in the source material presented in this paper confirms the observation that the extreme situations of life that isolate the individual encourage the writing of letters and the choice of the epistolary genre. It also provides us with the opportunity to compare the motifs of exile with *Letters from Turkey*.

137 Cf. Bányász, *Törökországi levelek*.

138 Szilágyi, "Egy sajátos zárvány."

6) The investigation seems to confirm the hypothesis of Bernard Bray and Odile Richard-Pauchet that *Letters from Turkey* can be placed—with certain restrictions—within the framework of the French epistolary literature, and within it the history of the epistolary novel.[139] *Letters from Turkey* can be interpreted as an epistolary novel, the plot of which was partly written by the lives of the exiles—mainly Rákóczi and Mikes—, European political games and Ottoman diplomacy. It seems evident that *Letters from Turkey* occupies a transitional place between the tradition of the sentimental epistolary novel, completed by real or semi-fictional correspondences, and the epistolary novel with moral and philosophical aims, which also uses motifs of exotic travel and exile. The fact that Hungarian readers find it difficult to interpret it as a novel because of their direct involvement, the high proportion of historical references, and the lack of a proper genre tradition[140] is another matter altogether.

7) Mikes had not yet uttered the key phrase of 18th-century sentimental literature—"je sens, donc j'existe"[141]—, but there are some features in his work that point towards the sentimental novel, including the confessional tone, the exploration and speculation of spiritual motives, and the nuanced depiction of different forms of love. There is no single philosophical thesis endorsed by Mikes, but his Christian stoicism combined with practical wisdom and serene rationalism, and his reflections on the questions of religion, providence, nature, time, free will, customs, morality, politics, exile, and suffering point in the direction of the philosophical novel. He considers natural reason to be the controller of morality, jokingly travestying Descartes' theorem on the level of physical certainties: "I am still alive, for I eat and write."[142]

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139 Bray and Richard-Pauchet, "Kelemen Mikes," 268; Richard-Pauchet, "Introduction," 38, 40.

140 Labádi, *A magyar episztola*; Penke, "A levélműfaj szerepe,"; Bódi, "Galant levelek." Cf. Gelzer, *Konversation*; Steigerwald, *Galanterie*; Rose, *Conduite und Text*; Reinlein, *Der Brief als Medium*; Pintér, "A levél szerepe"; Kiczenko and Thimár, eds, *Levél, író, irodalom*.

141 Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, Études de la Nature, vol. XII, 438.

142 Mikes, *Letters from Turkey*, 230.

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