

Abstract

The Enlightenment of Feelings. The Poetic and Rhetoric Representation of Emotion in the European Epistolary Novel around 1800.

The project aims at the comparative analysis and description of the representation of emotion in three epistolary novels *Julie ou la Nouvelle Héloïse* [*Julie, or the New Heloise*] (Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 1761), *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* [*The Sorrows of Young Werther*] (Johann Wolfgang Goethe, 1774/1787) and *Ultime Lettere di Jacopo Ortis* [*The Last Letters of Jacopo Ortis*] (Ugo Foscolo, 1817) and a parallel study of selected private letters from the authors to their lovers with focus on genre-specific medial aspects of emotional writing. Furthermore, the communicative function of represented emotions as well as their rhetoric and performative potential shall be analyzed. The final object of this project is a tool-box for describing, analyzing and determining emotions typologically in epistolary novels [narrative texts].

The chosen exemplary epistolary novels of different European cultures are suited to a comparison because after Richardson's *Pamela* and *Clarissa* (1740/1748) the following three ones became a model for one another in their chronological order of publication. The protagonists' inner quarrels with worlds felt to be false as well as their search for a real world is negotiated by the representation of emotions and an imminent rhetorical criticism. Also formally the analysis of the focused genre which returns to a medium of daily life, namely the letter, represents a novelty in the research of emotion because it creates new conditions and possibilities of emotional expression in its literary reprise.

The current state of research shows that works of the modeling of affects (Matzat), the semantics of love (Bobsin, Klinkert) or the historical prototypical emotions as fear (Bernsen, Mellmann) give partly answer to the key question and constitute a good starting point for further research; nevertheless, diachronic and cultural aspects as well as the spectrum of the represented emotions in epistolary novels have not been taken into account. Essential questions about the method of analysis of emotions are still unanswered or have to be tackled once again. The methodology of Winko (2003) und Mellmann (2006) describing emotion as "code" or as "fake" shows how many different assumptions a literary and cultural analysis can be confronted with. It has been also shown that rhetoric and pragmatic aspects are helpful and substantial in the period of historical change around 1800. The "End of Rhetoric" (Behrens, Campe, Geitner) refers to the end of the Aristotelian rhetoric of topics: disreputable as an artificial technique for dissimulating affects this rhetoric is not more appropriate to reflect truly and naturally inner feelings and requires new possibilities of expression.