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Diary in Modern Ukrainian Literature: Varieties of the Genre

Yanina I. Kulinska

Bogomolets National Medical University, Kyiv, Ukraine

Olena I. Koval

Bogomolets National Medical University, Kyiv, Ukraine

Olga A. Redkina

Bogomolets National Medical University, Kyiv, Ukraine

Nina V. Gerasimenko

Shevchenko Institute of Literature of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Kyiv, Ukraine

Abstract---Diary literature was of interest to Ukrainian literary critics and literary critics from other countries in different years, but still most scientific studies occur in the mid-20th century. In Ukraine, the diary has been on the side-lines of the literary process for the past two decades. And only the turning points of historical events – the Revolution of Dignity and the Russian-Ukrainian war in eastern Ukraine – returned the genre to active public circulation: without exception, all the diaries of 2014-2020 were created during the crisis period, social upheavals. The relevance of the subject is explained by the need to use the latest practices to comprehend modern Ukrainian literature and, in particular, the diary genre as one of the components of modern military prose. The purpose of the study was to perform a thorough analysis of army diaries published during 2014-2020, study their genre nature, determine their distinctive features and create their general classification. Among the main methods for processing diary texts were historical-biographical, comparative historical, comparative, structural-narratological, interdisciplinary, as well as elements of hermeneutical, intertextual methods, text and discourse analysis, etc. The study presented a thorough analysis and suggested a new classification of the modern diary genre. The materials of the study can be used for the preparation of basic and special courses on the history of Ukrainian and world literature, literary theory, when compiling manuals, textbooks, including for higher educational institutions, etc.

Keywords---author, memoirs, notes, short story, text.

Introduction

The most fundamental studies covering the genre of the diary in European literary studies are still considered to be the study "Intimate diary" by A. Girard and "Max Frisch. Literary diary" by R. Kieser (Bircher, 1999). Among Russian scientists, in the 1960s-1980s, the diary caused serious controversy, predominantly by the uncertainty of its genre nature. For example, Ginzburg (1999), called the diary an "intermediate genre", Bank (1978) considered it an independent genre unit and contrasted diaries and memoirs. Egorov (2003), analysed literary diaries through the lens of psychological literature and also distinguished between a diary and a memoir, noting the "ambiguous relationship" between the two genres: "from a historical and documentary standpoint, memoirs are inferior to a diary (Braidotti, 2000; Kantor, 1976). The synchronicity of diary entries regarding the depicted events gave genre those qualities of efficiency and reliability that were not covered by the depth and philosophic nature of later assessments in memoiristics". Tartakovsky (1991) defined the diary as an equal genre of memoir prose, Gapeka & Lashkevich (2007), assigned it to subliterature.

There is no consensus in the definition of the concept of a diary among Ukrainian scientists, in particular Zatonsky (1989), interpreted it as a specific form of autobiographical and memoir genres. Merezhyńska (1986) advocated the study of the diary only among memoir literature, while Bovsunivska (2008), explained it as a variety of auto-documentary prose containing essential attributes of memoirism. Modern researcher Varykasha (2013), wrote about the diary's belonging to non-fiction literature, although she noted along the way that "due to its long marginal position in the literary studies of previous years, the diary still seems to be the most understudied genre." Cherkashyna (2014), included the diary in the diaristics: "the main genre of this subtype of memoirism is the diary (there are also historical variants of the name – diariusz, journal). Other genres of diaristics include blog, microblog, notes, and notebooks", while Halych (2008; 2015) is convinced that diaries belong to memoirs.

After the turning points of the historical events of 2013-2014 – the Revolution of Dignity and the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian war in Eastern Ukraine – the diary genre has become one of the most popular in the modern Ukrainian literary process, especially frequently it is used by authors-combatants, current or former fighters. Therefore, literary critics faced an urgent need for a clearer definition of the genre nature of the diary, the relations between the addressee and the author, the chronotope, functions, classification, and finally determination of the place of the diary in the general system of literary genres. As stated in the Literary Encyclopedia (Kovaliv, 2007), "diary is the notes of a certain author about life events that strongly impressed the author, prompting him or her to record them, mostly dated, presented in the first person in chronological order". And in the "Literary dictionary-reference book" edited by Hromiak et al., (1997), the diary genre is defined as "a literary realistic genre, a recording of a seen, heard, internally experienced event that has just happened". Both of these definitions are

most sound, prompting the authors to use them in this study (Mishkin, 1999; Sherr, 2006). The purpose of the study was to perform a thorough analysis of army diaries published during 2014-2020, study their genre nature, determine their distinctive features and create their general classification.

Materials and Methods

Research methods were subordinated to the achievement of the purpose set in this study. The main literary methods are historical and biographical (examination of diary texts in connection with reflecting the moments of author's biographies for further study in a modern historical context), comparative-typological and comparative (allow determining the similarity/difference in the development of modern literary phenomena with previous decades), structural-narratological (for building narrative models of the military diary genre), interdisciplinary (for analysing diary texts in connection with other types of art and media), as well as elements of a hermeneutical, intertextual approach (for identification of existential meanings in diary texts for the purpose of their multi-level reading and aesthetic value) (Vowel et al., 2017).

Based on the above methods, a conditional division of modern diaries into actual diaries with a powerful literary stream and military diaries was proposed. The first diaries include the diaries of famous Ukrainian writers Matios (2015) and Kurkov (2018), their texts stand out due to their compliance with the norms of the diary genre: recording an event as soon as it took place, with mandatory calendar dating, first-person narration, etc. Military diaries, the authors of which are mainly active or former military personnel, include army notes themselves and literary and journalistic materials called diaries (Gede Budasi & Wayan Suryasa, 2021). This classification gives a complete picture of the diary genre in modern Ukrainian literature with its modifications, subtypes, main features, etc. This allows clarifying the very concept of a diary, changing the process of genre creation, supplementing it with the phenomena of the modern literary process, and systematising the flow of literary and military texts in general (Hammond et al., 2007; Free et al., 2011). Researchers from other countries also discuss the rapid increase in scientific interest in the diary genre and even the emergence of a separate field of philology – diary studies. Among the reasons mentioned, in particular, are the fact that these texts, with their fragmentation, nonlinearity, violation of cause-and-effect relationships, intertextuality, autoreflexia, a combination of documentary and artistic principles, fundamental incompleteness and lack of a single idea, perfectly fall under the postmodern aesthetic paradigm (Zaliznyak, 2011).

Russian researcher Kolyadina (2006), named three main varieties of the diary genre that are actively in demand in world literature: a real diary (for example, the diaries of Anne Frank, Tanya Savicheva, Yura Ryabinkina – the impression depends on the context, both historical and literary); a writer's diary – diaries of writers, scientists, artists that were not supposed to be published, but at the same time their artistic value competes with the diaries of literary heroes deliberately created by authors (L. Tolstoy, M. Prishvin); literary works in the form of a diary ("Pechorin's Journal" in "Heroes of Our Time" by M. Lermontov, "The

Diary of a Superfluous Man" by I. Turgenev, "Kostia Ryabtsev's Diary" by M. Ognev, "Village Diary" by Ye. Dorosh).

Results and Discussion

In modern Ukrainian literature, diaries of 2014-2020 should be distinguished, first of all, by their authors – civilian or military. Hence, one can discuss the actual diaries with a powerful literary factor and military, battalion commander publications, the authors of which are current or former army soldiers. The most famous diaries of the first group “Diary of Maidan and War” by [Kurkov \(2018\)](#) and “Private diary. Maidan. War...” by [Matios \(2015\)](#). The emergence of both diariuszsz was caused by the events of 2013-2014, which became a separate page in the recent history of the Ukrainian state: “...not for the first time being in the centre of the “historical maelstrom”, I once again witnessed the dramatic events that began in Ukraine in November 2013 and are still ongoing. I do not know how they will end. I do not know what awaits me and my family in the near future... I am not leaving. I am not hiding from reality. I live in it every day... in an apartment on the fourth floor, from the balcony of which we saw smoke from burning barricades, heard explosions of grenades and shots... all this time life went on. And I wrote down this life almost every day, so that now I can try to tell you about it minutely, in detail. Life during the revolution, life in wait for war...” ([Kurkov, 2018](#)). For keeping records during such social upheavals, the diary is most fitting among all other genres. [Kurkov \(2018\)](#), adhered to all the requirements of the conventional diary form: he made notes regularly (even daily in the first months), with the mandatory indication of the date, place, often even the day of the week, carefully and meticulously noting events, thoughts, or considerations. The story unfolds deliberately, thoroughly, with minute details ([Rezapour & Hambarani, 2008](#); [Liao, 2009](#)). Notably, the text clearly traces three content planes: the theme of the Revolution, the theme of routine and everyday life, the theme of professional, writing sphere. They may be adjacent in the records of the same day, but also may not intertwine or overlap each other. Hence the three options of I-narrator: I, the Revolution Witness; I, an Ordinary Citizen; and I, a Writer.

The main attention of the narrator was focused on the Maidan events, from the very beginning of the civil resistance on November 21, 2013 to November 19, 2017: the text reflects not only the main stages of the Revolution of Dignity, but also the prerequisites for its emergence. In his diary, [Kurkov \(2018\)](#), covered a large-scale context – protests in the centre of Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities, the reaction of Ukrainian statesmen and clergymen of various dioceses, the behaviour of leading Ukrainian and European politicians during the revolution, their statements, etc. The smallest actions of the two sides of the confrontations were recorded. For example, a round table held by Yanukovych for national reconciliation, where “Ukrainian students were represented by a certain pink-cheeked chubby boy who opposed Europe and generally turned out to be a member of the “Young Regions” organisation” ([Kurkov, 2018](#)) and the meter-long “Yanukovych's ear” that his students brought to the Maidan stage and demanded that the guarantor hear the protesters. Such episodes are quickly forgotten among the general turbulent events, and only such private recordings allow conceptualising those days. “When you live near a volcano, either real or metaphorical, the day itself is filled with so many events that it is physically

impossible to remember them all (Lenchuk & Ahmed, 2021). These events are always included in school history textbooks, sometimes in two or three lines, sometimes in one or two pages, but in such situations only the dates and names of the actors are what's left of the events..." (Kurkov, 2018).

Along with the notes about the Revolution and the Maidan, there are also everyday notes in the diary (I, an ordinary citizen with daily chores), such as "Today we went to Silpo on Borshchahivka. We bought food for ourselves and for mom-Raia and Dad-Yura. We stopped by their place. Mom was worried that there was nothing to feed us. We ate tea and cake. The boys were playing with the cat Murochka. She was, by her old age, lazy and slow..." (Kurkov, 2018). And the third content plane concerns the professional activity of the author, it is a discussion about literature, about the ideas of new works, about book exhibitions, presentations, prospects for Ukrainian book publishing, etc. Depending on the subject, the rhythm of the author's narrative also changes: in general, detached, as objective as possible, with respect to cause-and-effect relationships, covering most issues through the prism of opposing parties, "protesters-central power" becomes disturbing, fragmentary and torn, textually incomplete, when it comes to the shootings of protesters on the Maidan, about the dead and maimed, about the Heavenly Hundred and their families. Here, the narrator refuses to play the role of a detached observer of events – in these notes a reader can feel pain, despair, and anger.

"Private diary. Maidan. War..." by Matios (2015), has a similar structure: the writer's notes concern two main historical events – the Revolution of Dignity and the beginning of the Russian occupation of Eastern Ukraine in 2014. The diary text is just as heterogeneous as Kurkov (2018) – thematically, most of the entries cover the Maidan protests, but there are also everyday notes such as "18.01.14 on January 16, spring hyacinths sprouted out the ovary of blossom. Abnormal". "8.03.14. I don't know about anyone else, but I have a high day when I am healthy and every person I love is healthy. So today I picked the first spring flowers in the garden for my mother, daughter-in-law, and granddaughter. So much for the eighth of March". "25.05.14 Had some coffee. Waved my hand to my peonies and roosters – I'm heading to vote. And you, must have beaten me to it already?" (Matios, 2015). The voice of Matios (2015), as a writer also becomes more expressive. In her diary, the author-narrator foremost expresses her I, the Revolution witness and participant: "22.12.13. I understand that this is historical data. I try to record as much as possible..." (Matios, 2015).

In general, in "Private diary. Maidan. War..." (Matios, 2015), several texts are intertwined – Facebook posts (about then current events of the Revolution of Dignity, which had to be immediately responded to, in particular, the dispersal on the Maidan, the shooting of protesters, the rescue of detainees in the capital's courts, and the wounded in hospitals, the further occupation of the Crimea and Donbas by the Russians, etc., as well as household notes), entries from a writer's notebook (arguments about the nation, people, War, etc.), media interviews, a variety of dialogues with colleagues-deputies, Maidan activists, displaced persons, etc. The diary also contains two levels of perception of the Revolution: the plane of power: officials, deputies, businessmen, as well as the plane of the middle class and ordinary people (Jirak et al., 2010; Barkhuizen, 2017). All entries are dated

by the writer, mostly detailed recordings of events, the story is narrated in the first person, fragmentarily and abruptly. According to the author herself, it was written "on the knee and on the wheels, without that mandatory and indispensable "filtering" of each word. Maybe for the first time in my creative life, I don't have time to polish my thoughts and sentences. There is no time to take care of selected phrases and aphoristic expressions" (Matios, 2015). But despite this, it is impossible to speak of the incompleteness of the story. Almost everywhere, after the day's notes, there is a "P. S.", where the author briefly indicated the outcome to a certain event. These entries were added later, arranged in literary and editorial terms (Hidayanti, 2021).

This eclecticism of the diary form gives rise to several literary questions at once, namely regarding the internet version of the modern diary, as well as the genre's relationship with non-fiction prose (Varykasha, 2013). Story in "Private diary. Maidan. War..." (Matios, 2015), is radically different from the narrative of Kurkov (2018) – it is bright and emotional, often with sharp jabs at some of her parliamentary colleagues: "13.12.13. ...the National Round Table continues in the Palace "Ukraine". A mockery rather than a round table. But still morons!...". "14.12.13. "Gramps Azirov" has completely lost the plot: he just said at an anti-Maidan rally that in Ukraine "we must legalise the same-sex marriage...". "16.01.14. ...the Party of Regions is nuttier than a fruitcake! They voted for the package of laws with their hands, feet, ears, tails, and handkerchiefs... I wanted to puke right in the hall". "14.05.14. This is vomit – not a national round table!!! Those whose hands fanned the fire in Ukraine, now bleat about making peace! Yefremov, Shufrych, Herman, Pysarenko. Shufrych is generally shedding his crocodile tears for Petro Symonenko, who was absent from this sabbath. Hyenas philosophise about vegetarianism. And where is Ukraine? Ukraine is on fire".

Diaries of the second group, the authors of which are current or former military personnel, include diaries themselves and other artistic and journalistic works in the form of diaries (Kulinska, 2020). The most famous publications of the diaries themselves are "Savur-Mohyla. Military diaries" by Muzyka et al. (2017), "Ilovaisk diary" by Zinenko (2017), "Military diary" by Mamalui (2016), etc. There are several factors common to all publications of this subgroup: firstly, their authors are combatants, so the diaries are based on the real author's military experience; and secondly, these stories are not recorded immediately after the events, but later; therefore, they are memoirs. All diaries without exception cover the beginning of the military campaign in Eastern Ukraine during its so-called hot phase, when the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU), together with volunteer battalions, advanced and liberated Donbas cities and villages from Russian invaders and their mercenaries – illegal armed groups.

Diaries "Savur-Mohyla. Military diaries" by Muzyka et al. (2017), "Ilovaisk diary" by Zinenko (2017), "Military diary" by Mamalui (2016), cover the most important military operations of the summer of 2014: the defence of Savur-Mohyla, a strategic height in the Donetsk Oblast, which was won from the enemy and held by volunteers in the deep enemy rear, until Russian troops came to reinforce the militants; the storming of Ilovaisk and the subsequent Ilovaisk pocket, the exit from the entrapment and the fusillading of the Ukrainian military column by the Russians in the so-called green corridor near Mnogopol; the liberation of Pisky,

Netailove, Pervomaiske, Avdiivka, the stay and defence of Donetsk airport – the story of a sniper, a participant in the anti-terrorist operation (ATO), [Mamalui \(2016\)](#). Therefore, these diaries can also be called point-based, location-based diaries. The shortest by time period is "Ilovaisk diary" by [Zinenko \(2017\)](#), with his notes covering events from August 18, 2014 to August 31, 2014. However, the notes are so detailed and thorough that they give a complete picture of the August events not only near Ilovaisk, but also on the Eastern Front in general. All diaries themselves meet genre requirements: entries are made by the authors regularly, notes are dated, often with an indication of the area, the story is narrated in the first person, referring to experiences – military deployments, everyday life, special operations, battles, impressions, considerations and assumptions.

"Dance of Death. Diary of a volunteer of the Donbas battalion" by [Mykhailyshyn \(2019\)](#), "ATO syndrome. Aibolit's notes" by [Stebliuk \(2017\)](#), "Gunner's diary" by [Kharchenko \(2019\)](#), "The war... From the diary of a sector "A" officer" by [Kushnir \(2020\)](#), "Military doctor's diary" by [Cherniienko \(2020\)](#), etc. are conditionally classified as artistic and journalistic materials under the guise of diaries. These publications are based, as in the previous subgroup, on stories about the Russian-Ukrainian war in the East and the participation of combatant authors in it. However, even though the books are published in the series and are called war diaries, they do not follow the genre features of the diary. In particular, most of these publications have two time planes – the real and the past ("ATO syndrome. Aibolit's notes" by [Stebliuk \(2017\)](#)), dating is done selectively ("Dance of Death. Diary of a volunteer of the Donbas battalion" by [Mykhailyshyn \(2019\)](#), "ATO syndrome. Aibolit's notes" by [Stebliuk \(2017\)](#), "Military doctor's diary" by [Cherniienko \(2020\)](#)) or completely missing ("The war... From the diary of a sector "A" officer" by [Kushnir \(2020\)](#), "Gunner's diary" by [Kharchenko \(2019\)](#), "Desire of the front" [Call sign "Vyrii" \(2017\)](#), etc.), the narration is not always in the first person. But all the author's material of this block is structured according to the laws of the plot of a literary work, so they have a beginning, climax and denouement, and there is also a conflict around which the story revolves ([Kulinska, 2020](#)).

"Dance of Death. Diary of a volunteer of the Donbas battalion" by [Mykhailyshyn \(2019\)](#), deserves special attention among the block of these publications. In this diary, the action takes place in two planes: the real one – the author describes his participation in the hot phase of the war, the liberation of Artemivsk, Popasna, Lysychansk, Pervomaisk, Marinka, battles and escape from the Ilovaisk entrapment; and the imaginary one is a musical interpretation of the war in general and events in the East in particular ([Suyasa et al., 2016](#)). The author himself is a grenade launcher operator, a lawyer in civilian life, an amateur musician, who played on the Maidan in December 2013, then volunteered for the war. The first thing a fighter does in the liberated territory is look for a piano in the assembly halls of schools and cultural centres and sit down at the instrument: "Music doesn't just attract listeners. A barrage of musical sounds falls on their heads. Constant pulsating accents alternate in the left and right hand... Warriors' dance. Several dozen men move rhythmically. Going wall on wall at each other... Tied notes develop a storm. Develop the struggle... Balanced and accurate strokes... Deadly strokes. The clang of iron just knocks you down. Ding-ding-ding... the climax just tears you apart from the

inside. Thousands upon thousands of warriors are stuck in an eternal struggle. Everyone wants to win, but there are no winners yet. There is only movement. Movement towards victory. Motivation. Zeal and anger. Calmness and balance... Without inner peace, you will never win the battle...". Musical works reproduce images of War, Death, Soldiers-Blood Brothers, etc. Therefore, the compositional design of this diary, apart from the plot-literary one, also has a musical one, because it begins with an overture.

"ATO syndrome. Aibolit's notes" by [Stebliuk \(2017\)](#), can also be called a borderline publication. Syncretic notes that combine modernity and long-past events (the protagonist's childhood, growing up, participation in previous revolutions and it is these flashbacks that are dated, not the present times), author's poems and small prose allow considering this diary not only among fiction publications, but also among non-fiction literature, as well as "Private diary. Maidan. War..." by [Matios \(2015\)](#). The genre of a modern military diary should first of all be distinguished by civilian or military authors. The first of them includes conventional documentary diaries with a powerful literary narrative, but all publications of military authors can be divided into diaries and artistic and journalistic works in the form of diaries ([Kulinska, 2020](#)). A substantial difference between civilian, writer's diaries, and military ones is that the former can be called chronicles since the records reflect events that have been witnessed or experienced as soon as they have occurred. Whereas the battalion commander's diaries – all without exception – are memoirs, later recollections created from original, for some reason lost notes. According to [Mykhailyshyn \(2019\)](#), "In Ilovaisk, I kept diaries. One burned down when a mine hit a car. Another one I lost. Then I restored them from memory and re-recorded them. When I was captured, I tore up the third diary (where I recorded the Ilovaisk events) and scattered it in the field. Another one remained in Kurakhovo at the campsite" ([Provornyj, 2019](#)). Such a simultaneous presence of varieties of diary – chronicles and memoirs, as well as their internal subtypes, indicates the intensive development and formation of the genre in modern military and non-fiction literature.

Conclusions

What is common to all modern diaries, without exception, is that they emerged as a result of social upheavals, changes in state power. In particular, the records highlight the events of the Revolution of Dignity, the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula, the approach and beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian war in Eastern Ukraine, as well as its course, stages, and outstanding pages in the history of Ukraine (Savur-Mohyla, Ilovaisk, Donetsk airport). The diaries of A. Kurkov and M. Matios are thoroughly created per all the requirements of the diary genre: records relate to current events that have just occurred, there is a clear calendar dating (on especially important days, even days of the week and hours are indicated), there are minor intersperses of household records, notes are not processed by editors (there are certain Russianisms in M. Matios' diary, along with dialectisms and slang), the story is narrated exclusively in the first person; a powerful literary factor brings these diaries closer to literary ones, both authors are well-known Ukrainian writers.

But diaries, whose authors are military, have two types: diaries per se and literary and journalistic works with the title and under the guise of diaries. The authors of the first subgroup mainly adhere to the requirements of the diary form (regularity of notes with dating, narration of modern events in the first person, sincerity, frankness of the narrative), while the publications of the second subgroup are created and unfold according to the laws of the literary plot. Therewith, during the analysis and systematisation of modern military diaries on this matter, new problems have emerged that require careful analysis. For example, the emergence of a network Internet diary, as well as a more detailed study of artistic and journalistic works in the form of a diary: these studies will help define not only new modifications, but also clarify the nature of the modern diary genre. At present, this phenomenon requires more careful and long-term attention, and it is still too early to draw final conclusions.

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