

WAR AS AN EXAMPLE OF COLLECTIVE TRANSGRESSION IN THE ESSAYS OF THE ANTHOLOGY «THE STATE OF WAR»

Anna MALITSKA

graduate (PhD) student,
the Department of Ukrainian Literature and Comparative Studies,
Odesa I.I. Mechnikov National University

Abstract

In the article, war is analysed as an example of collective transgression in military essays. The methods of analysis, synthesis, psychoanalysis, and receptive aesthetics are used to denote and study the examples of transgression in the essays of «The State of War» anthology. It is suggested that the

three main examples of war as transgressive experience are the boundaries created and crossed, the existence of certain social norms and taboos, and the imagological division between the people. The results of the results show that a boundary can be temporal (the leitmotif of the 24th of February). It is also highlighted that in the time of war the new norms and taboos can be created that emphasize the tension and instability in the society. Regarding the image studies, it is proved that the alienation through misunderstanding may occur even between the allies, as the Europeans cannot fully comprehend the Ukrainian experience of war.

Key words: *transgression, boundary, military fiction, essays, imagology.*

Introduction. In the two years of the full-scale invasion of Russia, the amount of military fiction in Ukrainian literature has increased significantly. Therefore, the problem of studying this type of literature by means of modern approaches has arisen in the literary studies. In this study, it is suggested to analyse Ukrainian military fiction through the concept of transgression. The choice of the concept is explained by its nature, as transgression means the crossing of a boundary, in narrative, conceptual, genre sense, etc. War as a concept is widely recognised as an example of transgressive experience. That is why, **the aim** of the research is to analyse the depiction of war in military fiction (essays, in particular) through the concept of transgression. **The object** of the research is an anthology «The State of War», published in 2023, which contains essays of 50 Ukrainian writers and intellectuals. The genre of essay was chosen, as it can also be studied within the concept of transgression, on the constant borderline of genres and discourses.

Methods. Among the methods used for the present research, are the general scientific methods of analysis and synthesis which enable the detailed study of the methodology and essays, the method of psychoanalysis (for deciphering and explaining taboo and restrictions as the expressions of transgression), existentialism (to explain the dissociation of the feelings of a person in the times of war). The principle of receptive aesthetics is also implied to enable the understanding of the influence of the concept of war as a transgressive experience on the readers.

The results of the research. Firstly, there is a need to explain transgression, as it is viewed in the humanities. For instance, R. Nykonenko underlines that transgression is «an experience of the subject overcoming possible boundaries, limits, various prohibitions, norms, etc.» (in literary studies), and «a special state, that leads to a violation of the norm (...) the transition space from one fixed state to another one...» (in cultural studies) (Nykonenko, 2022: 335). V. Musiy interprets transgression as the process of meeting of the two opposites, which the concepts of experiencing the border, the frontier etc. are directly connected to (Musiy, 2023: 29). Therefore, a conclusion can be made that transgression is a process that contains elements of instability, abnormal states.

In George Bataille's philosophy, the experiences of individual and collective transgression are studied. Among the latter there are celebrations, carnivals, and wars. (Kropyvko, 2019: 59). In our opinion, this theory can be highlighted by Ya. Polishchuk's ideas about war being the time of intension and instability, so it proves that war provokes the state of a boundary that is to be crossed. The war as an experience of collective transgression is often followed by the collapse of the regular life, the violation of rules and social norms, and the borders between people that can be viewed

through the image studies. These three main representations of the transgressive experience are vivid in the essays of «The State of War».

One of the dominant leitmotifs of the anthology, that unites the essays on the narrative and imagery levels, is the borderline between the 23rd and the 24th of February 2022. Within the ideas of transgression, this time shift can be interpreted as the crossing of the boundary: *«Востаннє я була з трекером у ніч на 24 лютого. Там лишилися показники сну»* (M. Barchuk, «The State of War», 2023: 47); *«Якраз 23 лютого вдень я надіслала рукопис своєї книги... А за якісь два тижні я несподівано опинилась у Мюнхені»* (T. Hundorova, «The State of War», 2023: 84); sometimes the authors speak about unexpected feelings they experienced: *«з якоїсь дивної причини – чи внаслідок дії захисного механізму – мені хотілося сміятись, я провів ранок 24 лютого, стоячи в довгій черзі в сусідньому продуктовому магазині»* (P. Zalmayev, «The State of War», 2023: 131). In these situations, the crossing results in the significant changes of both the world around and the inner world of an author (who is a subject of self-reflection): *«Ще війна, безперечно, змінює мову, її архітектуру, поле її функціонування»; «відчуття часового зламу, відсутності тягlosti, відчуття спресованості повітря, коли дихати стає важко від того, що реальність прагне витиснути тебе по той бік життя, по той бік видимого»* (S. Zhadan, «The State of War», 2023: 105). As it is seen, in terms of transgression the boundary created by the war can be crossed not only in space, but in time, too.

Both the transition state and the depiction of taboos are present in an essay «Haka, or the Formation of an Identity» by Sofia Andrukhovych. In it, the author's friend says that she has sex during the air raid alerts in the country, and immediately recognises it as a taboo topic that people mustn't talk about aloud in the present environment: *«Про це, напевно, не варто говорити вголос», – повторювала вона, а її очі щасливо світилися»* («The State of War», 2023: 21). It can be viewed as a sign of transgression; notwithstanding that any war breaks social norms, it is also capable of creating the new ones, which proves the idea of constant balance on the boundary. Haka, an ancient Maori war dance, was initially used to scare the enemies, and as a ritual dance allows the mind of the people performing it to cross the line between the real and imaginary worlds. The chorus of the chant «Ka mate» («I am death, I am life») underlines the existential transgressive dualism of life and death, Eros and Thanatos. A conclusion can be made that sex and haka mirror each other in the individual and collective experience of transgression.

The violation of social norms, often present in the times of war, in the idea of transgression creates a new norm. It is implied in the essay «Routine Habits» by Volodymyr Aryenyev, where he suggests that all cruel and violent deeds are considered to be normal, sometimes a routine thing: *«Ці новини з України теж мимоволі перетворюються там для когось на буденну звичку. І це жахає, бо таким чином тортури, вбивства, звалтування, скоєні російськими військовими, стають нормою»* («The State of War», 2023: 34). Moreover, it is also specified that this violation goes beyond the countries that are directly at war. In «Let This Be a Text Not About War» Serhiy Zhadan says that the act of transgression is often performed by the «audience» i.e. the Europeans: *«... намагаючись залишитися в зоні комфорту, вона благополучно виходить поза межі етики»* («The State of War», 2023: 107). Even the

image of a border is present in the text; it enables new ways of perception of the texts with the imagological potential. Not only the russians are viewed as enemies, but the people from the Western world (Europe, the USA) are seen as others and are separated by the existential boundary from the Ukrainians.

War as an experience of collective transgression forcibly erases the boundary, or, on the other hand, creates one artificially: *«Для українців – це війна за своє існування та майбутнє держави, і так само – для кримських татар, які по обидва боки штучного кордону на Чонгарі вигризують свою ідентичність та землю від окупантів»* (A. Aliev, «The State of War», 2023: 13). In Yu. Andrukhovych's essay it is also suggested that the linguistic boundary doesn't create an imagological frontier between the Ukrainians: *«Да я тоже против москалей, - відбився офіціант. - Я хоть из Крыма, но за Украину. / Сума чайових, здається, зросла»* («The State of War», 2023: 27).

On the other hand, the war also intensifies the imagological dualism of Ukraine and Europe as «Us - Strangers» relation: *«Все, що не є українським досвідом, нині бліде й непереконливе... Західні друзі переймаються, але не можуть повноцінно емпатувати»* (K. Kalytko, «The State of War», 2023: 139). Thus, the transgression here is seen in the creation of an existential boundary that is quite hard to cross without having lived through certain experience.

Conclusions. In military fiction and in essays, in particular, war can be seen and analysed as an example of collective transgression that includes instability, social tension and violation of norms. The beginning full-scale phase of russian-Ukrainian war in 2022 specified the boundary of time (the 24th of February) that expresses the dissociation of reality and of internal world of any person who experiences the war. As a concept of transgression, war also becomes the chronotopos, where social norms and taboos are erased and, on the other hand, the new ones are often set. It also creates the imagological boundaries that occur even between Ukraine and its allies on the ground of misunderstandings that are caused by different perception of the events.

References

1. Воєнний стан: антологія. Чернівці, Видавець Померанцев Святослав, 2023. 368 с. [in Ukrainian]
2. Кропивко І. В. Українська і польська постмодерна проза (карнавал, фрагментація, фронтір): монографія. Київ, Видавничий дім Дмитра Бураго, 2019. 524 с.
3. Мусій В. Постмодерна візія відносин «автор-герой» як акту трансгресії. *Вісник Одеського національного університету. Філологія*. 2023. №27. 1(25). С. 28–37.
4. Никоненко Р. Феномен трансгресії у сучасних мистецьких практиках. *Grail of Science*. 2022. Вип. 22. С. 335–337.