

## ФОЛЬКЛОРИСТИКА

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### RESEARCH OF WAR EXPERIENCE IN UKRAINIAN AND FOREIGN FOLKLORE STUDIES

*In the Ukrainian scientific discourse, the scientific study of autobiographical narratives about the war has been conducted at least within the framework of several philological, anthropological, and social disciplines. The most significant for the authors of the presented research are the findings in the fields of oral history, folklore studies, and social anthropology. Oral historians drew attention to alternative stories about war, which reflected the experiences not of the military only but also other groups of people, such as UPA insurgents, concentration camp prisoners, women, children, and home-front workers. Thus, they wanted to show a different, “another” war. The method of open narrative interviews suggested by oral history researchers is of the greatest importance to us as well. A number of scientific papers on the study of the war experience are based on the narratives of war refugees, which cover various aspects of a socio-anthropological and cultural and anthropological nature.*

*The research of autobiographical narratives in folklore studies has its own history. The most valuable for us are the works of the Polish scholar D. Simonides. Dorota Simonides considers the study of individual human biographies to be one of the most important tasks of modern folklore studies, seeing the object of research in the observation and study of human destiny. Among the followers of the famous Polish folklorist, the works of Hajduk-Nijakowska, A. Rzepkowska, and Przybyła-Dumin are worth mentioning. Ukrainian scholars' works by V. Borysenko, O. Britsyna, M. Hrynych, R. Kyrchiv, O. Kis, O. Kuzmenko, O. Labashchuk, and S. Myshanych should be mentioned as well. A structural and semantic analysis of autobiographical stories of Ukrainians about the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian war is carried out in O. Labashchuk's paper.*

*In the study of narratives about the war experience, there is a clear division by fields of knowledge: folklorists focus on philological issues, studying the poetics of the text, while specialists in cultural anthropology pay attention to the text as a presentation of a certain type of cultural tradition. At the same time, applying a combination of philological and anthropological methods to the material allows us to accomplish tasks and draw conclusions that have not been the subject of scientific interest so far.*

**Key words:** war experiences, narrative, folklore studies, anthropology, autobiography.

**Introduction.** On February 24, 2022, the Russian Federation launched a full-scale invasion of the territory of sovereign Ukraine. This date divided the lives of Ukrainian people into “before” and “after” periods. The independence of the Ukrainian state, the very existence of the Ukrainian nation,

the lives of the citizens of Ukraine were threatened. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the war entered the lives of every Ukrainian to a greater or lesser extent.

Narratives about the experience of war have attracted the attention of specialists in various fields

of knowledge: linguists, literary critics, ethnologists, oral historians and folklorists.

**The objective** of the presented study is to determine the works of Ukrainian and foreign researchers that could be used as a basis for studying the oral autobiographical narratives of combatants who describe their experiences.

**Presentation of the Material.** Scientific research of autobiographical narratives about war in the Ukrainian scientific discourse was conducted at least within a number of anthropological, philological, social disciplines [20]. For us, the most important achievements are in the field of oral history, folklore studies, social anthropology. Oral historians have drawn attention to alternative stories about war, which reflected the experience not of the military but of other social groups – UPA members, concentration camp prisoners, women, children, and rear workers. Thus, they wanted to show “another” war [6; 8; 16]. The method of open narrative interview, proposed by researchers of oral history [when the interviewer asks the respondent one open-ended question with a request to share his/her own experience] is of the greatest importance for our research. This allows the researcher not to prompt the narrator’s answer. From all the experience a person chooses only those episodes that are important for him/her.

We are not aware of anthropological or folkloristic research on the Russian-Ukrainian war of 2014–2022. The thematic issue of the journal *Europe-Asia Studies* covers topics of political, economic, social life, sense of identity, social adaptation of internally and externally displaced persons from Luhansk and Donetsk regions [12]. However, the issues of this collection do not correspond to our scientific interests. There are a number of relevant articles devoted to the study of the experience of the war, based on narratives of refugees from Syria, which cover various aspects of social anthropological and cultural anthropological nature [11; 14; 18; 19]. The most important for us is the work of Julia Powles, who raises important theoretical and methodological issues of refugee research. We were interested in the author’s reasoning that the life story and personal story help to identify our gaps in the knowledge of refugees, show their most important fears and concerns allowing them to be creative in solving these problems. In addition, the close connection between the storyteller and the interviewer enables to help the most vulnerable refugees, and the story of the experienced trauma may be cathartic [23].

The study of autobiographical folk stories in folklore studies has its history. Despite the fact that the memorate as a special kind of folk prose was discov-

ered by Karl von Sydov in the 30’s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century [29], folklorists have not considered it for a long time. Dorota Simonides speaks about this quite categorically. She suggests that the traditional oral repertoire consisted largely of memorates, but collectors did not record it, focusing only on what they thought could be considered folklore [29: p. 122]. The situation with the adequate reproduction of folklore tradition in the field of folk prose was aggravated by the established collecting and publishing practice. Oleksandra Britsyna has covered this issue in details. She points out that prose texts, due to the widespread literary model of recording and publication, underwent double editing: first by the collector and then by the editor, who sought to make the text more perfect, aesthetic, and more acceptable to the reader [3]. Such collecting and publishing practices had a detrimental effect on folklorists’ perception of the modern prose tradition: it has been viewed as a decline compared to the perfect and exemplary folklore tradition of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries [3: p. 85].

A significant contribution to the study of folk prose is the outstanding Polish folklorist Dorota Simonides, who mainly focused her research on the study of folk prose in the real environment of her life. Therefore, she considers the study of individual human biographies to be one of the most important tasks of modern folklore studies. In fact, the “micro-history of human destiny”, according to the researcher, appears as an extremely interesting subject to study, so it should be included in the folklorists’ field of study. After all, the studied tradition always consists of memories that the collector either managed or didn’t manage to get from the narrator [28: p. 20]. Considering the memorate as the most common type of folk prose, the researcher is convinced that the desire to give stories a form of message about a real event leads to the fact that well-known traditional stories are increasingly retold as individual experiences. Thus, the traditional plot has the opportunity to turn into a memorate [28: p. 124]. The works of Janina Hajduk-Nijakowska and Alexandra Rzepkowska [13; 26] continued the scientific school of D. Simonides in Polish folklore studies.

We find consensus in the works of Alexandra Britsyna, who also believes that when telling about the past, the narrator focuses on telling real facts, and the participation of creative imagination is minimized, which is why household memorates are usually considered by folklorists as eyewitnesses and they do not see their influence of oral tradition [3: p. 135].

In Ukrainian folklore studies, Stepan Myshanych first drew attention to everyday stories in the “memorate convention” in the 1980’s, using the term “folk sto-

ries” to describe them [10]. Unlike Dorota Simonides, he did not consider individual stories folklore, because, in his opinion, they do not have such features of folklore as collectivity and variability. The Ukrainian researcher saw the value of such stories in the extent to which the story is of public interest [10]. We believe that these scientist’s considerations were influenced by the prevailing at the time in Soviet folklore studies idea of the existence of a certain genre canon, which was not allowed to review and supplement. In the book “Oral Folk Stories: Questions of Poetics” the author analyzes the folk stories of Ukrainians about World War II. His attention is primarily drawn to extrapods – the most heroic, tragic, dramatic stories. According to the author, they have a chance to enter the oral narrative tradition [10]. At one time, Stepan Myshanych’s work used to be a pioneer in the study of autobiographical prose in Ukrainian folklore studies.

Today in the Ukrainian scientific discourse the situation with the study of folk prose, told in the memorate convention, has undergone significant changes. Roman Kyrchiv’s in-depth study “The Twentieth Century in Ukrainian Folklore” addresses biographical narratives about World War I, Ukrainian liberation struggles in the interwar 20<sup>th</sup> century, the horrors of the Holodomor and World War II. The researcher believes that the memorate today is a more widespread example of oral prose, which reflects the vision, narrator’s experience [7]. Valentyna Borysenko’s collection “Such a Rye: Culture of Everyday Life of Ukrainians of Chernobyl Polissia” [2] is based on the material of autobiographical narratives of the Chernobyl zone residents. Ukrainian researchers did not miss the topic of the experience of war in the autobiographical narratives of Ukrainians. Oral narratives depicting the non-heroic history of World War II have emerged in recent decades. As there is a long distance between the time of the event and the time of the story, narrators can tell things they would never have dared to tell before [1; 4]. The research of the Ukrainian historian Maryna Hrymych is based on the memorates of the direct participants in the war, namely the Halychyna division, who sees in the memorates of the war a tangible influence of folklore plots and images. The researcher manages to build on the basis of these stories a single multivariate military narrative of one of the episodes of World War II [5: p. 139]. Thus, most works in Ukrainian folklore studies are dedicated to the research of narrative texts that reflect a person’s personal experience and are conveyed in a “memorate convention”. Researchers focus on retelling the plot of stories, characterizing their significance for contemporaries as unbiased evidence from the past. They

consider the form of folk stories somewhat simplified, underestimate the social component of the transmission of folk tradition.

Oksana Kuzmenko’s multi-genre study used the notion of concept to interpret folklore phenomena. She identifies twelve basic folklore concepts, which encode enduring symbolic structures of national mentality [war, prayer, death, enemy, mother, longing, joy, fear, home, captivity, grave, Ukraine], and which are reflected in all kinds of folk art and most fully convey the folk experience of crucial historical events of the 20<sup>th</sup> century [9: p. 22]. The researcher believes that a separate autobiographical narrative may contain a number of episodes of the folklore type. The scientist classifies them as episodes-closures, episodes-culminations, episodes-inserts and episodes-author’s digressions. She also does not deny the fact that in the field conditions the story can often be non-linear, which is naturally reflected in the structure of the text – the narrator repeatedly returns to what has already been said. Folklore prose in Oksana Kuzmenko’s research is always inscribed in the historical and social contexts in which certain texts were born [9].

As Oksana Kuzmenko rightly points out, Ukrainian folklore studies has accumulated a considerable layer of primary sources of wartime folklore prose, including legends, eschatological stories, stories in the form of memorates, chronicles, rumors, etc. [9: p. 135–136]. And today there is a significant lack of various methodological approaches to the analysis of the research material.

The scientific interests of our closest neighbors, the Poles, also show interest in publishing and researching the topic of prose heritage which tells about the experiences of World War II. The evidence of this is the two-volume material of Śląsk folk prose and the monograph by Agnieszka Przybyła-Dumin [24; 25].

Thus, folklorists’ attention is drawn to those examples of autobiographical folk prose, which tell about significant, turning points, crisis moments in the life of the people: war, eviction, famine. This does not seem strange because all these texts are created under the influence of very strong emotions.

The full-scale Russian-Ukrainian war that began in 2022 has not received adequate coverage in Ukrainian folklore studies so far. Several publications, including the article by O. Labashchuk and co-authors, have conducted a structural and semantic analysis of autobiographical stories of civilian Ukrainians about the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian war [17]. However, the experience of military personnel participating in the war has not been adequately considered in folklore studies yet.

It is important to emphasize another aspect of the study of personal narratives. Roch Sulima, adhering to the semiotic and culturological approaches to the study of speech texts, identifies three types of communicators: 1] spontaneous one-time statements that we use in everyday conversations; these texts have neither thematic nor structural unity; 2] retelling of socially valuable information [news, gossip, advice, predictions, stories]; they have thematic unity, but do not constitute integrity on formal indicators; 3] folklore texts-signs that are stable both from the thematic and formal point of view [30]. Modern folklore studies also conclude that an oral prose text is created in the process of telling it rather than memorizing it and further retelling of the ready-made text [3]. A researcher of folklore texts who studies uncluttered texts [as in the case with oral prose texts] will always feel the lack of folklorist theory. After all, the existing theoretical basis was formed mainly on the basis of the study of oral but clichéd texts [those that are reproduced, not those that are created in the process of communication]. So it becomes inevitable to turn to the achievements of narratology.

Modern research in the field of cultural anthropology also does not miss the topic of the experiences of war that man had to go through. Undoubtedly, a valuable source for our study is the British scientific journal "The Journal of War and Culture Studies", which focuses on the cultural and anthropological study of the "scars of war". Most publications highlight how war is reflected in works of art, which ultimately helps to see the experience of violence that has remained unnoticed so far [32]. Some articles are based on the analysis of the oral narratives of people who survived the war. Janet Jacob and Aida Rogonich Cruickshank's study is based on interviews with Bosnian Muslims who were children and experienced violence during the war. It is important for us that the authors touch on children's memories of

the mother as the basis of their emotional stability. It was the mother's activity that determined the survival and safety strategies of the children who found themselves in the conflict zone [15].

Simona Tobia [2016] tries to analyze the relationship between war and culture during and after World War II in an article on the memories of captured servicemen who were traumatized by interrogations [31]. The experience of "disadvantaged generations" [i.e. young participants in the conflict in Northern Ireland] is studied in an article by Lucy Newby. The article is significant because it traces the influence of folk memory of this period on the ways of expressing personal memories [22]. Articles published in the journal also raise questions about recorded forms of autobiographical interviews. Details of everyday life reflected in the diary of a German Jew during the Third Reich are analyzed in the article by Roger Woods [33]. So, the publications in the journal demonstrate the diversity of research interests in the narratives of people who survived the war.

Examples of thoughtful cultural and anthropological analysis of autobiographical narratives of the Lviv intelligentsia can be found in the book by E. Narvseilius [21]. Women's narratives about the experience of Stalin's concentration camps became the basis for writing a fundamental anthropological study by Oksana Kis, which analyzed strategies for preserving Ukrainian women's basic social identities [16].

**Conclusions.** Thus, there is a clear division by fields of knowledge in the study of narratives about the war experience: folklorists mostly focus on philological problems, study the poetics of the text, specialists in cultural anthropology focus on texts as presentations of the first type of cultural tradition. At the same time the application of combination of philological and anthropological methods to the research material will allow to perform tasks and draw conclusions that have not yet been the subject of the scientific study.

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**Лабашук О. В., Савчин Т. О., Скуратко Т. М. ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ ДОСВІДІВ ВІЙНИ В УКРАЇНСЬКІЙ І ЗАРУБІЖНІЙ ФОЛЬКЛОРИСТИЦІ**

Наукове дослідження автобіографічних наративів про війну в українському науковому дискурсі проводилося щонайменше в рамках цілого ряду філологічних, антропологічних, соціальних дисциплін. Для нас найвагомішими є здобутки у галузі усної історії, фольклористики, соціальної антропології. Усні історики звернули увагу на альтернативні розповіді про війну, які відображали досвід не лише військових, а інших груп населення – повстанців УПА, в'язнів концтаборів, жінок, дітей, працівників тилу. Таким чином вони хотіли показати іншу війну. Найбільше значення для нас має запропонований дослідниками усної історії метод відкритого наративного інтерв'ю. Є цілий ряд наукових статей, присвячених вивченню досвіду війни, проведені на основі наративів біженців від війни, які охоплюють різноманітні аспекти соціально-антропологічного та культурно-антропологічного характеру.

Дослідження народних оповідань автобіографічного характеру у фольклористиці має свою історію. Для нас найважливішими є праці польської науковиці Д. Симонідес. Одним з найважливіших завдань сучасної фольклористики Дорота Симонідес вважає дослідження індивідуальних людських біографій, вбачаючи об'єкт дослідження у спостереженні і вивченні людської долі. Серед послідовників відомої польської фольклористок варто згадати праці Я. Гайдук-Ніяковської, А. Жепковської, А. Пишибили-Думін. Серед українських науковців вважаємо вартими уваги роботи В. Борисенко, О. Бріциної, М. Гримич, Р. Кирчіва, О. Кісь, О. Кузьменко, О. Лабашук, С. Мишанича. У статті О. Лабашук проведено структурно-семантичний аналіз автобіографічних оповідей українців про початок російсько-української війни.

У дослідженні наративів про пережитий досвід війни присутній чіткий розподіл за галузями знань: фольклористи здебільшого зосереджуються на філологічних проблемах, досліджують поетику тексту, спеціалісти у галузі культурної антропології приділяють увагу тексту, як презентації певного типу культурної традиції. Водночас застосування до матеріалу комбінації філологічних та антропологічних методик дозволить виконати завдання і зробити висновки, які досі не були предметом уваги у науковому світі.

**Ключові слова:** досвіди війни, наратив, фольклористика, антропологія, автобіографія.