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Features of Modern Ukrainian Military Prose (on the example of Bohdan Zholdak's film story "Ukry" and Yevhen Polozhii's novel "Ilovaisk")

**Особливості сучасної української воєнної прози
(на прикладі кіноповісті «Укри» Богдана Жолдака та роману «Ловайськ» Євгена
Положія)**

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The purpose of the article is to study the artistic features of Bohdan Zholdak's military prose "Ukry" and Yevhen Polozhii's "Ilovaisk". The methodological basis of the study is complex and is based mainly on the tools of traditional literary studies (comparative-typological, comparative-historical and specific-textual types of literary analysis) using elements of motivational analysis. The article examines military prose as a phenomenon of modern Ukrainian literature; genre diversity of works dedicated to the realities of the anti-terrorist operation and the war in Donbas; the main problems that writers raise. It is determined that Bohdan Zholdak's film story "Ukry" shows "a noble, active, strong hero who defends freedom, justice and universal ideals." Zholdak's style (burlesque-postmodern) depiction of characters is considered with their positive and negative sides, true language and emotions. Yevhen Polozhii's novel "Ilovaisk" was analyzed, based on the memoirs of soldiers who survived the Ilovaisk pocket. It is determined that the writer turns to the traditional

Анотація

Мета статті – дослідження художніх особливостей воєнної прози «Укри» Богдана Жолдака та «Ловайськ» Євгена Положія. Методологічна основа дослідження має комплексний характер і базується, у першу чергу, на інструментарії традиційного літературознавства (порівняльно-типологічному, порівняльно-історичному й конкретно-текстуальному видах літературознавчого аналізу) з використанням елементів мотивного аналізу. У статті досліджено воєнну прозу як феномен сучасної української літератури; жанрову різноманітність творів, присвячених реаліям АТО та війні на Донбасі; основні проблеми, які порушують письменники. Визначено, що в кіноповісті «Укри» Богдана Жолдака показано «благородного, активного, сильного героя, що відстоює свободу, справедливість та загальнолюдські ідеали». Розглянуто жолданівський стиль (бурлескно-постмодерний) зображення персонажів: з їхніми позитивними й негативними сторонами, правдивою мовою та емоції. Проаналізовано роман «Ловайськ» Євгена Положія, в основу якого лягли спогади бійців, що

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plot and depiction of heroes, using the features of existentialism and naturalism, often resorting to contrast in the reproduction of pictures of frontal and peaceful Donbas, and ideological beliefs of older and younger generations. It is proved that in the works of modern Ukrainian literature there is a deep rethinking of the war, which poses a potential threat not only to the individual country and its inhabitants, but to humanity in general. The authors affirm the idea of peace as the highest human value.

Key words: military prose, film story, literary discourse, novel, Russian-Ukrainian hybrid war.

Introduction

The Russian-Ukrainian hybrid war has become a powerful catalyst for the development of modern literature. Today, a new niche in the publishing market is filled with books about events in the East of the country. Initially, military prose took the form of a collection of Facebook notes, memoirs of anti-terrorist operation participants, reportage and documentary publications. Subsequently, works of art were published: novels, film stories, tales, novelettes. The writers present their own vision of the war, drawing on their experience, as each of them was either mobilized to the front or visited the destroyed towns and villages of Donbas with volunteer help. The boom in military literature that we are witnessing today shows that the theme of war is related to the problems of culture, the desire of artists to comprehensive and unbiased rethinking it. Artists interpret events in the East, debunking the myth of friendship between peoples, laid down in previous epochs. The authors build a new model of Ukrainian culture of the XXI century.

Literary critics are increasingly turning to the topic of the Russian-Ukrainian war. Thus, Yaroslav Polishchuk (2016) and Olha Derkachova (2017) in their scientific research described collections of poetry about events in the East. Anton Sanchenko (2019) researched the most popular books about the ATO, the secrets of their success and genre originality. Nina Herasymenko (2019) and Sofia Filonenko (2015) reviewed novels about the war by Ukrainian writers. Maryna Riabchenko (2019), a literary critic, analyzed the genre and artistic features of combatant prose. Bohdan Zholdak's (2015) film story "Ukry" and Yevhen Polozhii's novel "Ilovaisk" are mentioned sporadically in literary

пережили «Ловайський котел». Визначено, що письменник звертається до традиційного сюжету та змалювання героїв, використовуючи риси екзистенціалізму та натуралізму, часто вдається до контрасту як у відтворенні картин фронтового й мирного Донбасу, так і ідейних переконань старшого й молодшого поколінь. Доведено, що у творах сучасної української літератури відбувається глибоке переосмислення війни, яка несе потенційну загрозу не лише окремій країні та її жителям, а людству взагалі. Автори утверджують ідею миру як найвищої людської цінності.

Ключові слова: воєнна проза, кіноповість, літературний дискурс, роман, російсько-українська гібридна війна.

criticism, so the study of the artistic specificity of these works is relevant.

The purpose of our work is to study the artistic features of Bohdan Zholdak's military prose "Ukry" and Yevhen Polozhii's novel "Ilovaisk".

Achieving this purpose involves solving the following tasks:

- 1) to characterize military prose as a phenomenon of modern Ukrainian literature;
- 2) to find out the problem of genre definition of Bohdan Zholdak's work "Ukry";
- 3) to investigate the truth of the characters of the main characters of the film story;
- 4) to consider the real events that formed the basis of the novel "Ilovaisk" by Yevhen Polozhii;
- 5) to analyze the heroism and humanity of Ukrainian soldiers who were on the brink of life and death.

The scientific novelty of the work lies in the systematization and deepening of the conception about the structure of modern Ukrainian military prose in terms of artistic tradition understanding. For the first time, the subject of literary analysis is a film story and a novel about the Russian-Ukrainian war, general and special in each of them.

Theoretical basis

At different times the phenomenon of war considered by scientists as a natural state, a counterweight to peace for the normal development of society. Ivanna Stefiuk's scientific research "The First World War as a Social Anomaly (Philosophical and Literary

Aspects)” considers different approaches to understanding the nature of war. In particular, Kenneth Waltz supposes the state to be the cause of the conflict, i.e. the war is purely political. In contrast, John Keegan believes that through war, society solves religious and cultural issues (Stefiuk, 2013).

In the twentieth century, the problem of war and interstate conflicts became quite acute, as humanity has survived two world wars. The main categories operated by the society of that time were war and peace. At this time, the idea of pacifism to condemn all forms of war as an instrument of foreign policy is actively spreading. We can learn about the political consequences and economic losses of countries involved in military conflicts from historical sources, while fiction must convey changes in the psychology and worldview of people who found themselves in the vortex of war.

The war in eastern Ukraine has become one of the leading themes of modern literature. In recent years, many different publications about the Russian-Ukrainian war have been published. One of the first researchers of works on this topic was Hanna Skorina, who compiled a list of books about the ATO, which included both paper and electronic publications, as well as online diaries (Armyfm, 2019). The list numbered more than 400 items. According to Hanna, this is not enough to form a “full-fledged literary layer”. However, we can say that the number of authors and works of art has recently increased significantly and military prose occupies a prominent place in the modern literary process.

Today, the authors depicting the events in the East of the country are civilians and direct participants in the anti-terrorist operation (Slapchuk, 2015). According to research by Oleksandr Mymruk, books by civil authors, which include writers, journalists and volunteers, are divided into two categories: “books of mass literature and books of “high shelf” (Mymruk, 2019).

ATO writers can also be divided into two categories. The first covers mobilized authors and volunteer writers, the second – fighters who showed a talent for literary work during the war. The undeniable advantage of these works is that the everyday life of the military is shown truthfully, they are ordinary people who are betrayed, left without help and used as living targets. Heroes have such feelings as fear, joy, peace, pleasure. They are not idealized, as is often the case in fiction. In view of this, literary

critics distinguish combatant as one of the types of “military prose”.

With the advent of combatant prose in the modern Ukrainian literary process, it is increasingly possible to trace the mention of the concept of “lieutenant prose”. However, we support the statement of Maryna Riabchenko (2019), who believes that comparing works of Soviet literature and modern “military prose” is incorrect. The main focus should be on differences: not all modern authors have the rank of officer, most had nothing to do with the army. As for the main function that relied on the works of “lieutenant's prose”, it is the formation of a person with the right views and beliefs.

Speaking of military prose, we cannot ignore such a genre as anti-war novel. There is no definition of this phenomenon in the literary dictionary. The anti-war novel is similar to military, fascist, battle, and military literature. The difficulty of determining, according to literary critic Kateryna Hurduz (2015), lies in the differences between the methods of presenting the war and its artistic interpretation. In Ukrainian literature, the anti-war novel is not associated with the works of writers of the “lost generation”. Thus, the reflection of military everyday life is influenced by national tradition. “The key genre marker of the anti-war novel is a powerful humanistic pathos aimed at condemning the war, exposing its criminal perverted nature” (Hurduz, 2015, p. 133). Of course, we cannot equate the anti-war novel with modern military prose completely, but these two phenomena are united by a true reflection of the war and its consequences, a condemnation of any armed conflict between states.

In our opinion, another important aspect in the study of works on the Russian-Ukrainian war in the East is women's prose. Nina Herasymenko (2019) presents “The Story with a Woman's Face” in her scientific research, noting that the works of women writers are not intended to aestheticize reality, but to give the reader the opportunity to form their own opinion about military events in the East of our country. The genre of works of artists is also diverse. If men's prose is characterized by the creation of diaries, memoirs, essays, women's prose is mostly represented by pure melodramas or has a powerful melodramatic flow. Thus, using the traditional literary plot, “writers were able to artistically summarize the facts and real life stories that embody the humanistic pathos and national idea” (Herasymenko, 2019, p. 89).

Maidan-themed military books evoke strong emotions, such as pain and tender emotion.

Thus, military prose is genre-diverse. It covers film stories, action movies, short stories, diaries, memoirs, novels, melodramas. Well-known writers and journalists are involved in its creation.

Methodology

In our research we use the following methods: descriptive, typological, contextual and cultural-historical. The main one is the typological, with which we found features of the image of war theme in various literary works. Descriptive and contextual methods are used in the study of historiography to learn the problem of Ukrainian military prose formation. By means of cultural-historical method the specifics of the artistic and stylistic structure of Bohdan Zholdak and Yevhen Polozhii's letters are revealed.

The methodological basis of the study is complex and is based primarily on the tools of traditional literary studies (comparative-typological, comparative-historical and specific-textual types of literary analysis) using elements of motivational analysis.

Results and discussion

Bohdan Zholdak's "Ukry" as "the best prose book defending freedom, justice and human ideals"

The first literary attempts of Bohdan Zholdak date back to the 60s of the twentieth century. His creative output includes plays, screenplays, as well as many short feature, animated and documentary videos. The "Ukry" film story has twice been awarded prestigious prizes. Thus, in 2015 the writer received the Bohdan Khmelnytskyi Literary and Artistic Prize from the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine for the best coverage of military issues in literature and art, publicism and journalism, aimed at establishing high humanistic, state-building ideals, raising the prestige of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Also in 2016, the film story won the international literary competition "Warriors of Light" in memory of the hero of the Heavenly Hundred Mykhailo Zhyznevskyi. The book is dedicated to Heorhii Toropovskyyi, an eighteen-year-old soldier who died while returning to the anti-terrorist operation zone after vacations. One of the conditions of the competition was the presence in the work of "a noble, active, strong hero who defends freedom, justice and universal ideals"

(Karasiyov, 2016). The writer managed to portray a whole cohort of such desperate defenders of the Motherland. Those were young men and women who went to the war voluntarily, according to their ideological convictions.

The author himself added the book "Ukry" to combat prose. Literary critics disagree on the genre definition. Thus, the following definitions sound: "a mosaic novel", a film story, a series of film fragments, "national action, written in hot pursuit" (Levchuk, 2016). "Ukry" does not have a clear plot and consists of thirty-seven stories or, according to Iryna Trostok (2015), "trench fables". In addition to the theme of the war in Donbas, the main characters are common. However, attentive critics note that Bohdan Zholdak introduces episodic characters in separate sections, which are no longer found by the end of the novel.

Bohdan Zholdak's war prose "Ukry" was published firstly in separate publications. The author himself was worried about the name, because the word "ukry" began to be actively used in society. Separatists in Donbas contemptuously call Ukrainians "ukry" or "ukropy" (that means "dill"). However, since the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian hybrid war, these words have become branded, and chevrons with them adorn the clothes of soldiers and volunteers.

The annotation to the film story states that the work is based on real events, and modern Ukrainian soldiers are compared to the heroes of Ivan Kotliarevskyyi's "Aeneid". They "desperately joke with death, defending their land and honor". Bohdan Zholdak writes short stories in an ironic and humorous style.

In the film story, the events and actions of the heroes are often exaggerated, seemingly frivolous, but at the same time they show the intelligence of the fighters. In borderline situations, the guys find a way out even where the logic of the plot cannot be. Humor has always supported Ukrainian fighters, and with funny antics they tried to diversify the gray military existence, when they sat in the trenches for several days, because the sky above their heads was torn by battle shells. It was hard to call it a life, but everyone remembered their purpose – to protect the Motherland from the enemy.

Yar Levchuk (2016), exploring the elements of Kotliarevskyyi's prose in the film story "Ukry", points out that Bohdan Zholdak writes some episodes in such spirit. In particular, the

fabrications of Zhora and Michurin about neutralizing the enemy. These heroes are very similar to the Ukrainian Cossacks, who embodied the people's strength of spirit and indomitable will in the fight against the invaders.

The language of the work is also impressive: alive, without complicated terminology, twisted syntactic constructions. Transmitting the speech of Ukrainian soldiers, the writer uses the surzhik, which also indicates the reality of the events. Bohdan Zholdak also adapts the Russian language to the national tradition. Thus, we can say that the film story "Ukry" is written in a purely Zholdan style, even more – burlesque-postmodern.

The writer in "Ukry" has an unusual approach to the theme of war. His main merit is the depiction of the front Donbas without the use of documentary images. Ukrainian fighters appear to be ordinary people, and the protection of the borders of their native country, in their opinion, is the duty of every conscious citizen, so we will not see in the film story the pathetic glorification of the ATO participants.

The main characters are fighters from one unit: Lieutenant Michurin, Zvirobii, Gray, Hunter, Zhora, Jura, Vlad-Stolytsia, Vitko, Halia-Chupacabra. They are completely different, and in a peaceful life their paths would not cross. But the war unites officers and poachers, experienced and young, men and women.

Already at the beginning of the work, Bohdan Zholdak sharply twists the plot, introduces the lieutenant, who after his vacation returns not to the unit, but to the positions surrendered by Ukrainian soldiers, so he comes under heavy fire. He received his call-up after a successful operation, outwitting the separatists: "Everything can be said about the lieutenant, but he had an anticipation, and it did not fail" (Zholdak, 2015). As a senior, Michurin was the first to go into dangerous operations, because he felt responsible for very young fighters, the youngest of whom was only eighteen. In addition to courage and bravery, the lieutenant had remarkable acting skills. So, disguised as an old grandfather, he handed the militants firewood with explosives, which neutralized the entire unit: "At that moment, a distant explosion sharply threw darkness. Then it detonated again, and several times more powerful" (Zholdak, 2015).

Skilled in martial arts is Zvirobii, who came to the anti-terrorist operation zone as a volunteer:

"After prison, he immediately volunteered, not because of any patriotic views or unemployment, but because he looked at katsaps (Russians) there, as they put themselves, although most of our compatriots were among them, but it was the most furious" (Zholdak, 2015). According to the hero, poaching, for which he served his sentence, is hard work, because you need to be able to skillfully disguise and track down the prey. Therefore, Zvirobii's skills in the Russian-Ukrainian war came in handy. As a true hunter, he felt ambushes, disguised enemies, gunners, who were often indigenous. As Bohdan Zholdak writes his heroes from life, they can come out of different situations with victory or failure. Zvirobii is so obsessed with reconnaissance that he loses his landmarks and is taken prisoner. Like Ivan Kotliarevskiy's Trojans, cunning helps to avoid torture and death. The Ukrainian military was not only able to escape, but also captured several separatists.

The writer pays considerable attention to Zhora – Heorhii Toropovskiy, an eighteen-year-old soldier who died under unusual circumstances. The young man was most fascinated by various electronic devices: thermal imagers, stereo tubes, radars, drones. He always paid attention to trifles, at first glance, everyday things, but in the war they had a hidden meaning. "Of course, according to such unimportant observations, it can happen as in boxing: when you blink, you miss the most interesting thing – a knockout, that is, somewhere you will not see the enemy, but here Zhora had a reliable support: an anticipation. He heard from the spine any important changes in reality..." (Zholdak, 2015). Sometimes he was called a Psycho or a Psychologist for his ability to recognize people. For the separatists, Heorhii Toropovskiy was extremely dangerous, so they hunted for the boy and in peaceful territory. "He was returning from Kyiv to the front, and, of course, he had no idea that even from the capital it was impossible to talk about it on the phone. He was not easy, at school he jumped on trains, at the anti-terrorist operation he received a medal, saved his sworn brothers from death, had a lot of experience, and he was tracked down in a simple civilian train – a soldier can be seen from afar – killed and thrown out of the train" (Zholdak, 2015). Thus the story of the Ukrainian fighter Zhora ended.

The author showed the Russian-Ukrainian war in Donbas from different angles: through the eyes of residents who divided into two camps: those who supported the Ukrainian fighters, and those who worked for the new leadership of the DPR and LPR. Of course, the latter turned out to be

more. Influenced by provocative Russian TV programs, illusory ideas of a better life in a separate territory, locals despise the Ukrainian army, calling the fighters “ukrops”, “Banderas” and “khokhols”. In his work, Bohdan Zholdak depicts the destroyed towns and villages of Donbas, militants’ shelling of women and children, abandoned elderly people. The writer leaves the ending of some parts of the film story open for the reader to draw his own conclusions.

Thus, Bohdan Zholdak’s military prose “Ukry” today can be called rightly one of the best examples of modern Ukrainian literature about the realities of the ATO. The collection of film episodes is united by the chronotope of the Russian-Ukrainian hybrid war. The main characters have absorbed the best features, so it is not surprising that the film story is compared to “Aeneid” by Ivan Kotliarevskiy. And Lieutenant Michurin, Zvirobii, Zhora, Gray and Hunter – to the Cossacks-characterists who defended Motherland with their courage, bravery and ingenuity.

Heroic and tragic events of the Russian-Ukrainian war in the pages of Yevhen Polozhii’s novel “Ilovaisk”

In 2015, the world saw a novel in the short stories “Ilovaisk” by Yevhen Polozhii. At the Publishers’ Forum in Lviv, the book was recognized as the best about the war, and its author was awarded a cash prize. At the International Literary Competition “Coronation of the Word” the novel received a special award. Work on the book lasted from October 2014 to August 2015. Yevhen Polozhii based his novel on the real events that took place on August 29-30 near Ilovaisk. These are the stories of the fighters who found themselves in the Ilovaisk pocket. In the work we observe a masterful combination of writing and journalistic work. The novel consists of sixteen short stories that tell about the courage and heroism of Ukrainian soldiers. The author himself noted that “Ilovaisk” is a completely artistic work, although to write it Yevhen Polozhii met and talked with almost a hundred members of the ATO, took seventy interviews. The writer invents the names and call signs of his characters, but everyone has a prototype. It is noteworthy that the book was published in two languages: Ukrainian and Russian, because the war united Eastern and Western Ukraine, and among the natives of Donbas there were many volunteers who went to defend their homeland from the enemy. The author tried to convey the color, mood, emotions of the fighters who managed to escape. “I did not

want to lose the energy of the narrators, so I used this bilingual technique” (Lykhohliad, 2015).

While writing the novel, first of all Yevhen Polozhii wanted to find out who was to blame for the deaths of several hundred soldiers of the Ukrainian army: “If they do not respect the dead, they do not respect the living”. The writer used the testimony of volunteer battalions “Donbas”, “Dnipro-1”, “Kherson”, “Peacemaker”, “Dnipro-2”, “Kryvbas” and others. All events are depicted truthfully, without artistic interpretation. The author’s undoubted merit is that he portrayed the Russian-Ukrainian war through the eyes of an ordinary soldier who found himself at the front without proper knowledge, experience and weapons. Yevhen Polozhii, unlike Bohdan Zholdak, does not exaggerate the main characters. If in the film story “Ukry” the fighters defend the checkpoint, try not to give up controlled positions, in the novel “Ilovaisk” the main focus is on the ability to survive in the terrible conditions in which the military found itself due to a failed command. The writer clearly draws the line between positive and negative characters, their ideas and beliefs. We can assume that this was influenced by the further life of the participants of the Ilovaisk pocket, as many of them were disappointed in the intention of the Ukrainian army leadership to preserve the territory of the country and its defenders. “We still have a strange command – we pass information for a week about the movement of Russian troops, about the illegal crossing of the state border by numerous columns of equipment, about the possible encirclement – no reaction” (Polozhii, 2015). Some of the volunteers continue their service in other units. Prominent representatives of military leaders in the novel “Ilovaisk” are Colonel Hrachev, who died with his soldiers, and Khomchak, who fled when the first shelling began.

We can say that a writer Polozhii prevailed over Polozhii as a journalist, so “Ilovaisk” is a work of art with fictional words and details, not a documentary. The author turns to the traditional plot and depiction of the characters, using the features of existentialism and naturalism. The novel “Ilovaisk” is an example of classical war literature, not popular non-fiction. According to Yevhen Polozhii, the memories of the fighters who survived the Ilovaisk pocket cannot be regarded as historical evidence, as people were under severe psychological stress, they had hallucinations, and perceived certain events differently. “Absolutely peaceful people got into this war, and for many of them the experience of

Ilovaïsk, in fact a very cruel experience, was the first combat experience” (Lykhohliad, 2015).

The writer pays considerable attention to the image of Donbas. In his depiction he uses contrast: “The villages of Donbas and Dnipropetrovsk region were strikingly different. In Donbas, you will not see anyone on the streets, not even a chicken runs, let alone people or cows, and even if residents show up, they try to hide in the yard so as not to start conversations” (Polozhii, 2015). For example, Bohdan Zholdak in “Ukry” mostly presents the indigenous population as separatists, disguised mercenaries of the DPR and LPR, and tippers-off. They openly despise Ukrainian soldiers and try to destroy them. In his novel, Yevhen Polozhii points to the pro-Russian sentiments of the civilian population, their fascination with the “Russian world”, but at the same time ordinary people are helping our soldiers escape and survive. A striking example is a doctor who professes DPR policy, but puts professional duty above, which is why he treats Serioha Kaban: “As a doctor, I don’t care whose soldier you are – Ukrainian, Russian or Chinese. To me, you are firstly a patient whom I must cure. Human health is the most important thing, and politics is useless here” (Polozhii, 2015). The author also shows that the worldview of many Ukrainians is changing, but they are able to respond to other people’s troubles. For example, Tymofiiiovych from the Crimea, a retired colonel who received Russian citizenship, or Stiopa from DPR. They are the ones who save Kaban and help him get to the territory controlled by Ukraine. Of course, we cannot justify them, but their actions deserve attention, because the heroes risk their own lives. Yevhen Polozhii also uses contrast. The ideal family is only an illusion of family happiness, and the fascination with the ideas of a new life leads to the betrayal of loved ones. The writer enters into the text a letter of confession of a boy whose father survived near Ilovaïsk. War, in addition to death, well shows the essence of man, his insides. So, a mother leaves the family for ghostly ideas and remains to profess Gubarev’s policy, while the father goes to the front to defend the Motherland from enemies.

“A separatist now lives in my apartment with my mother, my mother met him at a rally, he reminds her of Gubarev with his crazy eyes, and of Putin speaking in a predatory insidious manner. He walks around our checkpoints in our car, he lies on our couch and watches at our big plasma Russia-24 and Lifenews – at least he has something of his own. He yawns sweetly and thinks of squeezing someone else tomorrow”

(Polozhii, 2015). In this short story Yevhen Polozhii showed the war through the eyes of a child. The feeling of patriotism is mixed with the feeling of hopelessness of the situation. But the worst thing is the betrayal of a loved human.

At first glance, the novel consists of individual episodes of events near Ilovaïsk, but there are heroes whose fates run through the whole work. These are Greg from Dnipro-1, Hrim and a nurse Murka from Donbas. But, according to the author, “the protagonist is the tragedy itself” (Tolokolnikova, 2015). Yevhen Polozhii uses the example of Greg’s family to show the clash of two generations – older and younger. “My father categorically did not believe in today’s people, in their ability to create large-scale projects, to be organized in a creative group, to make constructive and consistent changes” (Polozhii, 2015). In his opinion, the current generation can be considered lost, because it is accustomed to the policy of consumption, so the events on the Maidan and the first armed riots in the East he did not take seriously. The old man had an unshakable belief that no one could quarrel between two fraternal peoples. In the image of Greg’s father, the writer recreated the worldview of the people of the Soviet epoch. At the same time, he is one of the most tragic in the work, because “the old man managed to change his faith. He renounced the past, tore it up and threw it in the trash, along with a ticket of a member of the CPSU that was not needed but carefully hidden in a drawer” (Polozhii, 2015). But he has a future – a son-volunteer who defended the Motherland. Yevhen Polozhii managed to recreate skillfully the emotional experiences of heroes who say goodbye to the past and have the strength of will to accept a new future.

Many of the heroes of the novel are residents of Donbas. That is how Slava Snizhok got his call sign, because he was from the town of Snizhnyi. In peacetime he worked as a teacher of Russian language and literature. When the war broke out, he left his wife and children and volunteered because he decided to defend them from the enemy. Snizhok became the first killed in the Ilovaïsk pocket.

In the pages of the novel, we meet Mark Paslavskiyi, nicknamed Franko, a US citizen with Ukrainian roots. A successful financier, a man who revolves around the highest circles, finds himself in our war. He is not indifferent to the fate of the country. “When we win, I will become chairman of the National Bank of Ukraine and break all the schemes of the oligarchs” (Polozhii, 2015). In our opinion, the writer in the image of

Franko showed that patriotism does not depend on a person's place of residence or financial situation. Marko Paslavskyi makes us think about the question: why do volunteers go to the Russian-Ukrainian war from abroad, while the majority of Donbas residents are hostile?

In the novel "Ilovaisk" the author focuses the reader's attention on certain details. One of them is the young age of the fighters. Yevhen Polozhii, acquainting with the main characters, gives the facts of their biographies. Among the fighters were teachers, miners, workers, entrepreneurs, judges who had families. But the main focus is on eighteen- and twenty-year-old soldiers thrown into the maelstrom of war without any support. Entire battalions were destroyed. "Those spiritualized, patriotic, sincere people are not left" (Myronova, 2015).

In some short stories, Yevhen Polozhii uses the principle of naturalism to recreate the horrors of war: "Hrim covered his head with his hands, all he felt was pieces of burnt human flesh falling on him, which gave off a disgusting smell" (Polozhii, 2015). The pictures of interrogations and tortures of the Ukrainian military are not indifferent: "He could not imagine how he sits in the basement, and every day freaks come to him and break bones with an iron pipe, shoot his knees, pinch his fingers [...] and force him to beg for pardon" (Polozhii, 2015). But along with the atrocities of Caucasian mercenaries, the writer depicts young Russian soldiers who happened to be at war. Those guys came to the state border to study and only in Ilovaisk they realized that everything is really happening. They were of no value to the command of the Russian army, so they were shot along with Ukrainian soldiers during the assault.

Thus, in the novel "Ilovaisk", Yevhen Polozhii recreated a military operation that suffered the greatest defeat during the entire period of the Russian-Ukrainian war. The book is a testimony and memoirs of soldiers who managed to survive in the Ilovaisk pocket. The author showed the courage and cowardice, feat and betrayal that often occurs in war. Ukrainian fighters are not exaggerated heroes, but ordinary people who defend their Motherland. The novel "Ilovaisk" reveals the truth of the war, shows the events of August 29-30, 2014 through the eyes of its participants, and therefore is perceived by critics and readers quite ambiguously.

Conclusions

In recent years, many works on the realities of the anti-terrorist operation and the war in Donbas have appeared in the Ukrainian literary discourse. They impress with their genre diversity. Military prose has undergone certain changes: from diary entries and notes on social networks to novels, short stories, film stories, poetry. Well-known writers, journalists, and the military, whose artistic talent was revealed during the events in the East, raised the topic of war in their works. Problems covered by military prose – life and death, heroism and betrayal, friendship, mutual assistance, justice, family relationships, violence, destruction. And the most important, in our opinion, is the idea of the struggle for peace, the moral responsibility of human to society.

Bohdan Zholdak's film story "Ukry" shows "a noble, active, strong hero who defends freedom, justice and universal ideals". The author managed to portray a whole cohort of such desperate defenders of the Motherland. The writer creates a living character with its positive and negative sides, true language and emotions. Joking with death, the heroes, sometimes exaggerated, resort to courageous deeds, relying only on their ingenuity and good luck, which makes them similar to the heroes of Ivan Kotliarevskyi's "Aeneid".

Another striking example of literature on the Russian-Ukrainian hybrid war is Yevhen Polozhii's novel "Ilovaisk", which is based on the memoirs of soldiers who survived the Ilovaisk pocket. According to the author himself, this is a completely artistic work based on real events. The writer turns to the traditional plot and depiction of the characters, using the features of existentialism and naturalism. After the presentation, the novel was perceived by readers and critics ambiguously, as it revealed the truth of the war, the reasons for the greatest defeat of the Ukrainian army during the entire period of hostilities in the East. The novel "Ilovaisk" is "the soldier's truth" in its almost completely authentic form.

Thus, Bohdan Zholdak's film story "Ukry" and Yevhen Polozhii's novel "Ilovaisk" are united by the artists' convictions in the victory of the Ukrainian army, as the main characters of military prose have their prototypes. In the works of modern Ukrainian literature there is a deep rethinking of the war, which poses a potential threat not only to the individual country and its inhabitants, but to humanity in general. The

authors affirm the idea of peace as the highest human value.

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