Between documentary (verbatim) and experimental theater: poetic features of the genre of modern biographical drama (based on comparative analysis)

Yuhan Nataliia

1 Doctor of Philology, Associate Professor, Associate Professor Preparatory Department for Foreign Students; Taras Shevchenko National University of Kiev; Ukraine

Abstract.
The genre of modern biographical drama is characterized by almost all types of "research biographies" (according to P. Kendell’s classification): ironic biography (Thea Dorn, E. Narshi); meaningful and critical biography (R. Veretelnik); "standard" biography (T. Ivashchenko, V. Ogennovich, Nika Simonova); subjectively-interpreted biography (A. Ostermeier, Dea Loher); fictionalized biography (Thea Dorn); pseudobiography (E. Narshi). Among the genre and style innovations of the "biographical drama", first of all, it is necessary to note the intergeneric approach (plays by T. Ivashchenko, Thea Dorn), as well as the interdisciplinary one - the destruction of barriers between the arts, word, dance, music, video art, visual arts, new media art and ballet (dramas by R. Veretelnik, Nika Simonova, Dea Loher).

Keywords:
meta-genre of artistic biography
biographical drama
documentary theater
verbatim
experimental theater
comparative analysis
The genre of “biography” (biographical genre), which originated in Antiquity, due to its flexibility, has not only been well preserved but also constantly developed, “adjusting” to the requirements of a particular era. Depending on the tasks facing the biographer, modern genre studies distinguish between artistic, scientific, and academic biographies, distinguishing the genre of historical biography and autobiography as a special subspecies of the genre [1, p. 23-24].

A particular term appeared in the theory of literature to label the whole variety of biographies in the 20th century – the meta-genre of artistic biography, which reflects the scale of this phenomenon in modern culture. As a meta-genre, artistic biography combines texts of various kinds, as well as verbal and other types of arts (theater and cinema), in particular, genres of dramaturgy, which combined can be called the term “biographical drama”.

The vital issue of the genre belonging of the work to the biographical genre in general, and the genre of biographical drama in particular, has been and remains the question of the relationship between documentary and fiction in the interpretation of the biographical facts of the hero of the play. To more accurately define this relationship, literary scholars and literary critics have introduced several special terms: “historiographic metafiction” (L. Hatchen), “archival novel” (S. Keene), “fictitious (fictitious) metabiography” (I. Shabert, E. Nanning), “bio(graphic)fiction” (M. Danova), “bio-official” (K. Kaplan, M. Middeck, W. Huber), “biographic novel” (D. Lodge), “fiction biography” (D. Kersten) and others. The terms clarify the genre specifics of the work, indicate its belonging to documentary or fiction, and determine the position of the text in the “fact-fiction” coordinates.

Paul Kendall became the author of the classification of biographical texts built on English-language material. He divided all biographical literature into two fundamental types – biography and autobiography. Biography as a type of text, in turn, is divided into primary source, research, and a separate class of special biographies.

The firsthand knowledge provides for the author's
personal acquaintance with the subject of the biography. It is sometimes called a “source biography” because these texts are original materials, testimonies of contemporaries.

Research is divided into:
- reference collections, which are multi-volume biographical dictionaries;
- character sketches as short and anecdotal biographical sketches;
- informative biography, also called “cumulative”. The author of such a biography should avoid all forms of interpretation, except for selection, stating the facts in chronological order according to papers, documents, eyewitness accounts.
- critical biography as an authentic presentation of the hero’s life path. It assumes a thorough study of sources (consideration of biography facts in combination with social or literary activities), their presentation in strictly chronological order without manipulation or processing of materials using fiction techniques;
- “standard” biography, which is the central type of biographical text, where the objective and subjective image of the person is balanced (the use of literary methods should not distort and falsify the biography);
- interpretative biography - the most subjective live narrative, with a free interpretation of biographical sources;
- a fictionalized biography based on secondary sources and superficial research;
- fiction presented as biography, representing absolutely fictitious biographical events.

In addition, P. Kendall identifies “special-purpose” biography, which include:
- memorable biographies, most often postmortem eulogies;
- biographies for political campaigns (the purpose of which is to promote the promotion of a political candidate);
- newspaper gossip about the stars, created to glorify an outstanding personality;
- scandalous revelations (propaganda);
- lives of saints (hagiography).

Autobiography as part of the biography is divided into:
Informal autobiography, in turn, includes such types of autobiographical texts as:
- letters, diaries, and magazines (letters, diaries, and journals) representing self-realized revelations;
- memoirs, recollections.
A formal autobiography is a description of a life recovered from memories, with all their inherent errors, omissions, and inconsistencies.

Special forms of autobiography include thematic, religious, intellectual, fictionalized autobiographies. As a separate type of biography, a multimedia biography stands out, which includes biographical films, newsreels and photographs, documentary “docudrama”, interviews, talk shows, etc. [2].

Supplementing the classification of P. Kendal, Ukrainian researcher M. Shapoval referred to “multimedia biographies” as “popular pseudo-biographies”, “mythos-biographies, and even alternative biographies intended as mystification and artistic fantasies” [3, p. 51]. She considered the biographical drama and its theatrical representation as a narrative based on modern Ukrainian dramaturgy. According to the concept of the researcher, cognitive narratology “systemically substantiates the extrapolation of the narrative approach as the optics of reading the text to drama, theatrical art, cinema” [3, p. 48].

M. Shapoval, in her theoretical study, seeks to separate epic biographies from dramatic ones: “playwrights are limited by the amount of verbal text that must meet the terms of a theatrical performance; they face the need to fit artistic time into the harsh framework of stage time” [3, p. 52-53]. She described the main features of the genre: “The temporal limitation is to a certain extent compensated by the fact that the events in the drama take place in real time, each depicted moment is tightly adjacent to the others <...>. Life in the drama is depicted with maximum immediacy, the action seems to take place before the eyes of the viewer” [3, p. 53].
Important for describing the genre of “biographical drama” are also observations on the poetic features of the genre by L. Zakalyuzhny: “Historical and biographical drama has a special place in the biographical meta-genre, primarily taking into account the nature of the dramatic text, which, unlike a novel, short story or essay, requires density and concentration of the action, the montage principle, embodied in the plot parataxis, a certain artificiality of the conflict, is much less than that of the creator of the epic narrative, the possibilities for the playwright to manifest the author's position, the reduction or leveling of his voice” [4, p. 266].


From our point of view, modern biographical drama develops in the space between documentary theater (doctheater, verbatim) and experimental theater.

A documentary play (doc-play) is based on a true fact recorded through protocols, transcripts, interviews, and archival documents. It uses autobiographies, memoirs, diaries, etc. Documentary theater is often called “verbatim”: from Latin – verbatim – “spoken”. With this approach, the playwright seeks to avoid fiction and subjective interpretations, rely on specific historical events and the remarks of their eyewitnesses [5; 6].

Documentary theater is widely known in many countries of the world – the Royal Court and Tricycle Theater in the UK, the Scottish theater “7:84”, “Live Theater” in the USA,
"Teatr.doc" in Moscow, the theater group Rimini Protokoll in Berlin, Kiev "Settler's Theatre" (G. Zheno, A. Karachinsky, N. Vorozhbit, M. Kurochkin), documentary performances at the Ukrainian Center named after Vs. Meyerhold in Kherson (productions of “Witches”, “Kherson is ...”), etc. In addition to global catastrophes and social upheavals (E. Piskator "Despite everything", P. Weiss "Inquiry", K. Churchill “The sun is shining over Buckinghamshire”, D. Hare “Anything happens”, E. Gremina and M. Ugarov “BerlusPutin” and “Bolotnaya case”), the doc theater is also interested in the private life of the common man, specific life experience, which allows us to draw parallels between the docuplay and the biographical drama (for example, “Hour 18”, “Captivity”, “Goods”, “Nikolaevka”, “Hug me”, “Exit the closet”, etc.).

Modern biographical drama actively uses the poetic possibilities of related genres and types of literature (epics, lyrics) and arts (music, cinema, ballet, etc.). From this point of view, it is appropriate to analyze the innovation of the authors of biographical plays compared with the principles of the experimental (avant-garde) theater. This theater became a kind of rejection of the classical way of writing and staging plays in general, it had and has different forms of manifestation (P. Brook, B. Brecht, A. Artaud, A. Boal, etc.). Among the many innovations introduced by the avant-garde theater apologists, an interdisciplinary approach is becoming more and more common, the destruction of barriers between art forms: the boundaries between word, dance, music, video art, fine art, new media art and ballet in many cases become blurred, and artists with completely different approaches and creative experience interact very productively [7].

Let's consider the poetic features of modern biographical drama on specific examples.

The biographical play by R. Veretelnik “Matrimony” was based on Olga Khoruzhinskaya's letters to Ivan Franko, deciphered and published only in 2000. This correspondence covers the first years of the family life of the famous couple. The dialogue of lovers, and then young spouses, recreated on stage, in this case is close to the tradition of documentary theater. The work was created solely on a
documentary basis.

The letters of Olga Khoruzhinskaya, a woman of noble origin who received an excellent education in the Russian Empire, but grew up and formed in Eastern Ukraine, are written not in the refined Ukrainian language, but in Surzhyk (mixtures of Russian and Ukrainian words and grammatical constructions). They are reproduced in the performance in an authentic form [7, p. 196], which is one of the basic principles of docudrama. The director managed to involve the grandson of the great poet – Roland Tarasovich Franko – to work on the stage dialogue in letters between Olga and Ivan [8]. Thus, the voice of Ivan Franko sounded from the lips of his closest relative, which created an even greater illusion of convergence of the inherently conditional theatrical performance with reality. Galina Stefanova, an actress playing the role of Olga, writes in a scientific article the fact that when working on the play “Matrimony” the principles of creating verbatim guided the director and actors, she quotes documentary theater theorists P. Weiss and E. Piscator and peculiarly “reports” on the embodiment of all the main principles of verbatim in duodrama [7, p. 198-199].

While working on the production, R. Veretelnik filmed discussions of the text and rehearsals, in which R. Franco participated. These materials were subsequently used as new documents as a prologue to the performance [7, p. 199]. Including various authentic documents in the performance is one of the main principles of classical documentary theater. The next element of this aesthetic was the use of all known photographs of Olga and Ivan Franko, members of their family, a selection of ancient views of Kyiv and Lviv associated with the places of events referred to in the letters in the video sequence when decorating the stage of the performance [7, p. 199].

The same material (supplemented with information from numerous biographical documents and passages from the poetic works of I. Franko) was the basis of the biographical duodrama of the Ukrainian playwright T. Ivashchenko “The Secret of Life” [10]. But this is not a documentary drama: although the author consistently reproduces all the main events in the life of the famous poet and his family, the nature of the use
of biographical and poetic material in it is completely different from that in R. Veretelnik's play “Matrimony”.

The playwright seeks to reconstruct the creative biography of I. Franko through the eyes of his wife, who holds six “memories” that form the plot basis of the work. The chronotope of the duodrama expands due to the appearance of the protagonists of real or fictional characters (the Hutsul-fortuneteller, Ivan Vyshensky, Ivan Franko’s lovers - Olga Roskevich and Tselina Zhurovskaya) in memories, dreams, delusional states. According to the well-known literary critic L. Zakolyuzhny, a characteristic of the drama is the role of Olga Khoruzhinskaya both as “a dramatic character, and as a storyteller, and as a lyrical subject, which gives her image multidimensionality and depth” [4, p. 270].

Episodes-memoirs are vividly episodized: each contains Olga Khoruzhinskaya's recollection of a certain moment in her relationship with her husband. Such episodes are combined with dramatic dialogues that, according to the laws of traditional Aristotelian drama, take place in the present tense — right before the eyes of the public. They are sharp, conflicting, dynamic.

Similar combinations of epic memories and dramatic dialogues in the play “The Secret of Being” are synthesized with lyrical elements. The Fourth Remembrance is indicative in this respect. In it, in addition to Olga’s epicized memories, traditional for this drama (the episode begins with her memories of the day when “Franco returned after a meeting of the radical party, completely gloomy. He refused to have dinner and sat down at the table to weave fishing nets” [10]) and her dialogues with her husband, contains a voluminous episized monologue of Ivan himself. It contains a confession about meeting Tselina Zhurovskaya three years before marrying his wife and about the feelings that this woman evokes in him for many years, in the end, about their recent meeting (“I seemed to be mad, I stood for hours under her windows” [10]). The most remarkable thing in this episode is the combination of epic memories of two heroes (Olga and Ivan), dynamic and emotional dialogues (Franko and Tselina, Franko and Olga) with lyrical means: 4 poems by I. Franko are heard here, illustrating his feelings for Tselina.
Thus, a characteristic of the poetics of Ivashchenko’s play is that in the structure of dramatic action, at its different levels, not only interaction and interpenetration of elements of the dramatic and epic (epic drama) or dramatic and lyrical (lyrical drama) take place. Within one text, intergeneric diffusion of the epic, lyrical and dramatic takes place, therefore, a new specific genre type is created – the lyric-epic drama-biography.

Due to the consistent documentary story about the life and social activities of the great Ukrainian classic, the frequent mention of his literary works and the plentiful quoting and reproduction of his lyrical poetry in the play by Ivashchenko, practically nothing changes in the perception of this personality by the reader / viewer: Ivan Franko appears before us as a spiritual genius and intellectual titan [11, p. 254; 4, p. 270–271]. At the same time, the dramatic and, to a certain extent, even tragic story about Franco’s family conflicts allows the playwright to show the “living” classic in his private life, to psychologically motivate his behavior and individual actions, and in this way, get away from the schematism, glossiness and stereotyped image of the “great Kamenyar”.

The Ukrainian scholar O. Bondareva in her article “The Feminine Version of the Masculine Biography” saw in this play T. Ivashchenko a “feminine artistic version” of the “masculine biography of Ivan Franko”, which belongs to the “complex of protest dramatic strategies of modern literature for the theater” [12, p. 9]. Olga Khoruzhinskaya mainly talks about the great poet. The reader/viewer, together with her, goes through all 6 “memories” about the immense abyss of life between spouses, about the suffering of his wife in the “triangles” of Ivan Franko’s former or permanent beloved muses: “throughout the entire play, Franko creates his own world, and Olga gradually destroys herself in the nets of her devotion to her husband. As a result, in the finale we are talking about madness and mental illness of both” [12, p. 11].

Mileva Maric, the first wife of the famous physicist Albert Einstein, also experienced a similar female tragedy. She is shown in the play “Mileva Einstein” by the Serbian playwright V. Ognenovich [13]. Mileva and Albert met at the
Zurich Polytechnic University, where the woman (the only one on the course) studied physics in the group of Professor Weber. Albert fell in love with Mileva, a talented and promising physicist. For him, she was the ideal woman, the mother of his child. In marriage, the couple had two more sons. Mileva, in love, abandoned her studies, devoted herself to her husband and family. She became not a scientist, but an "umbrella" [13, p. 107] for the great Albert Einstein. This is what led her to a personal and family tragedy - her husband fell in love with another, and in Mileva he began to see “an unfortunate, tedious creature in which there is nothing of life”; “her presence kills joy in other people around her” [13, p. 109]. After a divorce with Mileva, the once passionately in love Albert vowed: “I will do everything to spend the rest of my life as far as possible from her at any cost” [13, p. 115]. At the end of the play, we see an unhappy lonely woman in a psychiatric hospital: she is still waiting and hoping her husband will visit her. In the plays about the wives of great men - Ivan Franko and Albert Einstein, silent spouses come to the fore, who became assistants to their men in their social activities or scientific careers, provided for life, gave birth and raised children. However, at the same time they remained in the shadow of celebrities in public opinion, could not fulfill themselves in society or were forced out of the orbit of the interests and feelings of their beloved.

In the play “Mileva Einstein” V. Ognenovich uses documentary materials, it consistently reproduces all the life changes of a married couple. However, we do not find any stylistic or genre innovations in the text.

Another type of biographical play-duodrama is presented in the work of the German playwright A. Ostermeier “Between two fires. Topography of Toller” [14], the conflict analysis of which is given in the dissertation of T. A. Onegina [15, p. 13].

The playwright thoroughly studied the biographical facts and work of the work's protagonist - the German expressionist Ernst Toller, poet, playwright, revolutionary, anti-fascist and chairman of the Bavarian Soviet Republic. Ostermeier's play is a biographical duodrama based on Toller's dialogue
with his alter ego Tollkirsch on the eve of his suicide at the New York Mayflower Hotel. Through a dialogue with the other half of his divided consciousness, the protagonist analyzes his life and work and comes to disappointing conclusions: his life had no meaning, and everything he did and wrote did not bring real benefit to people.

The play's action is limited to one night and the space of a hotel room. The expansion of the chronotope occurs due to memories and captures the main stages of the poet's life, reproduced in chronological order. However, this does not mean that we are facing a documentary narrative: the internal action of the drama, built in the form of Toller's boxing fight with himself and divided into three rounds, unfolds in the hero's memories and the space of his associations.

In addition, film projections help to expand the chronotope for the playwright. They form the common space of the hotel room, in which past impressions overlay the current ones: "front-line pictures of the Spanish Civil War and police pictures of street fights in the New York suburbs, over which, during Tollkirsch’s speech, the constantly changing exchange rate is displayed under the acoustic escort of obviously shouted out offers about the purchase, which gradually drown out the sounds of battle and the screams of the wounded, until nothing is heard but hastily concluded deals, abstract messages from the front about the stock index" [14, p. 21-22]. The combination of theatrical and cinematic techniques, according to F. Schlösser, blurs the boundaries of reality and convention, and the characters “become projections in a double sense, and history turns into a conglomeration of trivial mythical images” [16, p. 226-229]. Such an approach distances Ostermeier from the ethic of documentary theater and brings him closer to the experimental one.

In Thea Dorn’s play-duodrama “MarLeni, Prussian Maidens, Blond as Steel” [17], the dialogue is conducted by two famous fellow countrywoman – Marlene Dietrich and Leni Riefenstahl. The chronotope “MarLeni” (the action takes place in a Parisian hotel one night before Marlene Dietrich's death on May 5 - 6, 1992) and a fictional dialogue are close to Ostermeier’s play: this meeting never happened in reality. At the same time, in a dramatic story about the fate of German heroines, the
The playwright uses only real and concrete facts of their biographies.

There is no plot in the German play as such - dialogues almost completely replace the action. The images of great women that have become legends are presented in a perspective that is unexpected for the reader / viewer, the author destroys their traditional image. Marlene does not resemble a blond angel, but an old witch. She is almost out of her mind and spends the rest of her days alone in her Parisian apartment, staying in bed all day and constantly belting the bottle.

Thea Dorn gives her author's genre description of the work - “psychological grotesque”. As I. S. Kisileva notes, “the most important genre-forming element in this play is the play beginning” [18, p. 10]. The meeting of two prominent women, which never happened, is a guessing game. In “Marleni” a playing field is formed in which the author combines the real facts of the biography of two famous women with fictional ones, including elements of parody, absurdity and farce. The dialogues often mention real historical events and personalities, Riefenstahl's meeting with Hitler and her imaginary plans - to become the leader's woman, and then his director, are not hushed up. The characters' discussion of the events of distant years and their view of history, people, personal life - all this is presented to the reader / viewer by Thea Dorn with the help of a guessing game in order to reveal the parodic and grotesque nature of the images of the heroines.

The most important genre-forming characteristic of the work is undoubtedly comic, buffoonery. Marlene throws the contents of the chamber pot in Lena’s face, sits on top of her, while drinking whiskey directly from the bottle or hairspray instead of alcohol, tries to dance an African dance and clumsily falls on her back, puts a rusty helmet on her head, etc. And yet, in the comic form of idle chatter, there is a conversation about the serious and tragic collisions of the history of the 20th century. The heroines talk about themselves, their youth, their personal lives, careers, and mainly men (their husbands and lovers, cameraman Funk and director Sterbenrge, Ernest Hemingway and Erich Maria
Remarque, etc.).

The fundamental difference in the real fate of these two titanic women was their ideological position during the fascist dictatorship. This internal conflict becomes central in the play, interpenetrates the entire text, and is played out in different ways in many scenes. Marlene Dietrich left Germany in 1930, openly and sharply refused to cooperate with Propaganda Minister Goebels, went to Hollywood, America. During the Second World War, she actively participated in the anti-fascist fight, performed as a singer in front of American soldiers. On the other hand, Leni Riefenstahl was associated with the top of the Third Reich, shot several films commissioned by Hitler, which were later recognized as propaganda.

The whole play by Thea Dorn becomes a kind of penance for Leni Riefenstahl: she tries to justify herself to Marlene Dietrich, to the reader / viewer and herself, alternately denying her guilt, justifying her actions or insulting and blaming the anti-fascist Marlene Dietrich, the entire German people and history that were unfair to her throughout the 20th century. The main keynote in the play is Leni’s remark that for 50 years she has not been able to earn the forgiveness of society, which accuses her of Nazism.

This problem, which became central in Thea Dorn's “psychological grotesque” and did not have a positive solution in the play, was in reality solved in the 1950s: Leni Riefenstahl, who collaborated with the Nazis, was called a "companion traveler" and justified. And although her successful career as a film director was cut short, a talented woman was able to fulfill herself in other areas. She was known and quite popular in society.

Thus, on the one hand, Thea Dorn uses all known documentary data about the personalities of two famous German women, on the other hand, the chronotope, plot and all dialogues of the docudrama are completely fictitious, and this fiction causes the conflict of the play. Furthermore, by colliding two opposite positions in the work - pro-Nazi and anti-fascist, the author departs from real facts - and all this in order to convey to the reader / viewer extremely important and always relevant thoughts about the
responsibility of a creative person for his ideas, actions, ideological position in front of the society.

Based on documentary materials, a play by another German playwright Dea Loher “Olga’s Room” was created, which shows the struggle and death of the famous German-Jewish communist Olga Benario in the Ravensbrück concentration camp. This play also created an alternative version of Olga’s personal history [15, p. 16].

The final tragic events in the life of a communist are in the center of the drama: the moment of the arrest of the heroine after the revelation of a conspiracy against the Brazilian totalitarian regime, her transportation to a German prison and death in a gas chamber. The play’s main action takes place in a closed space – in “Olga’s room”, namely in a prison cell. At the same time, the chronotope expands due to the memories in the dialogues of the heroine with the traitor and her executioner Filinto Muller and cellmate Jenny.

Despite the documentary basis of the play, Dea Loher tries to avoid a realistic approach when depicting reality. The author achieves this with an episodic sequence of scenes, using the method of alienation (for example, the heroine going beyond her role). The monologues and self-reflection of the protagonist destroy the stage illusion and present events from the standpoint of aesthetic distance. An alternative version of history in the play is created by reinterpreting the historical role of the communist Olga Benario: she appears before the reader and viewer not as a fearless resistance fighter, but as an ordinary woman, as a tired and tortured person. The heroine expresses not only a strong will, perseverance and faith in her ideals, but also contradictions, doubts, uncertainty in her abilities and her destiny.

Compositionally, Olga's collision with herself and the antagonist are expressed in the play through intense monologues, revealing the internal contradictions of the character, and dialogic scenes leading to death. The play consists of 18 short scenes whose titles are borrowed from dance and opera art forms by Lauer. The struggle between the revolutionary and the traitor, executioner Filinto is described in the text as a dance of death with the devil: the playwright turns Pas de deux into pas de diable. D. Loher
adds notations to “duet” or “triolet” scenes: “negation” (“Duett II: Negatio”) and “madness” (“Triolett II: Dementia”). Thus, she turns the artistically harmonious pair dance and singing into a disharmonious battle.

Music, moreover national Mexican music, and projections of paintings by Frida Kahlo play a key role in the poetics of the play “Frida. Life in Color” by Russian playwright Nika Simonova. These types of art are organically combined with the monologues and dialogues of the characters, revealing the vivid tragic image of the Mexican artist Frida Kahlo, showing the story of loneliness, passion, pain, love and the artist's destiny.

According to the playwright, when creating the play, she used documentary materials: excerpts from Kahlo's diaries, fragments of an interview with her husband, the famous Mexican artist Diego Rivera, Mexican folklore [19; 20]. These sources play an important, if not fundamental, role in the drama: Nika Simonova consistently tells about all the most significant events in her heroine's life. At the same time, the playwright brings to the text her subjective view of the development of the characters’ inner world, their psychologically complex love and family relationships.

In the key episodes of the play, the most important decisions are entrusted to plasticity. One of the strongest such episodes is Frida, “dancing” with a white blanket pressed to her chest, in which instead of a newborn baby there are gray cold stones (Kalo dreamed of children, but she could not become a mother). The roar with which they fall to the floor can wake the most callous heart. And above all this, suffering and jubilant music – the melodies of Mexican folk songs. This synthesis of different types of art, possessing a certain mystical energy, combining the functions of the ancient choir and modern film editing, leads the reader and the viewer through the circles of Frida’s personal hell.

The next type of biographical drama, which can be classified as a subjectively interpreted biography (according to P. Kendall’s classification), can be illustrated by the play of the Russian playwright E. Narshi “Marina. By the law of August” [21]. The play is dedicated to the poetess Marina Tsvetaeva, and not only members of her family (mother, husband
S. Efron, daughter Ariadne, son Georgy), creative personalities of her time with whom she could be familiar (poet Boris Ryzhiy, pianist M. Main), but also the heroes of other chronotopes – A. S. Pushkin and W. A. Mozart.

The playwright exploits long and well-known information about the features of the personality and life of the poetess: the understanding of poetic creativity as the main purpose of life, to which everything is sacrificed; the need for a constant experience of love passions to stimulate the creative process, which leads to a collapse in relationships with her husband; inability to exist in real life conditions; admiration for the genius Pushkin, love for Napoleon, the Duke of Reichstadt, Sarah Bernhardt, music, cats. The images of the genius composer and poet in the play resemble masks.

The author does not care about the psychological depth of these characters – they receive only external characteristics, which are well rooted in the mass consciousness and do not carry anything new: Pushkin – “swarthy”, “with a curly head”; Mozart – “Austrian”, “plays the violin”, “in a white wig” [21]. The functions of these characters in Narsha’s play are to be “guardians”, moral support, companions, “servants” of Tsvetaeva and her family members.

When creating the image of Marina Tsvetaeva, the playwright uses only the most famous and textbook facts of the life of the poetess, mixing them abundantly with reinterpreted or fictional ones. Therefore, Tsvetaeva appears before us in a somewhat degraded and therefore unexpected appearance. Narshi emphasizes in the appearance and personality of the poetess those moments that were traditionally considered optional for revealing the image of the great and tragic poetess – this is Tsvetaeva's appearance (not very tall, bangs, cigarette, apron) and her unsuitability for everyday life. The playwright, exaggerating, caricaturing the outward inconspicuousness of the poetess, brings her to the stage in the guise of a 199-year-old inhabitant of the poetic Olympus in the other realm. This becomes the author’s version of the outrageous, shocking, romantic image of Tsvetaeva. Playing with the unsuitability of the poetess in everyday life, the playwright makes her the owner of a cat.
The images of the members of the Tsvetaeva family, husband, daughter, son, mother, are presented in the play habitually, traditionally. Their remarks and monologues are quotations from letters, diary entries, memoirs; actions are basically reflections of the actions committed in real life. The grotesque episode invented by Narshi, in which Efron breaks dishes in jealousy, enlivens the action, but does not add originality to the hero's character.

The main goal of E. Narsha when creating the play is the intention to “break the prevailing stereotype in the perception of Tsvetaeva’s personality, avoid interpreting the image as tragic, and create a romantic outrageous comedy” [22, p. 195], in our opinion, was implemented unsuccessfully, because Tsvetaeva herself leaves the original author’s text. Our point of view is also supported by the critic T. N. Karpova: “The artistic device of “routine life” used by E. Narshi does not allow the reader (viewer) to feel the specific Tsvetaeva’s romanticism of nature, and ultimately makes the image of the poetess unjustifiably rational [23, p. 214-215]. It should also be noted that no innovative principles of experimental theater are found in this play.

From the preceding, we can conclude that one of the key issues when creating a work in the meta-genre “artistic biography” is the principle of processing documentary material. This is also relevant for the genre of dramaturgy — “biographical drama”.

The genre of modern biographical drama is characterized by almost all types of “research biographies” (according to P. Kendell’s classification): ironic biography (Thea Dorn, E. Narshi); meaningful and critical biography (R. Veretelnik); “standard” biography (T. Ivashchenko, V. Ognenovich, Nika Simonova); subjectively-interpreted biography (A. Ostermeier, Dea Loher); fictionalized biography (Thea Dorn); pseudobiography (E. Narshi). A significant place among the well-known experiences of the “biographical drama” is occupied by the duodrama (the clash of the protagonist and his alter ego; protagonist and antagonist, and in these roles there can be spouses, two prominent personalities, a victim and an executioner, etc.).
Among the genre and style innovations of the "biographical drama", first of all, it is necessary to note the intergeneric (plays by T. Ivashchenko, Thea Dorn), as well as the interdisciplinary approach - the destruction of barriers between the arts, word, dance, music, video art, visual arts, new media art and ballet (dramas by R. Veretelnik, Nika Simonova, Dea Loher).

References:

[8] Подружжя. Київ. Національний центр театрального мистецтва імені Леся Курбаса. URL: kiev.karabas.com.ua/vistava-podruzhzhya (date of the application: 02.05.2023).
LITERARY STUDIES


