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**Writer's Diary by Dostoyevsky in the contexts and confrontations :  
summary**

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# SUMMARY

## Writer's Diary by Dostoyevsky in the Contexts and Confrontations

The 19th-century Russian writer Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky (1821–1881) entered the readers' minds in particular with his famous novels – *Crime and Punishment*, *Idiot* or *The Brothers Karamazov*. However, not many people are familiar with the *Writer's Diary*, a late work created in the 1870s and early 1880s when Dostoyevsky lived a decent well-to-do family life. We wrote the monograph *Writer's Diary by Dostoyevsky in the Contexts and Confrontations* due to the fact the *Writer's Diary* is insufficiently reflected in the literary research. The Czech and Slovak milieu largely focuses on works of art that represent a section of the *Writer's Diary* rather than the *Writer's Diary* as a whole.

The monograph consists of seven chapters that examine the *Writer's Diary* in four aspects – the literary genre, the themes, motifs and the reception. The first two chapters are dedicated to the methodology and the current state of the researched issue. The explanation why we consider the *Writer's Diary* the genre of a diary is provided in the third chapter *Poetics of Dostoyevsky's Writer's Diary*. We viewed the work from two perspectives – external and internal. The external perspective allows us to examine the *Writer's Diary* in the context of the author's personality and the period of the 1870s and early 1880s. Conversely, the internal perspective provides the poetological features of the *Writer's Diary*, which are demonstrated in the nature of the incipit and explicit, the time and space categories and in the plot line.

The chapter entitled the *Writer's Diary as a Mosaic of Literary Genres* concentrates on interconnection of autobiographical genres and Dostoyevsky's literary work and the presence of genre forms close to the genre of a diary still before the

publication of the *Writer's Diary*. We also defined the specific genre features of the artistic genres (tales with fantasy features), marginal genres (essay, letter, memoir) and non-fiction genres (critical essay).

The following chapter *Reflection of Socio-Political and Personal Issues on the Pages of the Writer's Diary* formulates three principal themes: 1. Relationship between Russia and the West, 2. Image of St. Petersburg, 3. Characters of children and the form of childhood. The chapter, the *Writer's Diary as a Mosaic of Motifs* concentrates on the definition and interpretation of the elements, the so-called random family and the motif of a dream. The final chapter *Reception of the Writer's Diary in the Czech and Slovak Milieu* maps the reception of the *Writer's Diary* in the Czech and Slovak milieu mainly focussed on translations and secondary literature about the *Writer's Diary*.

In the work, we arrived at the following conclusions. When relating the *Writer's Diary* to other Dostoyevsky's works, we created a typology of the book's overlaps into his other works, defining the retrograde, future and present overlaps. We divided events illustrated in the *Writer's Diary*: those depicted in detail, those mentioned only marginally and those to which Dostoyevsky paid no attention. Then we pointed out an important fact: Dostoyevsky's work had already contained features of a diary and similar genre forms before the *Writer's Diary* was published. In Dostoyevsky's work, autobiographical genres developed in four stages: 1. first, his prose contains autobiographical features; 2. next, the autobiographical features accumulate and the first novel, which can be referred to as autobiographical, originates (*Notes from a Dead House*); 3. the boundary genres and essays (*Petersburg Dreams in Verse and Prose*, *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions*) appear later in his work; 4. finally, the *Writer's Diary*, which is referred to as a diary genre, comes into existence.

Based on examination of the genre specifics, we can observe a three-level gradation of fantastic features within the myths and legends of the *Writer's Diary*: their introduction in the short story *Bobok*, intensification in the novella *A Gentle Creature* and culmination in the novella *Dream of a Ridiculous Man* where we can discern interconnection of the mentioned works with the story *Crocodile* published outside the *Writer's Diary*. The most important traits of an essay as a literary genre are expressiveness and subjectivity. Essays create the so-called genre base (term used by I. Pospíšil) of boundary and factual genres. Flashbacks allow us to see the *Writer's Diary* as a specific memoir structure. There are several types of flashbacks: recollections of social events, the family circle and persons whom Dostoyevsky respected, but also those whose relationship was ambivalent throughout his life, recollections of important moments in life and places as well as small reminiscences. Before the *Writer's Diary* was published, letters had appeared in the epistolary novella *Poor Folk* and epistolary story *Novel in Nine Letters*. Dostoyevsky supplemented the *Writer's Diary* with quoted letters from the readers and his responses

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to them. Critical essays written by the writer are generally considered a contribution to the literary critical thinking (Kuleshov). When reviewing the literary works, Dostoyevsky concentrated on aspect that corresponded to the focus of his work.

The thematic circles of Russia and the West and the image of St. Petersburg have their pre-text in the writer's essayistic works. The essay *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions* can therefore be regarded as a pre-text to the theme of Russia's relation to Western Europe, while another essay *Petersburg Dreams in Verse and Prose* serves as a pre-text to the theme of St. Petersburg. As regards relations between Russia and the West, we defined four levels of their processing. Dostoyevsky's perception of children and childhood was significantly affected by his own childhood experiences and later by the loss of his two children.

Regarding the examined motifs, the *Writer's Diary* contains the motif of fire, which can be perceived on a metaphorical level, i.e. as destructing, powering and purifying fire. The motif of water is present in the short story *Bobok* in connection with the dark side of human nature. The motif of the Earth can be observed in the story *Peasant Marey* where, through the character of the ordinary man Marey, Dostoyevsky refers to the return to well-doing, the soil and traditions. The so-called haphazard family acquired specific features and meaning in Dostoyevsky's work. As regards the genre, the motif of the so-called haphazard family is linked to a novel whereas the *Writer's Diary* serves as an interpretation key in connection with the novel. The dreams serve as an enriching element. In Dostoyevsky's *Writer's Diary*, the dreams were interpreted from several perspectives: relation to the reality, the character, function, context with other Dostoyevsky's works and from the perspective of connection with the literary genre.

Regarding reception of the *Writer's Diary* in Czech and Slovak critical literature, we can observe rather marginal reflection of the work focused on thematic aspects of the *Writer's Diary* (Masaryk, Parolek, Pytlík) or belles-lettres coming from this work (Kautman, Parolek, Červeňák). There are four translations in the Czech milieu, three of which were published as a book. Besides comprehensive translations, there are also digests based on the themes and genres. Digests popular among the readers are mostly those that are dedicated to the theme of children. In Slovakia, unfortunately, only two thematic digests from the *Writer's Diary* have been produced. In our opinion, the fact that the *Writer's Diary* has never been completely translated into Slovak is caused by the linguistic proximity of the Czechs and Slovaks and therefore availability of Czech translations in Slovakia.