Form and function regulating creativity and facilitating imagination – literary excursions in the diary of my great-grandfather

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Abstract
My great-grandfather, Ture Dahlbacka, kept a diary during his National (military) service, which lasted from 1922 to 1923. The main reason for keeping a diary appears to have been to serve as an imagined, private space in a setting where everything private must have been a commodity in short supply. Throughout the journal, his home village – Kortjärvi, located in the Northern parts of Swedish speaking Ostrobothnia – stands out as an antithesis to the garrison. It is to Kortjärvi that his mind flees in the long and lonely hours of service; remembering the place where he grew up becomes his sanctuary, his haven of refuge. Referring to Mikhail Bakhtin, the home village in the diary can be said to serve as a “chronotope of the idyll”. In this article, I discuss how both the diary form, and the memories of his home village that Ture uses to create the idyllic chronotope, are dependent upon a creative and almost nostalgic act, but also restricted to and thus affected by certain conventions. At the same time, these very same memory constructions allow him to imagine a future after, and outside of the military.

Keywords: Chronotope of the idyll, Diary, Memory, Ostrobothnia