

Narrating trauma: literary strategies in Ukrainian survivor literature of the second half of the 20th century

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Abstract

The paper provides an investigation of literary strategies to narrate eye-witness and survivor experiences regarding the Holodomor and Holocaust in the works of Ukrainian emigrant authors in the after-war period. The analysis focusses on novels by Oleksa Hay-Holowko, Olga Mak, Dokia Humenna, and Miron Dolot, authors rarely discussed in the context of the Ukrainian literature of the 20th century. The chosen texts elucidate distinctly different literary images of 'survivors' in literature, here classified respectively as 'survivor as a hero', 'survivor as a moral pattern', 'survivor as a silent bystander' and 'survivor as a human', which influence the image of victims in the texts and the overall recognition of the crimes they describe. The authors' search for appropriate narration reveals the inability to transmit the trauma through the genre of novel in which the image of the survivor is intensified by his personal qualities. The obstacle for this transmission emerges at the intersection of different levels: symbolical, metaphorical, historical and realistic. The novel by Dokia Humenna contains attempts to create a pre-dialog between the Holodomor and Holocaust which was impossible on the public level at that time. It helped to demolish the official commemorative strategy of 'forgetting to forget' and builds a multidirectional memory aimed at 'remembering to remember'. Therefore the Ukrainian survivor literature has its own specificity, which is defined mainly by the circumstance that every text was considered to be both proof of the crime and an embodiment of author's traumatic experience.

Keywords: memory studies, trauma, survivor literature, types of survivors, emigration literature, Holodomor, Holocaust

Introduction

The emergence and rapid extension of memory studies, especially in recent years, can be explained by an abundant number of memoirs, recollections of victims as well as public testimonies of witnesses of the events of the First and Second World War. In addition there is a growing awareness of the traumatic events and an increasing desire to deal with them and with the traces they left in collective memory. This "memory boom" was restricted to "the West" and in contrast occurred neither in Ukraine nor in most other post-Soviet countries, primarily due to political pressure. The true dynamic in Ukrainian cultural memory can be demonstrated through autobiographical texts written and published

by emigré writers who left Ukraine during or after the Second World War. This literary generation became witnesses of the two the most complicated traumas of the 20th century: Holodomor (The Great Famine in Ukraine in 1932-1933) and Holocaust. The great majority of them also became survivors who were lucky to escape or avoid the mass arrests and killings of Ukrainian writers and artists in 1933-1937. The organization of Ukrainian writers "MUR" (Artistic Ukrainian Movement, 1945-1948) in Furt had more than 60 members. The organization "Slovo", which was created in New York in 1954, united nearly 200 representatives of literature and art. The works of the most prominent of them (Ivan Bagrianyi, Ulas Samchuk, Todos Osmachka, Vasyl Baraka, Igor Kachurovskyi, Ihor Kosteckyi, Yuriij

Kosach, Dokia Humenna) even now construct the general idea about the thematic and notional structure of emigré Ukrainian literature. However, the greater part of texts published without censorship outside Soviet Ukraine were forbidden almost until the end of the 20th century and still remain excluded from the literary canon. This caused public unawareness of survivors' testimonies and provoked silence and the non-recognition of interconnections between the historical events that took place on Ukrainian territory. The works of writers who became constrained emigrants elucidate the first direct experiences of the totalitarian crimes in Ukraine, both Soviet and Nazi, and therefore form the complex of Ukrainian survivor literature.

The belated investigation of the traumatic topics of the Holodomor and Holocaust in Ukrainian literature was caused by and related to the political concealment of the real circumstances and outcomes of these events. The official extension of the term Holodomor, besides terms such as "famine", "great famine", and "famine terror", and its objective investigation began in the 1970s mainly in the American and Canadian diaspora due to publications in Ukrainian newspapers and especially due to the work of The US Commission on the Ukrainian Famine (1985). This term, which consists of two Ukrainian words that mean "to inflict death by hunger", probably secretly spread among people before. As it specifies the artificial and organized character of the famine, it rapidly became used in literary works as well (Olga Mak 1973, Hay-Holovko 1987, Miron Dolot 1987, Evhen Hutsalo 1990, etc). Even if the Holodomor is covered by different both ideological and non-ideological editions and separated analyses in concrete books, the Holocaust has only begun to be discussed in

several books and discussions. The valuable work by Miroslav Shkandrij (2009) analyzes the emergence and development of the image of Jews and the problem of anti-Semitism in Ukrainian literature, starting from the 19th century to the end of the 20th century.¹

Marco Carynnyk (1983), James E. Mace (1984), Robert Conquest (1987), and Karel C. Berkhoff (2008) made a significant contribution to investigating crimes on Ukrainian territory by objectively identifying Holodomor and Holocaust perpetrators based on witnesses' accounts and documents. The work of Timothy Snyder (2010) particularly emphasizes the necessity to juxtapose Soviet and Nazi crimes and to acknowledge them as equal.²

The specificities of the post-war literature in exile are represented in the research by Ihor Kachurovskij. He formulates the term "The generation of the Second World War", which enumerates at least 53 representatives of emigrant writers, among which only several names are fully remembered now (Jurij Tarnavskij, Oleksa Smotrych and the author himself).³ He draws attention to a neglected part of literature, which may not be investigated without considering the fact that it was rejected at the time of appearance. There is also a lack of studies about the literary heritage of emigrant authors as the embodiment of individual or collective traumas. George Grabowicz (1993) was the first to make a significant attempt to change the perspective of analyzing post-war literature from style peculiarities (Yurij Shevelyov⁴) to psychological interior

1 Myroslav Shkandrij, *Jews in Ukrainian Literature: Representation and Identity* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2009).

2 Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic books, 2010).

3 Ihor Kachurovskij, *Promenusti sulvoety* (Kyiv: Vydavnychi dim "Kyevo-Mogylianska akademija", 2006), p. 518.

4 Jurii Sheveliov, "Styli suchasnoyi

characterization. He assumes that these literary works were under the influence of a survivor complex as reflected in the autobiographical manner or memoir genre, but he did not illustrate how it is embodied in concrete narratives.⁵

This article explores not widely known pieces of survivor literature written by the Ukrainian emigrant-writers Dokia Humenna, Olga Mak, Oleksa Hay-Holovko and Miron Dolot. These texts contain their responses to the Holodomor and Holocaust and build a certain type of survivor as the main character in the text. The close reading of these autobiographical novels shows how remembering and forgetting processes caused by the traumas are represented by ways of constructing images about the past and which strategy they choose to bear witnesses.

Survivors' trauma

An analysis of survivor literature requires a precise distinction between those who are survivors and those who are not. In the context of the Holocaust, the voices of the survivors became available after the liberation of the concentration camps. The testimonies of Holocaust survivors (Primo Levi, Elie Wiesel, Victor Frankl, Inge Auerbacher, in Ukraine – Anatolij Kuznetsov) became prominent, acknowledged and are most valuable as a source of reconstruction of the reality of the extermination of Jews. The collective recognition of this crime was achieved by the publishing of photos and film material, journalistic investigations and the public trials of those respon-

ukrains'koyi literatury na emigratsiyi", in Jurii Sheveliov. *Vybrani praci*, Vol. II, ed. Ivan Dziuba (Kyiv: Vydavnychiy dim "Kyevo-Mogylianska akademiya", 2008), pp. 593-633.

⁵ Gryhorij Grabovych. *U poshukakh velykoyi literatury* (Kyiv, 1993).

sible. The distinction between victims and perpetrators was unequivocally clear. The survivors were in a position in which they did not have to prove the existence of the crime and were able to use the first person narrative in their reminiscences.

In contrast to this, the Soviet party policy basically denied that the famine terror happened. The true survivors' testimony could be told only at the risk of their and their families' lives and at the risk of those who were witnesses. To testify about the Holodomor was to testify against the Soviet Union and Stalin, its main representative at that time. Those testifying faced both the burden of proving that these atrocities happened as well as describing them accurately and showing the full extent of what happened. The Holodomor became recognizable as a trauma on the collective level even in the circumstances of suppression and negotiation, but primarily due to the enormous number of witnesses: all citizens of Kharkiv at the time of 1932 and especially in 1933 were observers of the mass starvation of villagers for whom the city was the last hope to survive. Alexandr Etkind has shown that the intricacy of testimonies about the Soviet terror was caused by the rapid changes in officials' staff, the unsteady boundaries between victims and perpetrators, and the absence of true verifiable data. Consequently, he defines the process of remembering Soviet terror as uncanny:

*The combination of memory and fear is, precisely, the uncanny. The greater the energy of forgetting, the greater the horror of remembering.*⁶

The results of a Canadian project UCRDC (1981), which searched for the available tes-

⁶ Alexandr Etkind, *Warped Mourning: Stories of the Undead in the Land of the Unburied* (California: Stanford University Press, 2013), p.17.

timonies of Holodomor survivors who were still alive, pointed out the influence of the fear that prevented survivors from being interviewed or constrained them so that they could only speak anonymously even almost half a century after the tragedy.⁷

Traumatic events provoke a rousing trauma in consciousness which appears alongside the recognition of being traumatized. The trauma occurs on the individual and the collective level. The work of Jeffrey Alexander indicates that the phenomenon of cultural trauma comes to light after the recognition of the reasons and outcomes of a specific event. Alexander makes clear that the public attitude which is formed by the work of carrier groups (historians, intellectuals, writers who present certain events to the audience) signifies the event as traumatic or not: "Events are not inherently traumatic. Trauma is a socially mediated attribution."⁸

The complicated process of overcoming trauma psychologically on the individual level is deeply connected to the desire to diminish its destructive effect by sharing received experiences through the verbal means of representation. Memory studies researchers, however, deny that language has an ability to transform traumatic experience in the continual textual construction of senses and rather state the impossibility of narrating the traumatic experience of it.⁹ Every attempt to put experiences in words is handicapped by linguistic narrowness. Moreover, the use of genre patterns anni-

7 Iroda Wynnyckyj and Wsevolod Isajiw, *The famine witnesses: oral histories in North America in Famine-Genocide in Ukraine (1932-1933). Western archives, testimonies and new research* () Ed. by Wsevolod W. Isajiw (Toronto: Ukrainian Canadian Research and Documentation Centre, 2003), p.67-77.

8 Jeffrey Alexander, *The meanings of social life: A cultural sociology* (Oxford: University Press, 2003), p.91.

9 Aleida Assmann, *Prostory spogadu. Formy transformatsiyi kutkurnoyi pamyati* (Kyiv: Nika-Center, 2012).

hilates the uniqueness of the story presented. Trauma deforms humans' natural abilities to remember one element and forget others and transforms the human consciousness to the unstable state in which they can unite or be turned into its opposite: non-remembering/non-forgetting. Andreas Huyssen defines the notion of trauma as a transition that occupies the place in-between: "on the threshold between remembering and forgetting, seeing and not seeing, transparency and occlusion, experience and its absence in repetition."¹⁰

The difference between witnesses' and survivors' narratives is linked to the trauma these distinct groups experienced. In the eye-witness's case, the fact is that the personal choice to be traumatized is strongly intertwined with a deep feeling of empathy. However, in the case of the survivor it is interwoven with the comprehension of being a survivor and of having had an unbearable experience which cannot be excluded from the personal life story. This provokes the well-known 'survivor complex', a strong responsibility of other victims for one's life as a merit of the others. Nevertheless this complex could be replaced by the victim complex which causes mourning for the past and the refusal of the future.

To specify the type of witnessing which includes both the survivor's and the eye-witness's conceptions, Avishai Margalit uses the concept of moral witness. This concept became significant in the development of the memory of the Holocaust. He has drawn attention to the fact that the category of moral witnesses demands both observing the atrocity and suffering from it. Otherwise it dwindles. Margalit argues that "A moral witness has knowl-

10 Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003), p.13.

edge-by-acquaintance of suffering.”¹¹ Thus the moral witness bears not just his individual experience, but the real truth. Aleida Assmann argues there is an important difference between a martyr (religious witness), whose suffering includes a definite idea or a purpose, and a moral witness, whose message comprises crimes. The use of one category instead of the other changes the perception of the crime by sacrificing victims and concealing the guilt of the perpetrators.¹² Thus, defying the moral witnesses of the Holodomor means also including the important demand to suffer from it.

Giorgio Agamben develops the idea of the absolute witness – those who did not stay alive, because others are just secondary or incomplete witnesses who cannot have a comprehensive awareness of a threshold they never passed. For the witnesses who remain alive Agamben contests the ability to choose forgetting as experiences are unforgettable.¹³ They become mediators in the traumatic memory transmission instead of or in commemoration of real victims. As a result, the process of forgetting could be the intentional and ultimate way to hide and to reject memories. Consequently, the survivor’s state includes a correlated restriction which shapes his experience: the disability to express and disability to forget.

The changes in the memory about the Holocaust in the United States and Britain during the after-war years are widely examined in research by Barbie Zelizer. She defines three pe-

riods which have their roots in memorialization practices. The first period occurs directly after the Holocaust and elucidates the resistance of tragic memory caused by the extreme shock of its cruelty and is defined as a period “forgetting to remember.”¹⁴ This public unwillingness to recognize the reality of war led to the separation of war events and atrocities, which, according to Zelizer, “came to be seen as a hindrance to the larger war narrative.”¹⁵ She saw a wave of “remembering to remember” from the seventies until the beginning of the 21st century. This wave was started by the trials in Jerusalem and Frankfurt and aimed at collecting the voices of moral witnesses and circulating their testimonies through the different artistic and media forms of presentation. The third period “remembering to forget,” according to Zelizer’s conception, occurs simultaneously with the continuation of the preceding one as a result of the restriction of the Holocaust to the emphasis just on atrocity and using this term as a metaphor for other crimes.¹⁶ Therefore the third period presents a new kind of amnesia, which is caused not by forgetting the event, but by forgetting its real roots.

This typology proves its usefulness in regard to the Holodomor, albeit with some modifications. The first long period until the collapse of the Soviet Union could be specified as a period of “forgetting to forget” due to the state organized campaign to selectively exclude and suppress data and facts from history and collective memory. The period after the collapse is characterized by the creation of the image of “remembering to remember” or ‘re-

11 Avishai Margalit, *The Ethic of Memory* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 149.

12 Aleida Assmann, *Dlynnaya ten` proshlogo: Memorialnaya klytura i isrotycheskaya politika* (Moskva: Novoe Literaturnoye obozrenye, 2014).

13 Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Aushwitz. The witnesses and the archive* (New York: Zone books, 1999).

14 Barbie Zelizer, *Remembering to forget: Holocaust memory through the camera’s eye* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 169.

15 Ibid., 162.

16 Ibid.

remembering to forget". The survivor literature represents different ways of narrating trauma which define the essence of the aim of the text as a combination of remembering and forgetting processes.

A literature of eye-witnesses and survivors

The works by Ukrainian emigré writers represent multi-directional attempts to speak out on suppressed experiences and to elucidate the intricacy of circumstances which they went through. All of them received this opportunity when they were forced to live outside Ukraine. Hryhorij Kostyuk correctly argues that in the circumstances outside censorship the writers had a deep longing to describe the truth not only for readers, but first and foremost for themselves.¹⁷ They also understood their literary work as the only way to construct alternative non-censured views of a history in which they had participated. The first memoirs about the Holodomor were published in exile by Victor Kravchenko (1946), Oleksa Voropaj (1953), while texts by Vira Vovk (1953) and Vasyl Baraka (1964) also appeared at the time.

According to Karel Berkhoff, during the German occupation of Ukraine in 1941 Ukrainians were able to mention the Holodomor openly, and the still best known book about the famine, "Maria" (1934) by the prominent author Ulas Samchuk, was wide-spread at that time. However, it remained a rather exceptional event, because editorial offices refused to publish diaries written by villagers during the famine.¹⁸ Due to propaganda at that time, the histories of the Holodomor and Holocaust were interconnected in a specific way: Jews

were considered to be guilty of inflicting famine in Ukraine. The incitement to anti-Semitism and perception of the Jews as enemies are largely reflected in the editorial work of Ulas Samchuk in the "Volyn" newspaper in 1941-1943. In his memoirs "Na koni voronomu", Samchuk explains the causes of the massacres of Jews (he was under the impression of killing in Rivne) by the fatality of the historical choices and doom.¹⁹ Therefore the Holodomor and Holocaust started to exist separately: the Holodomor as a tragedy of Ukrainians, Holocaust as a tragedy of strangers. The collective memory of the Holodomor was strongly influenced by this idea. In the novel "Vse techet" (1970), Victor Grossman made a well-known literary attempt to juxtapose the Holodomor and Holocaust as crimes of equal brutality against people, but an earlier juxtaposition exists in the less popular novel by Dokia Humenna "Khreshchaty Yar" (1946).²⁰ Thus the restoration of the connection between marginalized and prominent texts of survivor literature illustrates the real development of anti-totalitarian discourse in literature.

Among the wide range of emigré writers' testimonies there are still books that remain unknown or are rarely discussed in the context of 20th century literature. The significant novels by Olga Mak ("Stones Under The Scythe", 1973), Hay-Holovko ("For them the bells did not toll", 1987), Miron Dolot ("Execution by Hunger", 1985) that are dedicated to the famine in 1932-1933 and in which the idea of being a survivor occupies a central place enlarge the discourse on strategies for presenting the Holodomor in literature. The novel "Khreshchatyj Yar" (1946) by Dokia Humenna, which is based

17 Hryhorij Kostyuk, "Z litopysu literaturnogo zhyttya v diaspori" *Suchasnist'* 9 (129), 1971, 37-63.

18 Karel Berkhoff, *Harvest of the Despair: Life and Death in the Ukraine under Nazi Rule*. (Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press, 2004).

19 Ulas Samchuk, *Na koni voronomu* (Winnipeg: Vydannia tovatystva "Volyn", 1990), p. 94.

20 Dokia Humenna, *Khreshchaty Yar* (New York: Union "Writers" Association, 1946).

on the eye-witness accounts of events in Kyiv under the Nazi occupation, allows us to trace the abilities of both traumas, the Holodomor and Holocaust, to coexist in collective memory. These authors based their novels on the experiences of witnesses or survivors. Therefore they attempt to express the experienced trauma in literary texts. Each of the books builds distinctly different literary images of survivors, whose position in the text determines the quality of the circumstances around them. Based on an analysis of the novels by Olga Mak, Hay-Hollowko, Miron Dolot and Dokia Humenna, four different types of images of survivors are revealed:

- 1) the survivor as a hero;
- 2) the survivor as a moral pattern;
- 3) the survivor as a silent bystander;
- 4) the survivor as a human.

Each of these types influence the ways of presenting experienced trauma, but it particularly has a marked effect on the literary images of both perpetrators and victims as well as on the described crime.

The survivor as a hero

The substitution of the survivor's complex with the complex of the victim threateningly influences the strategies to present tragic and traumatic events. Through this substitution the sense of being a 'survivor' of real (dead) victims fades and is replaced by the sense of being a 'hero' – a victim who overcomes severe trials. That is why the pattern of survivors is ascribed superhuman abilities, boundless strength, perfect moral qualities or a strong feeling of patriotism. This kind of narrative is reflected in the book "Kaminnya pid kosoyu" ("Stones Under The

Scythe") by Olga Mak, published in Ukrainian in Toronto in 1973. The information about the author's life contains a mention of her short stay with a family in Kharkiv during the Holodomor.

The novel "Kaminnya pid kosoyu" takes place in Kharkiv during the famine, which is unusual and was a challenge for the author, because all preceding texts about famine depict circumstances in rural areas. Kharkiv – the capital of Ukraine at that time – was a point of arrival for all the people who were starving in nearby villages and trying to escape the famine. The main character – the young boy Andrij, who has recently escaped from the children's home, is full of courage and a strong desire to find effective ways of preventing his death in a city completely unknown to him.

The citizens around him are distracted from their everyday work not only by the huge masses of starving villagers looking for food, but by the enormous number of corpses around. The narrator dwells on the silence that surrounds the starving people: [they] "uncourageously stretched their hands and silently died by the thousands."²¹ They evoke horror in Andrij's eyes, as he feels separated from them because his chosen position is to not to die, but also not to beg: "I am not suchlike. I am not starving. I will not beg."²² He even throws away money that people have given him.

Andrij quotes Shevchenko's poems instead of mourning even in the circumstances of losing his consciousness. Those references to Shevchenko's poetry cultivates the character as a hero and as a martyr united in one person. The woman Lidia who finds this half-dead boy saves his life by calling him

²¹ Olga Mak, *Kaminnya pid kosoyu* (Toronto-Ontario-Canada: "Homin Ukrainy", 1973), p. 7.
²² *Ibid.*, 29.

her grandson. She chooses him among other starving people because he is not begging, but quarreling (which means struggling here) in a half-conscious state. Thus Olga Mak builds a heroic narrative in which the main characters reveal themselves as courageous defenders of the high ideas of dignity and patriotism in even the worst circumstances.

Through this development of the plot, the book emphasizes the survivors instead of the victims (those who actually died) or rather the survivor's fate to observe the dying people around him. Andriy feels bad when beggars come to his new home because by feeding them he deprives himself of food. Lidia helps him to start studying, as this is presented as exposure and proof his human dignity. Therefore, as a survivor he is given the task not to bear witness, but to work and to develop his abilities in order to be prepared for the future. Lidia also blames other people for selling their gold in Torgsin shops, as this act has a deeper meaning in her own eyes: "the golden cross given up in Torgsin will grow up in the Golgotha's cross for her [one's mother] son."²³

Olga Mak even uses the word "martyrs" to describe starving people.²⁴ However, using this word changes the meaning of the Holodomor, as the meaning of 'martyr' is strongly connected with the individual conscious choice to suffer. It is another example of a common process in history where the victim is represented as being guilty of the atrocities inflicted on him/herself. The perpetrators' guilt is substituted for the influence of evil and the victims become innocent and sacrificed (or even perpetrators themselves). In this way, the

atrocities are not only separated from the event, but even presented as praiseworthy.

The book ends with Lidia's refusal to give away her jewelry and she dies in the end after being cruelly tortured. However, her torment also resembles sanctity, because there are no signs on her body of being tortured and the bodily mutilation does not explain what actually happened to her. All the jewelry remains hidden under the pear tree in front of their houses, and her children are supposed to come from abroad and receive their legal inheritance.

Consequently this book reveals the tendency of 'remembering to forget'. It presents the Holodomor more as martyrdom than as a tragedy and crime. By making the survivor Andriy exceptional among others who become separated from the historical development processes because of influence of 'evil', 'natural selection', 'political consequences', 'moral weakness' or any other matter, the death of millions is implicitly justified.

The survivor as a moral pattern

The same tendency occurs in the works of Oleksa Hay-Holovko, who made two attempts to narrate the Holodomor. First, it comes out as a part of his diary "Smertelnoyu dorogoyu" ("Along the Dead Road", 1979), regarding his relocation from Leningrad to Kharkiv at the very beginning of the famine, and represents his experience being an eye-witness to it. The famine exists in his observations as a back plan, because he does not have recognition of its scale.

He also does not have straight answers to questions as to what is happening. However, he asks these questions all the time. The significant feature of his writing is the use of duplicate questions in dialogs which di-

²³ Olga Mak, *Kaminnya pid kosoyu* (Toronto-Ontario-Canada: "Homin Ukrainy", 1973), p. 146.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 8.

rect the reader's attention to important details in the answer or makes the answer more precise. As an example, here is part of the author's dialog with the landlady of the house where he lives regarding what happened to the starving people who had come to Kharkiv:

- *Those who reached the city have died already, other people are dying out in the villages.*
- *Dying out in the villages?*²⁵

These duplicate questions also elucidate a reluctance to add the author's voice and to give informative answers, thereby provoking interlocutors to speak out their position instead. This could be interpreted as a result of 'uncanniness', when fear blocked their ability to speak openly.

Hay-Holovko describes his assignment to the village in spring ostensibly to help with the sowing campaign, but actually to collect corpses from houses: "We should execute the plan – to "clean" four more houses."²⁶ He is forced to sign papers that he has not seen anything and to write articles about the advantages of collective farms after coming back to Kharkiv. In the second volume of his memoirs he strives to prove that it was an obligation, but not his real position: "I was forced to do this. An act, with which I did not agree, and which I thoroughly despised."²⁷ After this traumatic experience he adds a short promise to his memoirs to tell about events he has seen.

Hay-Holovko's second attempt to work with the topic of the Holodomor is his novel "Im dzvony ne dzvonyly" ("For them the bells did

not toll", 1987). He describes events in village Svitle (light) and then the process of its shifting to 'dark' in 1932 and 1933. At the very beginning of the book the villagers are shown to be aware of the coming famine and some of them start to hide food. Those who are naive and still believe in the promises of the communist party refuse to hide food and bring doom and death on themselves. For them the bell did toll.

After Andrij's father, a priest, is forced to leave the village, the officials destroy the church. This priest moves to another village and prays at night with the starving people in their houses or in the forest. The main emphasis here is on forbidding and destroying holy and religious values significant to people as well as the Soviet regime wiping out their moral convictions. Those who will survive have neither moral and patriotic stability nor are depressive of collective farms. The characters confide that "they want to kill our nation."²⁸

Besides depicting famine, the author also constructs a love story between the main character Andrij and Hannysia, the girl who becomes an orphan. The book ends with the marriage of this young couple and their escape from the village. This story beautifies the narrative of horrible famine, and simultaneously attributes characters streaks of dignity, bravery and innocence, which means that they are able to enshrine their high feelings to each other even in the circumstances of famine.

The break of senses reveals itself on the boundary between the realistic and metaphorical plans of the novel. The perpetrators of Holodomor are called "cannibals"²⁹ several times because of their attitude towards the

25 Oleksa Hay-Holowko, *Smertelnoyu dorogoyu*, Vol I (Winnipeg-Canada: Trident Press LTD, 1979), p.261.

26 *ibid.*, 271.

27 Oleksa Hay-Holowko, *Smertelnoyu dorogoyu*, Vol II (Winnipeg-Canada: Trident Press LTD, 1983), p.261.

28 Oleksa Hay-Holovko. *Im dzvony ne dzvonyly* (Winnipeg-Canada: Trident Press LTD, 1987), p.96.

29 *Ibid.*, 55.

villagers. However the word 'cannibal' later takes on its other literal meaning in the context of the Holodomor, when people in the village start to disappear. By using paraphrasing to emphasize the cruelty of the perpetrators, the essence of their real origin, motives and crimes is blurred and erased. The coexistence of these levels changes the attitude towards depicted events from the fiction to reality. The headline "for them the bells did not toll" could also mean that the crime was covered with silence, the death of the victims was unnoticeable on the public level, and that they were buried in an unreligious way, which at that time was equivalent to an inhuman way. This caption emphasizes the dead victims. Yet the story focusses on the survivors, who are strong-willed, brave and gritty as if this was the only way to survive.

By transforming his memoirs into the novel, Hay-Holovko therefore tries to embellish it with metaphoric phrases and a love story. The diary focusses on the cruelty of death caused by the famine as well as on the methods that were used to cover it all up and avoids mentioning those who survive. However, the novel honors survivors, their moral qualities and the intelligence that helped them to escape the doom of the bell. That is why the type of survivor in this novel could be distinguished as the 'survivor as a moral pattern'. By contrast, this strategy erases the memory of victims and provokes forgetting.

The survivor as a silent bystander

The novel "Khreshchaty Yar" (1946) by Dokia Humenna is the first depiction of the events in Kyiv between 1941 and 1943 when the Soviet authorities left the city and it was occupied by the Nazi army. This novel reveals the prolonged impact of memory of the Holodomor

on the society. The events of Holodomor are widely presented in her novel "Dity chymakohoho shljahy" ("Children of the Milky Way"), but the images of survivors are more elaborate in the novel "Khreshchaty Yar".

The book illustrates the stories of three women who choose three different strategies when choosing between the Soviet and Nazi totalitarian regimes. The first woman Halyna chooses to cooperate with the Nazi regime. She changes her nationality and language from Russian to Ukrainian because, in her opinion, Ukrainians were treated better than Russians under Nazi occupation. Later she moves to Germany. The second woman – Vasanta – prefers to defend the communist party and the values proposed by it and at the end she is killed by the Nazis for spying. The third woman – the main character of the novel – Mariana avoids choosing between the regimes and she survives. This character is an autobiographical projection of Humenna. This is confirmed by her diary and her other novel "Skarha majbutnjomy", which was published later, but precedes the events in "Khreshchaty Yar". Shkandrij notes that:

Humenna herself remained an enemy of all forms of inequality, authoritarianism, and racism throughout her life, and maintained a strong commitment to personal integrity and was outspoken about this issue.³⁰

She attributes this position to the main female characters in her novels.

Mariana consciously sees the position of eye-witness as her obligation; she believes her own eyes only and can judge Nazis only after having seen them. In her opinion, both

³⁰ Myroslav Shkandrij, *Jews in Ukrainian Literature: Representation and Identity* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2009), p.201.

regimes commit incredible crimes and cover them up with the propaganda discourse. Mariana blames those people who have nostalgia for Soviet occupation as she considers all kinds of occupation as equal. Therefore she refuses to mourn for the past, as her choice is definitely the future.

The anti-Semitism in the novel is an ambiguous topic. The communists, who flee from Kyiv, are represented as Jews, and even the narrator makes the generalization that this is "Jewish Kyiv."³¹ However, Mariana has Jewish friends; she tells her friend Rosa about the killings in Babi Yar and tries to save her life; she helps to preserve documents written in Hebrew in a museum. In the novel the announcement about gathering all Jews which was put up in Kyiv on the 29th of September of 1941 is metaphorically called the "blue announcement" or "blue decree" in order not to pronounce its real content. Those who stay in Kiev are simply workers, craftsmen, etc. In the narrator's words, there is no reason to kill them as all 'bad' Jews have left Kyiv. The citizens' attitude towards the mass killing of Jews is shown as negative: "No, bloody Hitler's font is not to the taste of Kiev citizens, there are no voices of delight, which Hitler probably expects."³² Nevertheless, these voices appear in the novel when some of the citizens accused the Jews of the detonations in Kyiv, which were used as an imaginary justification to kill them.

The comparison between Holodomor and Holocaust appears in the dialog between Vasanta and Mariana. Vasanta uses the argument about the killings of Jews to portray the communists as innocent in comparison to the Nazis. Mariana, however, gives examples of the Holodomor, deportations, and oppression,

which cannot be forgotten: "Babi Yar gives me a historical parallel. There were times when villagers were expatriated from Ukraine, the families were separated, and ten million were killed. The villages died out in the suffering of starvation. But cities live... This is now the brutality. Was that not brutality?"³³ The question whether the Holodomor was an organized crime remains unanswered in the text. This dialog elucidates the well-conceived strategy of manipulation of collective memory when the previous regime's crimes are covered up by concentrating public attention on current events and simultaneously by the obliteration of any interconnections with the past.

Besides the accusatory thoughts, the novel is mainly built on doubts and reflections on events as the main character's role is the position of a passive eye-witness for whom even her life is unbearable. The occupation of Kyiv not only demolishes the life in the city, but also destroys the expectation of Ukraine's possibility to become an independent state. The notion of "future" is not imaginable anymore in circumstances in which every day could be the last. Mariana notes: "All of us are blind. Plodding towards to the future. Seeing only the past."³⁴ However, the citizens of Kyiv are shown as blind even toward the past.

The authors draw attention to the fact that during the Nazi occupation there was a deficiency of food in the cities because of the prohibition for non-Germans to go to German shops or other public places. These circumstances are completely similar to the famine of 1932-1933, when villagers were starving, but citizens received state rations of food. This analogy in the novel evidences the rupture between the villagers and citizens which is shown to be tense mainly because of the pre-

31 Dokia Humenna, *Khreshchaty Yar* (New York: Union "Writers" Association, 1946), p.36.

32 *Ibid.*, 203.

33 *Ibid.*, 212.

34 *Ibid.*, 319.

vious famine: "Villagers are not receptive to the city's needs, as the city was once not receptive to villagers needs."³⁵ This proves that the lacunas which were not filled by critical historical analysis create a hazardous separation between 'we' and 'they'. The absence of the trauma process becomes an obstacle to reconstructing the causality of events and makes the collective memory entirely susceptible to propaganda.

The headline of the novel "Khreshchaty Yar", which is connected with the historical place in the center of Kyiv, has two possible interpretations regarding its' connection with the content. First, after the Soviet scorched-earth tactic during their withdrawal Kyiv no longer is perceived as a city and reverts to the initial stage - Khreshchaty Yar. Second, this caption extends the recognition of the depicted time by drawing attention to the past and history which coexist on every timeline. Thus in her novel *Humenna* makes an attempt to construct the multidirectional example of history in which different traumas, especially those which are connected to the same community or historical territory, should be juxtaposed. The main character Marianna is not a moral witness of the regime. Therefore the surrounding reality is just a descriptive scene for her and the reader. However, the significant remarks on comparing the two traumas reveal the desire to remember these crimes and not forget.

The survivor as a human

The book "Execution by Hunger" (1985) written in English by Miron Dolot is completely different from the other books about the Holodomor that were published by other emigré authors. Until the year of publication of "Ex-

ecution by Hunger" books mainly had metaphorical or symbolical titles which one could understand only after reading the book or being aware of the specific topic. The second title of this book "The hidden Holocaust" sounds provocative especially considering the time when it appeared – 1987. During this period it was still difficult and dangerous to speak out openly about the Ukrainian famine from 1932 to 1993, and no one was so courageous as to even compare it to or put it on equal footing with the Holocaust. Significantly, there is no such second title in Ukrainian (published at 1997) or in Russian and Polish translation. However this second title appears in the French and Romanian editions. The Ukrainian translation of this book was published under the author's real name Semen Stariv, which caused confusion among the readers.

There is no explanation in the text what kind of connection Dolot wants to delineate between the Holodomor and Holocaust by using his second title "The Hidden Holocaust" and how significant it is for him. The only thing in the text that could explain this is the author's reminiscence about his military service during the Second World War. He draws a comparison between the atrocities during the war with the atrocities of famine. However even after having been a witness to the war, in his consciousness the famine is a crueler offence:

*The suffering of war pales in comparison with the events of our village, all of which remain in my memory as absolute horror.*³⁶

The caption added in the cover of the English addition continues to provoke the reader by using well-known claims like "breadbasket

35 Ibid., 288.

36 Miron Dolot, *Execution by hunger* (New York, London: W.W.Norton and Company, 1985), p. 9.

for Europe” in the context of contrast:

Seven million people in the breadbasket of Europe were deliberately starved to death at Stalin’s command. This story has been suppressed for half a century. Now, a survivor speaks.

This small paragraph on the cover of the English edition contains important pieces of information that had been prohibited for a long time: 1) the number of deaths; 2) the specificity of the campaign; 3) the perpetrators of the famine; 4) the suppression of the truth; and 5) the silence of survivors’ voices. Those brief pieces of text probably were used to attract foreign readers’ attention.

In the “Author’s note” Dolot emphasizes the authenticity of the events he described in his book:

*It is the reconstruction of what I saw and experienced personally. Everything recorded actually happened; only authenticated facts are represented.*³⁷

He is very outspoken about his aim: telling the truth without oversimplification, exaggeration and literal imagination. He predicts that some will question the content of the book and answers the expected criticisms in advance:

*Some of my readers will wonder how I could reconstruct so many events, in such detail, after so many years. [...] First of all, one does not forget the trauma and tragedy of one’s life, no matter how hard one tries. Secondly, one cannot forget the details of one’s struggle to survive.*³⁸

37 Miron Dolot, *Execution by hunger* (New York, London: W.W.Norton and Company, 1985), p. 15.
38 Ibid.

Thus he consciously comprehends his survivor complex.

The book “Execution by hunger” is written in the first person narrative and according to the “author’s notes” Dolot identifies the main character of his novel with himself. The protagonist and the narrator – both combined in one person – have no name in the text. The author elucidates not only the events during the Holodomor, but he starts his story in 1929. This deliberate strategy enables him to draw a comparison between his village before and the after the famine. The author supports his story by analyzing the historical context of that time, using definite numbers: “Our village comprised about 800 households and 4000 inhabitants.”³⁹ These comments also change the meaning of his writing, as it is not just a kind of survivor literature, but a kind of investigation. The genre of memoirs reveals itself in a couple of the author’s descriptions of his current feelings while writing his book. His story is personalized by sincere interpolations: “God is the witness that as I write these words, the paper is wet with my tears.”⁴⁰

The author makes reference to anti-Semitic Communist party propaganda which accused the Jews of all brutalities that were committed against the villagers, in order to clear ‘real communists’ from guilt for any atrocities. Dolot shows how communists propagandized anti-Semitism to the villagers at the daily meetings: “The Jews took advantage of their power to take revenge on Ukrainians.”⁴¹ The author claims that it was totally unpredictable for the villagers.

The author constructs the narrative using more descriptive scenes than dialogs. This book breaks with the image of “typ-

39 Ibid., 9.
40 Ibid., 206.
41 Ibid., 83.

ical stories" about Holodomor, where the aim is often to affect the readers and even move them to tears. Instead it proposes explanations and analyses and expects recognition instead of sympathy. Dolot does not speak about his own feelings during the process of starving. This strategy allows him to be not just a witness to his own or of his family's suffering, but also a witness to the mass suffering.

By writing "we" in the first chapters, Dolot means all the inhabitants in his village, but the extent of his generalization varies in different parts of novel. In the last chapters "we" is limited to the author's family which is the result of the abandonment of all ties between people while they were starving to death. However, the author's family was trying to preserve these bonds. The main emphasis in the portrayal of the last months of the famine (spring 1933) is placed not on how the author's family was starving, but on the short family stories of the other villagers who died. As a survivor he speaks instead of them. While stumbling upon the dead bodies on their (his and his brother's) way, the author stops his main narrative line for a minute of recognition: to look in the face of the dead human and to say just a few words about him or her. In the very beginning of the book there is a description of the author's father's burial, but during the story there is no discussion of their own house, his mom's or brother's appearance, the author's appearance and the exact age. These memoirs are also the acquaintances with the author's family because, as he says at the end of the book, he left his village the year after the Holodomor and never saw his relatives again. This book contains the observable line of hope which influences the struggle to stay alive: "Those of us who were still alive harbored a secret and final hope that the com-

ing of the spring of 1933 would bring us some relief."⁴² The same idea concerning hope that brings a human being the strength to overcome the worst circumstances is enlightened in the prominent book "Man's search for meaning" (1984) by Victor Frankl. While telling his story about being a Holocaust witness he explicates the idea of human's exigency to have or create a meaning of one's urgency to stay alive.⁴³

Except for the historical references in this text, Miron Dolot creates the image of the 'survivor as a human' and the 'victim as a human'; they do not have exceptional features and are just ordinary people. Using this way of presenting his memoirs his approach is a contrast to the survivor literature that was written before him mainly by depriving his text of metaphorical and symbolical levels. "Execution by hunger" could be considered partly as historical research which presents historical facts and survivors' testimony as well.

Conclusion

Literary strategies of narrating traumas face the limitations of literary genres suited for the purpose. The genre of novel which the Ukrainian authors primarily choose changes the perception of the depicted events by its fictional components. Thus the texts partly lose their connection with the historical events and develop into an imagined, constructed reality rather than the original historical one. Forgetting the trauma of the Holodomor is facilitated by a strategy to depict the survivor

⁴² Miron Dolot, *Execution by hunger* (New York, London: W.W.Norton and Company, 1985), p. 203.

⁴³ Victor Frankl, *Man's search for meaning: an introduction to logotherapy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984).

as a heroic personality or a moral pattern for others. Therefore the literary work aims to be didactic for a reader. This choice of depicting the survivors erases the reasons and circumstances which put him in this condition, while emphasizing his personality which becomes a justification of why only he is able to survive. These two kinds of images of survivors are represented in the novels by Olga Mak and Oleksa Hay-Holovko.

The type of 'survivor as a silent bystander' depicts the events without showing a personal connection to them. This creates an ambiguous and elusive feeling, raises questions without explicit answers, and leaves an effect of incompleteness. This approach, however, allowed Dokia Humenna to juxtapose the Holodomor and Holocaust in 1943. She showed the existence of opposite perceptions of mass killings in Kyiv and Babi Yar.

The book by Miron Dolot, which is deprived of the protagonist's emotions on his struggle to survive, creates an image of the 'survivor as a human'. His text does not aim to shock the reader, but at thrilling, charming or exciting sympathy. The book which does not poetize and beautify the position of the survivor constructs the strategy of 'remembering to remember'. The lack of images of the "survivor as a human" facilitates the reader's estrangement from the perception of the Holodomor as true suffering and a crime. Therefore, this text fills the lacuna in the presentation of the uncommon type of survivor in the Ukrainian literature.

Consequently, these authors are constrained by their disability to express and transmit traumatic experience properly. The writers

narrate their traumatic experience in opposite ways, each of which enlightens a different approach to the past as a reality constructed through the historical perspective and literary imagination. These types of survivors could be used for other Ukrainian novels written in the after-war period. The extension of this typology will draw a comparison between features of Ukrainian survivor literature and the first post-war texts about the Holocaust.

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