Лекції відомих вчених
Lectures o f Renowned Academicians

DOI: https://doi.org/10.28925/2412-2491.2025.2517
UDC 821.161.2.09:341.485

THE HOLODOMOR IN UKRAINIAN LITERATURE

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This lecture was presented to the students of Slavic Philology at Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich within the framework of the workshop "Counter-Sentences. Feminist Perspectives in Slavic Studies" on July 3, 2025. The lecture is part of a larger project, launched at the Institute of Slavic Studies at Leipzig University, titled "The Memory of the Holodomor in Slavic Literature", aimed at introducing Western academia to Holodomor literature in various media, including prose, plays, poetry, comics, films, and other forms (Die Erinnerung an den Holodomor in den slawischen Literaturen, 2024).

Key words: *Holodomor, immigration, destructive strategy, victimhood, symbolic imagery, fiction texts*

Гайдаш А.В. Голодомор в українській літературі. *Цю лекцію було представлено студентам слов'янської філології Мюнхенського університету імені Людвіга-Максиміліана в рамках семінару «Контрречення. Феміністичні перспективи у славістичних дослідженнях» 3 липня 2025 року. Лекція є частиною більшого проєкту, започаткованого в Інституті славістики Лейпцизького університету під назвою «Пам'ять про Голодомор у слов'янській літературі», спрямованого на ознайомлення західної академічної спільноти з літературою про Голодомор у різних медіа, включаючи прозу, п'єси, поезію, комікси, фільми та інші форми (Die Erinnerung an den Holodomor in den slawischen Literaturen, 2024).*

Ключові слова: *Голодомор, імміграція, деструктивна стратегія, жертва, символічні образи, художні тексти*

Plan

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Ukrainian literature. Introduction to Holodomor Studies

How old is Ukrainian literature? Ukrainian writings begin with the adoption of Christianity in the 10th century AD. The oldest are religious writings and the Kyivan chronicles (Mandryka, 1968, p. 17). According to the curriculum approved by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine for students majoring in Ukrainian studies, philologists study the history of the national literature in periods and what I find essential in the research of the Holodomor fiction is the stages number three, five, and six (Table 1) because they represent those icon literati in the formation of the Ukrainian identity whose body of work serves as an intertext in the prose and drama texts about the genocide in Ukraine, particularly, Taras Shevchenko (mid-19th century), Lesya Ukrainka (fin de siècle), and the Executed Renaissance embodied by Mykola Khvylovy (the 20s and 30s of the 20th century). For example, one of the epigraphs of Tanya Pyankova`s novel alludes to Shevchenko`s seminal poem “To The Dead, The Living and the Unborn Countrymen of Mine in the Ukraine and outside the Ukraine My Friendly Message” (1845): “Gewidmet: Dem Andenken an jedes Korn, jeden Menschen Dem Andenken an die ungeborenen Generationen” (2022, S. 5). Serhiy Kokot-Ledyansky’s play “Nineteen-Thirty-Three” (1943) revolves around Mykola Khvylovy’s suicide, and Olha Mak’s novel for adolescents, “Stones Under the Scythe” (1973), abounds in imagery from Shevchenko and Lesya Ukrainka’s poetry.

Table 1. A curriculum in Ukrainian philology (Bachelor Modules).

Number	Period
1.	Folklore
2.	Ancient Ukrainian literature
3.	Ukrainian literature and literary criticism at the beginning – mid-19th

	century
4.	Ukrainian literature and literary criticism in the second half of the 19th century
5.	Ukrainian literature and literary criticism at the end of 19th — early 20th century
6.	Ukrainian literature and literary criticism in the 20s-30s of the 20th century
7.	Ukrainian literature and literary criticism in the 40s-50s of the 20th century
8.	Ukrainian literature and literary criticism in the 60s-80s of the 20th century
9.	Ukrainian literature and literary criticism at the end of the 20th — early 21 century: critical discourse

Introduction to Holodomor studies

Holodomor Studies is an interdisciplinary field of scholarship based on findings from history, philosophy, sociology, psychology, anthropology, and political science. Thus, references to Ukraine's history are essential in the literary analyses of Holodomor fiction. In the Ukrainian language, the term Holodomor consists of two words: "g/holod" means "hunger" and "mor" means "mass deaths". The Great Famine of 1932-1933 is a term often used synonymously with Holodomor.

Guido Hausmann, a German historian, writes, "To this day, there is still a great deal of ignorance about the Great Famine in Ukraine" (2022). This is still the case globally, including in Ukraine. However, over the past two decades, the Holodomor Genocide has received a great deal of attention from Ukrainian scholars. The Great Famine of 1932-1933 was a man-made, deliberate strategy to destroy the non-obedient Ukrainians as a nation under the soviet regime. This strategy took the form of imposed collectivization on the independent farmers, who made up 80% of the population of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic at that time. As a result of this strategy, approximately five million Ukrainians died of hunger within less than a year (Козицький, 2021, с. 19). The Great Famine was primarily a result of social manipulation, rather than a natural disaster, unlike Ireland's Gorta Mór (1845-1851). That is why, after many decades of silence, Holodomor is officially recognized as a genocide by Ukraine and twenty-nine

countries around the world, including Germany. On the territory of the Soviet Union, until its dissolution, it was forbidden even to pronounce the word "Holodomor" in the context of Ukraine in the early 1930s. Memories of this famine were under the strictest ban for almost sixty years in soviet Ukraine. However, despite the terror of the communist regime, Soviet Ukrainian authors such as Andriy Malyshko, Anatoliy Dimarov, and Volodymyr Sosiura dared to mention the tragedy in their fiction, creating an imagistic (rather than documentary) texture in the fiction.

Ukrainian society continues to experience the devastating consequences of the Great Famine (Gaidash, 2024, p. 204). In his well-known essay from 2008 concerning the Ukrainian authors of Holodomor, Volodymyr Dibrova identifies the origins of various social issues facing independent Ukraine, such as corruption and the unequal political elite, as well as the inconsistent approaches to nation-building by successive governments, all rooted in the tragedy of the Great Famine of 1932-33 (2008, p. 265). Dibrova highlights the significance of the Ukrainian language, which Soviet authorities sought to eradicate from everyday use, and which remains a powerful vehicle for conveying the inexpressible experience of pain and trauma in literary texts about the famine.

According to Dibrova, "the usual response of those who lived through the Holodomor" was a stunned facial expression filled with profound horror and sorrow, as if they were silently pleading, "Let's not remember!" (ibid.). The researcher highlights a shared characteristic of "the typical reactions of survivors of famine" (Dibrova, 2008, p. 267): in addition to feelings of unimaginable fear and grief, the victims strive to forget their experiences, as Dibrova suggests, to preserve their mental well-being and move forward with their lives. When it comes to fictional works, Dibrova argues that in Eastern Europe, literature served as a kind of public forum through which the nation sought to confront its traumas and uncertainties (ibid.).

Andriy Kozytsky explains Dibrova's findings by indicating that during the Great Famine and particularly in the period that followed, those who survived were compelled to abandon their normal way of life. This resulted in a deterioration of self-esteem, a diminishment of traditional values, and a sense of moral decline (Козицький, 2021, с. 64-65). In a similar vein, the book of the Ukrainian psychologist, Iryna Reva, "По той бік себе" ("On the Other Side of the Self", 2019), examines the social, psychological, and cultural impacts of the Holodomor, imposed by Stalin's policies. Reva's book explains why so many

Ukrainians (including three generations) still have a strong image of victimhood, a sense of hopelessness, and fear of the future. A better understanding of the traumatic past helps overcome predicaments in the present time and prevents the repetition of similar experiences in the future. What is also important is the recognition of the epigenetic consequences of trauma associated with hunger. In "Fieldwork in Ukrainian Sex" (1996), Oksana Zabuzhko notes that American Sovietologists struggled to explain the prevalence of overweight women in her generation, linking it to a cultural habit of hoarding food caused by psychological trauma. Similarly, Natalia Vorozhbit's play "The Grain Store" (2009) revisits collective memories of the Holodomor, contrasting the famine's devastating starvation with its long-term epigenetic effects, including obesity.

In the framework of political science, the Holodomor scholars have evidence that the genocide of 1932-1933 against Ukrainians was a conscious choice of the Bolshevik leadership of the USSR, whose main goal was to permanently eliminate the danger of Ukraine getting out of the Soviet Union and the sphere of Russian political and cultural influence (Козицький, 2021, с. 165). At all costs, the government wanted to maintain its political power and control of Ukraine, whose population threatened the Bolsheviks from within (ibidem). The concept of structural delegitimization can be instrumental in analyzing violence, which was initially directed only at selected representatives of Ukrainians, namely, kurkuls, intelligentsia, and clergy, and gradually spread to the entire Ukrainian society (Козицький, 2021, p. 165). Holodomor`s fiction abounds in cases of violence and genocidal politics of the soviet government.

Since 1933, interdisciplinary studies of the Holodomor (e.g., Robert Conquest's 1986 book) have been conducted in Western academia, with recent examples including "The Red Famine" (2017) by Anne Applebaum. Holodomor studies have long been active outside Ukraine, particularly in Canada, with the support of the Ukrainian diaspora, resulting in a vast interdisciplinary body of scholarship. Yet, Western European academia has also established an increasing tendency to address the tragedy of the Great Famine. The cutting-edge Berlin periodical "Osteuropa" dedicated one of its volumes to the Holodomor commemoration in 2004, featuring literary criticism of the two main novels about the Holodomor. LMU-based historian, Dr. Franziska Davies, observes in an interview with "Wyborcza": "In Russian-Ukrainian history, we have attempts at de-Ukrainization not only today in the occupied territories, but also in the past. There have always been attempts to destroy Ukrainian culture and language.

There was an erasure of the entire Ukrainian intelligentsia in the early 1930s. Then there was Holodomor with such a scale of genocidal violence that was never experienced in East Germany <...> The memory of the Holodomor was suppressed <…>" (2024).

State-of-the-art

Literary criticism is also crucial in raising awareness about the Holodomor Genocide. In independent Ukraine, two dissertations on Holodomor fiction were defended in the early 2000s. Maryna Kulchytska´s 2002 thesis reads closely "Ray" (1953) and "Zhovty Knyaz" (1962) by Vasyl Barka, a dialogue connected by Ukrainian urban and rural topoi. Kulchytska's findings explain the complex narrative of Barka's storytelling, characterized by numerous shifts in point of view and antonymic imagery, as the conflict between Russian and Ukrainian mentalities unfolds.

Natalya Tymoshchuk examines the key Ukrainian prose works about the Holodomor from the 20th century, approaching them as examples of antitotalitarian or non-conformist expression in her 2005 thesis. The scholar provides a structured analysis of Holodomor-related fiction, introducing her own categorizations. One notable distinction Tymoshchuk makes is between various short prose pieces and novels. In short stories and novellas, the narrative often shifts from a third-person perspective, which can be more distant and objective, to a first-person viewpoint. This change allows the focus to narrow down to the narrator's internal thoughts, presenting the tragedy of the Holodomor through the personal experiences and insights of the characters (Тимощук, 2005, с. 56). I have a question for those of you who have had the opportunity to read four pages of the short story "Krykhty" (2022) by Iryna Nebesna, translated into German as "Krümel". Is the narration in the story consistent throughout? Can we apply Tymoshchuk's findings to our interpretation of "Krümel"?

The big prose tackles the Great Famine primarily through the lens of historical and documentary fiction based on archival sources and factual accuracy, as inferred by the scholar (Тимощук, 2005, с. 164). A key feature of Tymoshchuk's close reading of "Zhovty Knyaz" is the diversity of metaphoric and tropic imagery in Barka's work, as well as her comparative study of Ukrainian fiction with the US-American novel "The Grapes of Wrath" (1939) by John Steinbeck. "The Grapes of Wrath" reflects the environmental tragedy of soil erosion in the southern United States during the Great Depression, which left

approximately thirty thousand American farmers homeless. The novels share many similarities in their portrayal of famine. Thus, in her thesis, Tymoshchuk detects a synthesis of an inherent Ukrainian outlook with the assimilation of Western democratic values, reconstructing the moral and ethical concept of human existence in extreme situations.

Outside Ukraine, Rolf Göbner analyzes the representations of the Holodomor in Ukrainian literature, drawing on the material of novels by Vasyl Barka and Ulas Samchuk, and titles his study "Burnt Souls". Göbner proves that both authors depicted the 1932-33 Holodomor "as a genocide perpetrated against the Ukrainian people and as a national disaster". Göbner's close reading of Ulas Samchuk and Vasyl Barka's novels reveals the factual and mimetic background of historical events in the plotlines. The German scholar assumes that (the original quote in German is on slide) "It is almost impossible to understand the events mentioned as facts and not illusions of a sick psyche" (2004, p. 185).

In her interdisciplinary thesis "*'Idle, Drunk and Good-for-Nothing'*: The Rank-and-File Perpetrators of 1932-1933 Famine in Ukraine and Their Representation in Cultural Memory", Daria Mattingly studies and categorizes perpetrators of mass violence, most of whom were "ordinary people with rather banal motives" (2018, p. 12). Mattingly starts her research with the antonymic representation of people who facilitated the famine on the ground in the cultural memory: "In Soviet literature, for instance, they are characterized by Soviet writers as heroes and martyrs, while writers in the Ukrainian diaspora and independent Ukraine describe them as idlers, savage Others or disillusioned Communists" (2018, p. 12). Mattingly's focus on the perpetrators rather than on the victims of the Great Famine is instrumental in the global postcolonial reading of the Holodomor literature.

How to read Holodomor literature?

I find Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of *minor literature* particularly useful, especially their notion of "the impossibility of not writing because national consciousness, uncertain or oppressed, necessarily exists by means of literature" (1986, p. 16). There are more features which underline their concept: one of them is "the characteristic of minor literatures is that everything in them is political <…> its cramped space forces each individual intrigue to connect immediately to politics" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1986, p. 17). The triad closes "the collective assemblage of enunciation" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1986, p.

18). Aside from the deterritorialization of the language (a characteristic of mainland Ukrainian fiction), I assume that the two features in the concept of minor literature by Deleuze and Guattari, in particular, political immediacy and collective value, are inherent in the Ukrainian literature of the Holodomor.

The social consequences and effects of the Great Famine are dramatic; therefore, to analyze their meanings, I suggest addressing the Holodomor in fictional texts within the broader context of global commemoration of the man-made disasters that affected people in the 20th century. The trauma studies developed by Anna Artwińska and Anja Tippner (2022) "focus on the period after the event, after catastrophe, viewing catastrophe as a process and as a condition" (Artwińska and Tippner 2022, p. 5), stressing "the heuristic potential of postcatastrophic approaches to European postwar cultures" (ibidem.). The scholars' idea of post-catastrophe considers the consequences of extreme experiences on a collective, aesthetic, and political level rather than on an individual one (Artwińska and Tippner 2022, p. 3). On the one hand, Artwińska and Tippner analyze the after-effects of the political and cultural situation in literary texts; on the other hand, the German scholars examine the aesthetic modes of representation.

Tackling the issue of postcatastrophe enables the focus on the poetics of the ineffable in Holodomor literature. Essentially, I examine the fictional representations of the ineffable experience of the Great Famine in Ukrainian and North American literature, both in the context of immigration and on the mainland.

Scholarly work on the aesthetic implications of the inexpressible in the humanities, particularly in literary studies, is scarce. In his seminal study of medieval English poetry, Theodore Bogdanos detects the aesthetic impact of the unspoken, developing the formula of the metaphor: "Because the tenor is unknown and fundamentally inexpressible, the vehicle tends to engulf it with its own reality and define it totally in its own terms" (1983, p. 11-12). The scholar analyses symbolic imagery in the domain of language. Further studies of the ineffable also revolve around the nature of language. In contemporary philosophy, Silvia Jonas accentuates the religious experience of the unspoken (which is also indicative in the novels about the Holodomor). Finally, in his interdisciplinary study of the ineffable in music and philosophy, Michael Gallope confirms that "there is an insufficiency in the medium of the language itself"

(2017, p. 4), regarding the nonverbal (namely, music) as “exceptionally powerful, even transformative experience” (2017, p. 7).

I assume that the mechanisms of the unspoken (ineffable) in the symbolic imagery of fictional texts about the Holodomor transmit emotional states and memories not recorded in documentary accounts. My working hypothesis is that the ineffable functions as a decolonizing trope in the trauma narrative, rendering the truth. Thus, ineffability can be instrumental in the text analysis of the (postapocalyptic) Holodomor narratives.

Outline of the Holodomor fiction: immigration and the mainland

The role of the Ukrainian writers in exile became crucial in the consideration of the concurrent (then) events happening on the territory of Ukraine, the distant gaze that combined trauma, anger, nostalgia, and criticism, too. Especially in terms of the Great Famine of 1932-1933. Ulas Samchuk, Vasyl Barka, Bohdan Boychuk, and Olha Mak became the first generation of Ukrainian authors abroad who narrated in fictional form the tragedy of the starving deaths of millions of Ukrainians in the Soviet Union. Because of Bolsheviks’ persecution and repression of any resistance to their regime, the Ukrainain authors wrote and published their fiction in immigration: “Maria” (1934), a novel by Ulas Samchuk in Lviv (the Second Polish Republic), “Zhovty Knyaz” (1962), a book by Vasyl Barka in New York (the USA), and “Hunger-1933” (1968), a play by Bohdan Boychuk in New York (the USA), a novel for teenagers “Stones Under the Scythe” by Olga Mak in Toronto (Canada). Written in the Ukrainian language and translated into English much later, these canonical books are infused with impenetrable, grotesque, and oftentimes apocalyptic images in the ineffable, which formed the background for the next generations of authors exploring the Great Famine.

The following generations of the Ukrainian Diaspora in the USA, represented by Askold Melnyczuk, Alexander Motyl, Erin Litteken, and Victoria Belim, have transmitted knowledge about this tragedy in English, making it accessible to a broader audience. Immensely diverse in genre and poetics, their novels make the painful past quite present in laying bare the Russian colonialism of Ukraine and Ukraine`s fight against victimhood.

Graphic novels about the Holodomor are also in demand. Yuliia Smal's comic, “P’yat’ Koloskiv” (translated as “The Five Spikelets” in English), is aimed at a younger audience and presents a blend of historical fiction and the

accounts of Holodomor survivors. The work, subtitled “the Holodomor stories about how Ukrainians disappeared” (2024, с. 3), is narrated by five children, two of whom tragically did not survive the Great Famine. Through a distinctive combination of children’s literature elements and nonfiction, the book communicates the memory of this tragic event. Rather than emphasizing victimhood often linked with the Holodomor, the conclusion of “P’yat’ Koloskiv” highlights resilience: “Everyone has their own story. Everyone has experienced grief that even many adults find difficult to bear. But children will always be children, eager to play, experience joy, and momentarily escape their sorrow through play” (Смаль, 2024, с. 70). Despite the mention of forgetting, the final page of the graphic novel features all five characters against a backdrop of grey, dotted silhouettes, symbolizing the victims of the genocide (Смаль, 2024, с. 71). In this way, remembrance becomes a testament to strength.

Figure 1. Memory of the Holodomor without victimization in Yuliia Smal's comic, “P’yat’ Koloskiv” (2024, с. 7).

Please follow the QR code with the list of all the books mentioned, for further study of the Holodomor literature:

Several significant novels about the Great Hunger have been translated into German. I will briefly comment on two of them, the seminal text by Vasyl Barka,

“Der gelbe Fürst” (“Жовтий князь”), and the recent book by Tanya Pyankova, “Das Zeitalter der roten Ameisen” (“Вік червоних мурах”).

A case study of “Der gelbe Fürst” (1962) by Vasyl Barka

“Zhovty Knyaz” by Vasyl Barkain is a naturalistic novel about the Holodomor Genocide of 1932-1933 in Ukraine. In the tradition of fin de siècle naturalists, Barka depicts the atrocities of famine through the example of one Ukrainian peasant family, the Katrannyks, set against the broader backdrop of the entire Poltavshchyna region. Documenting the memories of Holodomor survivors is a crucial aspect of “Zhovty Knyaz”. The scholarship highlights the use of symbolism, such as the significance of the color yellow in the novel. This combination creates a powerful text, not only for commemorative and edifying purposes, but also for aesthetic reception.

Rolf Göbner dissects three planes of Barka’s book, particularly 1) realistic descriptions of hunger corporeal consequences, mass graves, and cannibalism, 2) psychological portrayals of the victims and perpetrators, and 3) the metaphysical dimension of Ukrainian spirituality and the Bolsheviks’ infernal animosity. Despite the scholar’s concluding remarks that the books may initially seem “a bloody mess,” their imagery develops “humanistic expressiveness (that – A.G.) can hardly be surpassed” (p. 190). In his study, “Burnt Souls,” Rolf Göbner implies perpetrators rather than victims. The scholar’s significant contribution lies in situating The Yellow Prince within the historiography of the Holodomor Genocide.

I will quote a short excerpt from the novel, in which a protagonist´s wife, with their two children, stands in a long line in the city for bread, and how Soviet perpetrators indiscriminately kill people in line:

„Aus unerklärlichem Grund verkrampfte sich das Herz der Daria Oleksandrivna, als sie dies hörte: plötzlich ist es, als würde sich bösartiges Gelächter erheben. «Elend kommt! Man muss sich davor in Acht nehmen ... »

Sie sieht sich angestrengt um, wohin sie fliehen könnte, hier zumindest nicht weit weg durch das Loch im Zaun.

Tatsächlich rattern immer wieder Lastwagen herbei und die herabspringenden Kappelträger fangen und zerren alle wie Vieh fort, die abgerissen und in Lumpen mit Taschen herumsitzen und vom Dorf hergekommen sind. Sie treiben sie auf die Ladeflächen auf denen bewaffnete Wachen warten.

Daria Oleksandrivna hörte den alten Bürgern angsterfüllt zu und beobachtete jede Bewegung auf der Straße. Noch, ehe der Überfall begann, schrie sie den Kindern zu: «Die holen uns zum Verderben! Fliehen wir!»

Sie zog die Kinder an der Hand zur Öffnung im Zaun, da hatte jemand Bretter zum Heizen herausgerissen. Nachdem sie die Kinder hindurchgelassen und sich selbst hindurchgezwängt hatte, lief sie mit ihnen durch den kleinen mit Schnee gefüllten Garten und durch den Hof zum Türchen, das auf die andere Straße führte, die parallel zu der verlief, auf der sich die Reihe ums Brot anstellte“ (Barka, 2009, S. 180-181).

In this scene from *Der gelbe Fürst*, Barka captures the terror of the Holodomor through Daria Oleksandrivna’s visceral premonition of danger, conveyed in her heart spasm and the imagined “bösartiges Gelächter.” The violent roundups reduce people to animals “wie Vieh,” embodying state brutality, while the “Loch im Zaun” symbolizes a fragile threshold between entrapment and survival. Through rapid, paratactic narration and urgent action, Barka contrasts systemic dehumanization with a mother’s instinctive resilience, dramatizing how individual agency struggles to persist within collective historical trauma.

A case study of “Das Zeitalter der roten Ameisen” (2022) by Tanya Pyankova

Written 60 years later, “Das Zeitalter der roten Ameisen” (“Вік червоних мурах“) utilizes the images of perpetrators as full-fledged characters, which alters the canon of Holodomor fiction established by Vasyl Barka.

Tetyana Pyankova, a 40-year-old writer, comes from the Carpathian region, specifically Ivano-Frankivsk, which was spared the effects of the Holodomor. Pyankova’s poetry strikes a naturalistic tone; however, her novel about the Holodomor builds on the poetic imagery, complementing it with realist detail.

Since her student years, Pyankova had accumulated a substantial amount of documentary literature about the 1933 Famine. The writer also turned to the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory (Remembrance) for materials. She listened to numerous audio recordings of Holodomor survivors, whose eyewitness accounts are archived at the Institute and the National Museum of the Holodomor.

In her search, Pyankova came across a story about a sanatorium that was opened in the 1930s on the site of a former almshouse in the village of Machukhy, near Poltava, by the Soviet authorities. The party leadership was

treated for obesity there. At the same time, more than half of the people of this village died in the Holodomor. A woman who survived wrote: “Imagine how we, hungry, destitute, brought to the brink, went to look over the fence at those well-fed, rosy-cheeked patients of the sanatorium. It seemed that if God turned away for a moment, we could eat all those people.” Later, this phrase was used by the protagonist, Dusja, in the novel. The hungry villagers went to look at the well-fed residents of the sanatorium.

Partially, the action of “Das Zeitalter der roten Ameisen” takes place in the sanatorium, and partially, in the village of Machukhy.

The major characters of “Das Zeitalter der roten Ameisen”

The novel features three narrators. Through the first-person point of view of these three characters, the story of famine in Machukhy unfolds:

The first narrator, 33-year-old Solomiya (aka Solja) is the wife of a party functionary from Kharkiv who organizes a famine in Machukhy. She doesn’t even know about famine, as she lives in her own bubble. On the one hand, Solja is in the shadow of her Russian-speaking husband; on the other, she is experiencing the death of her two-month-old daughter with difficulty. The woman drowns the pain of loss with food. Solja brings herself to such a state that she cannot walk. She is treated for obesity with diets. She learns about the Holodomor from random conversations in a sanatorium. Solja seeks justification for herself and her husband because her initial reaction is one of denial.

Solja is, on the one hand, a victim of circumstances because of a family tragedy. On the other hand, she appears not to understand what is happening around her, despite having the opportunity to know the truth. Solja had to painfully emerge from this self-isolation.

The second narrator, a 19-year-old named Yavdokha (also known as Dusja), holds a different truth. She is slowly dying of hunger and is clearly aware of what is happening to her. She asks death to come soon and end the suffering. Dusja is a victim and a survivor of the famine in the village. Her narrative is contrasted with that of Solja. Corporeal manifestations are manifested by swelling of the feet due to different reasons. I assume that in the character of Dusja the author implies that if in the 1930s, Ukrainians were unable to cope with the evil that came to their land, then in 2022, Ukrainians no longer accept the torment so humbly and are ready to resist.

The third narrator, Svyryd, is a village activist and a perpetrator. A party dog who does everything the Bolsheviks order. There were also many such people. Yet, Svyryd is not absolutely evil. Pyankova claims that Svyryd is her favorite character because he manifests the mental turmoil. The author places him in the so-called gray zone, where white and black are mixed. Good impulses and downright meanness guide Svyryd. Mass hunger for Svyryd is a tool that allows him to achieve his goals. He is in love with Dusja`s mother, who does not let him in the threshold. Nevertheless, Svyryd has a child from another woman, a daughter of a kulak. The perpetrator takes his newborn son to an orphanage, on the one hand, saving him from death, on the other, fearing arrest for having an affair with a kulak descendant.

Pyankova assumes that perpetrators like Svyryd have children and grandchildren. They are still afraid to tell how they survived 1933. And the Russians needed this fear. They destroyed our culture and traditions to such a level that we stopped feeling like Ukrainians.

If Barka uses the image of the yellow prince as an embodiment of evil, Pyankova develops the image of hunger as a character through the narration of Dusja. Often, hunger manifests in the following physical forms:

„Mit Oma schriller Stimme treibt der Hunter Nachbars Ziege unter der alten Weide hervor:

„Schup, weg da! Du Elend!“…

Der Hunger zieht die Axt aus dem Gürtel. Macht sich flicht daran, das Bäumchen umzuhacken“… (Pyankova, 2022, S. 38).

„Der Hunger verschließt uns die Münde doppelt und dreifach, vereist sie mit stummer Kälte, knebelt sie, gießt heißes Zinn und übel riechendes Siegelwachs darüber aus…“ (Pyankova, 2022, S. 62).

„Der Hunger stehet mir näher als irgendwer sonst, denn er bringt mir die wärmender Hoffnung, dass wir nicht mehr langer haben, dass diese Welt schon bald hinterm Horizont versinkt, und ich gleich mir ihr“ (Pyankova, 2022, S. 77).

Similarly to Vasyl Barka, Tanya Pyankova consulted with medical professionals and even went without food for a time to support her research (Uthoff, 2022).

Although these three narrators, as well as other characters, are fictional, all the stories are based on actual events. First, Pyankova wrote the short story “A Small Bird” about a woman who was beaten to death, but in her mouth, the children found a few grains taken for them from the collective farm field. These

grains helped them to survive. This episode was then incorporated into the novel's plot.

Tanya Pyankova studied the martyrology of the Book of Memory, listing 882,510 names of those who died in the Holodomor. That is why all the names of the characters in "Das Zeitalter der roten Ameisen" are real. Pyankova took the names of the executioners and organizers of the Famine from historical documents.

Conclusions. One of my research arguments is that the ineffable representations in plays about Holodomor are construed with the help of non-mimetic imagery, including transcendental (dreams) and traumatic experiences, silence, and religiosity, enabled by the Ukrainian heritage of khymerna prose (stylistically close to magical realism). Ethnic and national issues were the reasons for the Holodomor, which was used as a weapon against the Ukrainian population that refused to submit to the communist regime. Holodomor novels possess the decolonizing potential to revive modern Ukraine's connection with its pre-colonial past and the most tragic experience in its recent history through their imagery.

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Дата надходження статті до редакції: 27.09.2025
Прийнято до друку: 27.10.2025