

## РОЗДІЛ 8 ЛІТЕРАТУРА ЗАРУБІЖНИХ КРАЇН

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### VISUALIZING TRAUMA: THE HOLOCAUST REPRESENTATION THROUGH THE PRISM OF EXPERIMENTAL PROSE

### ВІЗУАЛІЗУЮЧИ ТРАВМУ: РЕПРЕЗЕНТАЦІЯ ГОЛОКОСТУ КРИЗЬ ПРИЗМУ ЕКСПЕРЕМЕНТАЛЬНОЇ ПРОЗИ

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This article is devoted to the study and research of such a phenomenon as trauma and its representation by means of experimental prose, such as comics and graphic novels. The Holocaust events, which shocked the world, became the greatest trauma of the post-war period the concept of “trauma” is used to describe the psychological consequences of the violence suffered by the victims of the Catastrophe. From the second half of the 20th century until today learning of the Holocaust history and its consequences is mostly done through the written word and literature: stories about suffering, testimonies of eyewitnesses and saviors present those tragic events in both fiction and non-fiction forms. Experimental prose is understood as a set of genre and style modifications of innovative works and is considered by literary critics as a category. One of the main features that characterizes the transformation of the modern cultural paradigm is the deepening of the visual, figurative component. Today, visibility has become the leading channel of reality perception. That is why graphic literature has become so popular among the younger generation in the second half of the 20th century and does not interfere with it to this day. In the 80s, the era of “educational comics” begins, graphic prose began to be used to convey the most complex topics, such as the war in Vietnam, problems of racism and anti-Semitism, and the tragedy of the Holocaust. Modern graphic novels have specific stylistic features, among which there are those that are considered “european” or “american”. The first “underground comics”, that first broke the taboo on comics about the Holocaust, were “MAUS”, by the American writer and artist Art Spiegelman. After it begins a boom in graphic prose publishing. so graphic adaptation of the most famous and important document of the last century “The Diary of Anne Frank” appears and many others.

**Key words:** experimental prose, Holocaust, visibility, trauma, graphic literature.

Дана стаття присвячена вивченню та дослідженню такого феномену як травма та її репрезентація засобами експериментальної прози, як от комікс чи графічні романи. Події Голокосту, які шокували світ, стали найбільшою травмою післявоєнного періоду. Поняття «травма» використовується для опису психологічних наслідків насильства, якого зазнали жертви Катастрофи. З другої половини ХХ століття і до сьогодні вивчення історії Голокосту та його наслідків відбувається здебільшого через письмове слово та літературу: розповіді про страждання, свідчення очевидців і рятувальників подають ті трагічні події як у художній, так і в науково-дослідній формі. Нині експериментальна проза розуміється як сукупність жанрово-стильових модифікацій новаторських творів і розглядається літературознавцями як категорія. Однією з основних рис, що характеризує трансформацію сучасної культурної парадигми, є поглиблення візуальної, образної складової. Сьогодні візуальність стала провідним каналом сприйняття дійсності. Саме тому графічна література стала такою популярною серед підростаючого покоління у другій половині ХХ століття, це триває і донині. У 80-х починається ера «навчальних коміксів», графічна проза починає використовуватися для передачі найскладніших тем, таких як війна у В'єтнамі, проблеми расизму та антисемітизму, трагедія Голокосту. Сучасні графічні романи мають певні стилістичні особливості, серед яких є такі, що вважаються «європейськими» чи «американськими». Першими «підпільними коміксами», які вперше порушили табу на комікси про Голокост, стали «MAUS» американського письменника та художника Арта Шпігельмана. Після цього починається бум видання графічної прози. так з'являється графічна адаптація найвідомішого і важливого документа минулого століття «Щоденника Анни Франк» та багато інших.

**Ключові слова:** експериментальна проза, Голокост, візуальність, травма, графічна література.

**Formulation the Research Problem.** The impact that the Second World War had on the life experience of different generations seems to be more and more significant with the passage of time. Neither historical science nor psychology find in their arsenal suffi-

cient theoretical and practical studies to investigate on how many generations such an experience will spread and how traumatic it will be for future generations. Undoubtedly, the Holocaust events, which shocked the world, became the greatest trauma of the post-war

period. The traumatic Holocaust events acquired their current significance only in the late 1970s, primarily in connection with the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem, and the trial of the Auschwitz criminals in Frankfurt. The American four-episode TV movie "Holocaust", which first appeared on screens in 1978 and gave this topic a controversial color, also had considerable resonance (on the screen you can see a photo of the book Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil (1963), written by the philosopher and political thinker Hannah Arendt about the mentioned trial and you can see also the mentioned films).

**Recent researches and publications analysis.** The specified topic has been covered in scientific literature, its aspects are raised in works which are devoted to the study of trauma phenomenon: "Unclaimed Experience : Trauma, Narrative and History" by C. Caruth, "Sociodrama and Collective Trauma and History" by Kellermann P.F.; devoted to the theory of graphic novel and comics-culture: "The Graphic Novel: An Introduction" by Baetens J. Frey F., "Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art" by S. McCloud.

**Setting objectives:** to study and research such a phenomenon as trauma and its representation by means of experimental prose, such as comics and graphic novels, to find out the historical and socio-cultural context, the reasons that contributed to the emergence of this phenomenon, to indicate the main figures who contributed to the formation of its theoretical and practical component.

**Presentation of main material.** From the second half of the 20th century until today learning of the Holocaust history and its consequences is mostly done through the written word and literature: stories about suffering, testimonies of eyewitnesses and saviors present those tragic events in both fiction and non-fiction forms. In this case, the concept of "trauma" is used to describe the psychological consequences of the violence suffered by the victims of the Catastrophe. According to many philosophers and historians points of view, the greatest tragedy for the Jews and humanity in general is the psychological legacy that the survivors brought with them. Thus, the researcher P.F. Kellermann states: "I am particularly interested in how "collective trauma" affects everyone at a very deep level. It even passes from generation to generation and becomes part of cultural identity" [5]. In the course of long-term research, he discovered an interesting fact: descendants of Holocaust victims very often experience in their dreams and fantasies the horrors of the Second World War, which their forefathers experienced. Metaphorically, he explained it as follows: "Trauma

is like a shadow that is present in the souls of people, and this shadow falls into the souls of their loved ones" [5]. Thus, researching the phenomenon of trauma in literature, the researcher Cathy Caruth in her book "Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History" (1996) came to the conclusion that "the word "trauma" etymologically comes from the Greek "wound", and its primary meaning was "a wound that struck the body" [4, p. 3]. Later, this concept became widely used in psychiatry, which used it to understand the "wound that struck the mind" [4, p. 3]. Philip Codd draws attention to the fact that the theoretical substantiation (обґрунтування) of the "trauma" phenomenon of modern era, took place within the framework of several psychological schools and methods. The researcher considers J. Derrida's "deconstructive" theory and Z. Freud's psychoanalysis theory as the basis for understanding the ideas of the "traumatic phenomenon". The first makes it possible to find hidden meanings of the concept; the second emphasizes on overcoming the trauma. Z. Freud says that "talk therapy", is a method that helps a person to verbalize thoughts, fantasies and dreams through free associations. All these theoretical approaches that were mentioned above will be applied in one way or another to the study of traumatic text, and Holocaust literature is definitely the traumatic writing.

After the Nazis' atrocities were revealed to the world and condemned, a large number of books appeared, primarily non-fictional, documentary, since most of the victims were alive and could testify, films and TV series were filmed. One of the main features that characterizes the transformation of the modern cultural paradigm is the deepening of the visual, figurative component. Thus, according to the famous American writer and critic, Susan Sontag, a defining feature of society's modernity is its "production and consumption of images" [8, p. 153]. Today, visibility has become the leading channel of reality perception. A large number of scientific researches show that a person perceives information better through images. That is why graphic literature has become so popular among the younger generation in the second half of the 20th century and does not interfere with it to this day. This period in literary studies, was noted with various experiments, such as genre and form. The beginning of the 21st century was also marked by an interest to experimentation in literary studies.

Nowadays, experimental prose is understood as a set of genre and style modifications of innovative works and is considered by literary critics as a category, because it has such features as: hypotheses regarding the genre-stylistic range, plot construction

processes, etc. It should be noted that each stage of the literature development affected the linguopoetic features of experimental prose, such as: the specifics of the appropriate stylistic, compositional means and techniques for artistic modeling of reality, in view of which literary critics identified them as experimental texts. The experimental forms presence in modern prose testifies a departure from the canonical genre's theory. Reading experimental prose is made too difficult by their non-standard presentation of information, the use of visual means of conveying the meaning of the text (such as applications, experiments with typography, etc.), the possibility of different interpretations of certain fragments or the entire text, the lack of a clear and coherent plot, the combination of incompatible elements, as a result of which it is practically impossible to talk about the integrity of its structure.

The hybridization of genres in literature gained considerable popularity in the last decade of the 21st century. New synthetic genres in literature attract the attention of modern recipients because traditional narrative forms are supplemented with illustrative material, which is extremely interesting and promotes the development of visual memory. Postmodern civilization increasingly prefers the visual form in literature, the most popular example of it is graphic prose. Along such manifestations of visual art as cinema, photography, television, advertising, Internet, appear comics as a manifestation of popular and mass culture, therefore, there is a widespread opinion that comics are a purely American phenomenon born in a consumer society. But long-term studies attribute the comic, or graphic story, to the most ancient form of visual art, which has its roots with rock paintings and life icons. Most literary critics call the graphic novel a medium, Jan Baetens and Hugo Frey in their article characterize this genre as follows: "In proposing a definition of the graphic novel as a medium, we argue that it is part of other more comprehensive cultural fields and practices (graphic literature, visual storytelling)". [2, p. 34]. Other scholars make an attempt to contrast the graphic novel with cartoons and comics and argue that it can also follow all the formal and narrative characteristics of a traditional comic book. I would like to mention several stages of comic's development and its transition to the rank of graphic prose.

1. The origin of this visual form can also be seen in English political caricatures of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. And the forefather is considered to be Richard Outcalt, the creator of the world's first comic "Yellow Kid", which was published in 1895 in the American magazine "New York Journal".

2. A significant new stage in the development of comics culture was the appearance of graphic stories about animals by Walt Disney,

3. In the 50s, active persecution of comics began in the USA, which, according to psychologists, became the cause of the degradation of the younger generation.

4. In 1967, an event took place in Paris that legalized comics as art on an international scale. The exhibition "Comics and Narrative Art" was held in the Louvre, which provoked discussion and the promotion of new art.

5. In the 80s, the era of "educational comics" begins, graphic prose began to be used to convey the most complex topics, such as the war in Vietnam, problems of racism and anti-Semitism, and the tragedy of the Holocaust.

Modern graphic novels have specific stylistic features, among which there are those that are considered "european" or "american". In the process of researching a graphic novel, it is necessary to pay special attention to onomatopoeia, graphons, the specifics of characters' pronunciation, play of words, reproduction of allusions, allegories, hints, and "text in pictures". The uniqueness of this genre attracts the attention of the modern recipient, who has a particularly developed clip thinking.

The first "underground comics", which became a kind of the youth counterculture expression of the 80s and first broke the taboo on comics about the Holocaust, were "MAUS", by the American writer and artist Art Spiegelman. Three parts were released in different years: in 1986 – "Maus: A Survivor's Tale", in 1991 "Maus: And Here My Troubles Began", for which the author received the Pulitzer Prize in 1992. And in 2011, was published Spiegelman's monographic work "MetaMaus", in which the writer reveals the cultural basis of the comics' creation and what inspired him to create the graphic novel in a whole.

Maus is a good example of modern experimental, postmodernistic prose, the common title of which contains a multi-level associative series to all three parts of the novel. Firstable, "maus" sounds the same to the English word "mouse", although it is written differently as you can see – "MAUS", this pronunciation is characteristic of this word, but in Yiddish, since the mice in the book are the Jews themselves. In the first book, *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*, subtitled *My Father Bleeds History*, Spiegelman tells the life story of his father, *Vladek Spiegelman*, a Polish Jew who survived the Holocaust. The chronotope of the novel has a dual narrative structure: *Vladek's* life in Poland before and during the Second World War

and his life after the war in Rygo Park, in New York. Vladek not only tells Art how he passed through the ghetto, in addition to the “death march” in Dachau, “Maus” is a deeply personal story, the author’s own attempt to understand his relationship with his family, relationship between father and son. The reader feels the great gap that exists between two generations of Jews. One of them, Vladek and his second wife Mala, who survived the tragedy, and the other, Art’s generation, is only trying to join this trauma and grasp it. Stanislav Kolar calls this phenomenon “trauma transmission” [6], from one generation to another. The autobiographical hero, Art, asks himself a question to which he still has no answer: “I couldn’t even figure out my relationship with my father, how am I supposed to figure out Auschwitz?” With the Holocaust?” [9, p. 15].

The Holocaust history is treated by Art indirectly, through the interview of his father, which he records on a recorder. At the beginning of the story, we see Vladek as a young man, the owner of a textile factory in Częstochowa, with his beloved Anya, and they have a first-born child. But the couple’s life changes with the arrival of Nazis. Vladek’s story is a true testimony about the Holocaust events in Poland. Spiegelman began to interview his father again in 1978 and made a research visit in 1979 to the Auschwitz concentration camp, where his parents had been imprisoned.

Let’s pay attention to the fact that Vladek’s interview with Art is a frame story for both parts of the novel, but in the first part, Spiegelman resorts to the technique of “novel within a novel”, already traditional for postmodern literature, which, in the case of the American writer Spiegelman, is converted in “a comic within a comic.” Thus, in the middle of the book, the author places a story about his mother’s suicide, “A Prisoner on the Planet of Hell: A case history.” And tries to understand the reason for what happened. Art is looking for her diary, as the only way to find out the truth and understand his mother, but his father destroyed it. This is the usual desire of a person to destroy the memory of pain, or what causes that memory, but Art does not understand that.

The author depicted all the heroes in the form of anthropomorphic animals. For example, Jews appear in the image of mice, Germans as cats, Americans as dogs, etc. Moreover, the characters are similar to each other, they differ only in clothes. According to Spiegelman, such a technique was supposed to show the absurdity (обсодіті) of the stereotypical perception of any nation. According to researcher Ph. Yu-jin Lin: “Combining visual images and animal symbols,

Spiegelman calls into question the limitations of the Holocaust representation in popular media, mixing a realistic presentation of events with unreal world and metaphorical prototypes” [11].

But at the same time, “Maus” is not only a “book of memories and testimonies”. In the second part we can observe another deep problem: it is the burden of responsibility for the memory of that events, in which you did not participate, but which influenced your whole life. Art feels constant pressure of this memory burden, in this case, of his own parents, and returning to Freud’s psychoanalysis theory, he calls it an inter-generational trauma. Talking with his wife, François Art admits that he never felt a sense of guilt towards his dead brother Richieu, but he was often visited by nightmares, “as if SS soldiers were breaking into the classroom and taking me and the others Jewish children. I know it seems strange, but I even dreamed to end up in Auschwitz, together with my parents... I think I still felt guilty, because it was my life easier than theirs [9, p. 15]”.

Spiegelman did not only base his drawings on photographs but also integrated three real photographs into the book. These photographs could be understood to serve as an authentication of the story as they show that the characters were real people. However, they also serve as a challenge to the cartoon pictures. When looking at the photographs one sees the banality of the animal metaphor. Speaking about the experience of the trauma that Art is going through, the photo of Art’s brother, Richieu, in my opinion, is the most important it appears on the very first page of volume two. Spiegelman never met his brother but feels certain contest (суперництво) between him and Richieu. It seems that neither Anja nor Vladek did get over the loss of a child. Art refers to Richieu as his “phantom brother” and describes the photo as “a little ghostly”. As Spiegelman explains in *MetaMaus*, he wanted to include a photo of a child because the book was going to be for his children.

After the *Maus* appearance in the literary world the comic moves from the category of easy reading to the serious literature, which can compete with ordinary novel. But, let me say a few words about another graphic novel. This is the appearance of a graphic adaptation of the most famous and important document of the last century, “The Diary of Anne Frank” (1950) – Anna was a German-born Jewish girl who kept a diary in which she documented life in hiding under Nazi persecution during the German occupation of the Netherlands from June 12, 1942 to August 1, 1944, three days later the Gestapo arrested everyone including Anna’s family. The girl died in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. The diary



was preserved, and later given to the girl's father, Otto Frank, who survived Auschwitz.

Adapted by Ari Folman, illustrated by David Polonsky, authorized by the "Anne Frank Foundation" in Basel, the first graphic edition of the "Anne Frank's Diary: The Graphic Adaptation" (2018) contains many quotations from the original. Staying true to it, it offers unusual visual interpretations, adding meaningful new layers and immediacy to this classic variant. The book's carefully crafted images interpret elements of Frank's story with beauty and humor. But, comparing the comic book with the text of the diary, point out that many important passages from the original text are lost, which show Anna as a talented writer, who describes people and events in a very adult way. Ari Folman explained, that it would be impossible to insert the whole text of the diary, then the graphic novel would contain 3,500 pages.

Anna's quotes are getting tighter and more dramatic. But on the other hand, we got an ordinary girl, a teenager, who is struggling with the problems of the transitional age, who is trying to establish relations with her family, especially her mother. These are the problems of growing up, a physical changes that occurred during her stay in the warehouse. Anna seems to come alive again, especially for young readers: her writing makes you feel like you're in her head and she's in yours. She's you, or someone you know. Her early entries from home describe a familiar kind of daily life: friends, boys, school, family. On one hand, Stav Ziv claims "As the events that shaped Frank's short life slip further into the past, it's heartening that her account continues to captivate new generations" [Ziv]. which emphasizes the importance of such publications for the younger generation, who may not be so well informed about the Holocaust. But if Spiegelman's comic is the original text, then we understand that Anne Frank's diary adapted to the graphic novel is always a challenge and will always cause questions and comparisons. Some American states began to ban this publication, for example, the "The Diary of Anne Frank: A Graphic Novel" has been removed from Vero Beach High School in Indian River, Florida, after parent group Moms for Liberty raised concerns. According to the leader of the group, there are "frankly sexual" scenes in the novel.

However, the book and Anna's image continue to live on in various adaptive forms. A German game designer developed a computer game based on historical material. Kira Rezari does not think at all that, by creating his computer game, he trivialized the girl's life: "When talking about computer games, many people think first of all about entertainment,

but they can do much more than just entertain", explains Rezari. In his opinion, computer games can also convey feelings: "Films and books also touch on difficult topics. Why can't such topics be touched on in games created for the computer?" [3] – the game designer wonders.

Another example and an attempt of visual adaptation can serve the exhibition "100 Misunderstandings about and among Jews" that took place at the Vienna Jewish Museum on 29 November, the topic of which the perception of Jewishness mainly from the 19th century to nowadays and the growing influence of fashion, advertising, TV, film and digital media through the years. At one presentation Anna's image seems to animate with the help of a video series and depicted Anna in her daily process of preparation for the exhibition in her own house-museum in Amsterdam, where she receives visitors every day: she is dressed, make-up and hair done, seated at the table where she traditionally writes her diary. One of the exhibited fashion objects is a light blue jumpsuit which was worn by Beyoncé in 2014 during her visit to the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam. Beyoncé and Jay-Z's visit was seen by the media as tactful and respectful. Only that the Holocaust memorial became part of today's consumption society through the posting on Instagram caused controversies – probably one of the misunderstandings.

So we can conclude, that in the modern context, the Anne Frank's image and her undoubtedly important testimony, from a true, written story transform to a modernized, virtual with the help of various means of expression. And partial changes (mostly textual), still achieve the main goal – memory about her, her legacy, memories, her trauma continue to live on and will not sink into the annals of history. Isn't this what the modern world needs so much

In recent years have also appeared many significant graphic publications such as graphic memoir "Belonging: A German Reckons With History and Home" (2018) written by German-American author and illustrator Nora Krug devoted to the history of the Holocaust, the history of her own family. It is the winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award "Silver Medal Society of Illustrators" (2018), also named a Best Book of the Year by The New York Times, The Boston Globe, San Francisco Chronicle, NPR, Comics Beat and The Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel, Kirkus Reviews, and Library Journal. Krug was born decades after the fall of the Nazi regime, but the Second World War cast a long shadow over her childhood and youth in the city of Karlsruhe, Germany. Yet she knew little about her own family's involvement; though all four grandpar-

ents lived through the war, they never spoke of it. After twelve years in the US, Krug realizes that living abroad has only intensified her need to ask the questions she didn't dare to as a child. Returning to Germany, she visits archives, conducts research, and interviews family members, uncovering in the process the stories of her maternal grandfather, a driving teacher in Karlsruhe during the war, and her father's brother Franz-Karl, who died as a teenage SS soldier. In this quest, Krug erases the boundaries between comics, scrapbooking, and collage as she endeavors to make sense of 20th-century history, the Holocaust, her German heritage, and her family's place in it all. Krug's collaboration with historian Timothy Snyder produced a much-acclaimed graphic edition of Snyder's *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century* (2021). Snyder's examination of the current political scene and the lessons that 20th century history has taught about the rise

of authoritarianism, visually reinforced with Krug's illustrations, was named "Best Graphic Novel" by *The New York Times* and was hailed by *The Guardian* as "a 'how to' guide for resisting tyranny".

**Conclusions.** Therefore, it can be concluded that the formation of the art comics has undergone a significant transformation. It has been established that the modern art comic gravitates towards serious issues, which significantly deepens and aestheticizes its form and content. In literary circles, only the ethical side of the question remains debatable: "Is it possible to talk about the Holocaust trauma through the "visual" form of graphical prose?". In my opinion, yes. Because literature has to follow the path of modernity and traditional prose forms no longer encourage reading, secondly, the primary task of such representation was to make people remember the tragic events of the 20th century in any possible way, in order to prevent their repetition in future.

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