

Article

Holocaust: Artistic Dimensions of Contemporary Ukrainian Prose (Using the Example of Larysa Denysenko's *Echoes: From the Dead Grandfather to the Deceased*)

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Abstract: In recent times, global events have starkly illuminated the disturbing absence of ethnic tolerance, thrusting interethnic conflicts into the spotlight and casting shadows over both individual and collective identities. This research focuses on the Holocaust, delving into the annals of history through the lenses of recollection, personal identification, and genetic memory, as portrayed within the pages of the novel *Echoes: From the Dead Grandfather to the Deceased*. The primary aim is to fathom the gradual erosion of collective historical memory over time and discern its profound significance for future generations. Within this study, an examination of the interplay between the 'collective unconscious' and the 'personal unconscious' is undertaken. Additionally, the novel's utilization of symbols and details is scrutinized. The research employs a multifaceted approach, encompassing historical-genetic, interpretative, narrative, and psychoanalytic methodologies. Through the protagonist's transformative journey, the novel highlights the importance of preserving historical memory and recognizing its lasting impact on individual and collective consciousness.

Keywords: holocaust; narrative; Ukrainian prose; symbol; contrast; genetic memory



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1. Introduction

Recent global events have exposed the ongoing lack of ethical and ethnic tolerance, leading to interethnic conflicts that overshadow both individual and collective identities. Consequently, there is an urgent need to instill and nurture value orientations among future generations, particularly regarding the significance of national identity, culture, art, literature, cinema, and other essential aspects. Presently, value orientations tend to be influenced uncontrollably by various socio-cultural and external factors, often leading to clashes with materialistic values that dominate society and restrict individual expression and independent choices. This phenomenon results in the erosion of collective historical memory, diminishing the interest of new generations in it, and risking a recurrence of tragedies and crimes from the past.

The current global aggression serves as a stark reminder of the importance of restoring collective memory that, as defined by Y. Dudai, refers to a body of knowledge that is shared by a group of individuals within a particular culture or society (Dudai 2002) and can constructively shape models of the past and serve as a deterrent against repeating historical atrocities. Thus, the relevance of this study lies in its exploration of a specific work of art that sheds light not only on the worldview of the Jewish community but also that of the German people, whose ancestors were responsible for the genocide against the Jews. Furthermore, the research delves into the perspectives of Ukrainians who bore witness to these heinous acts and suffered at the hands of the Nazis alongside their Jewish counterparts. By examining the artistic dimensions of Larysa Denysenko's *Echoes: From the Dead Grandfather to the Deceased*, this study seeks to comprehend the complex interplay

of the viewpoints and experiences of these interconnected communities during a critical historical period.

The novel *Echoes* . . . embarks on a profound reexamination of the past, particularly the Nazi stigma as a part of the historical experience of the German people. This perspective becomes apparent when considering that nearly 80 years, or approximately 3–4 generations, have passed since the Holocaust. Despite the passage of time, these events can still be viewed as an integral part of historical memory. This is especially significant because there are fewer and fewer survivors who can share their firsthand accounts with today's youth in Ukraine and around the world. What makes the novel unique is its approachable portrayal of Holocaust events, sparking curiosity and a desire to delve deeper into the history of Jewish extermination during World War II. The novel's intriguing plot not only deserves recognition within Ukraine but also all over the world.

Scholars have diametrically opposed views on the problem. Michael Geyer, in his study, states that Germany rationalized a cult of violence which combined foreign political ambitions (both in Europe and in the world) with the politics of militarized symbolism (Geyer 1992). This may be subject to debate as historical events and national identities are complex and multifaceted. Attributing the concept of a "cult of violence" solely to Germany may overlook similar tendencies that have emerged in other countries throughout history. M. Krupka's research primarily centers on analyzing memory in contemporary Ukrainian literature, exemplified by Larysa Denysenko's novel *Echoes* The article specifically focuses on dismantling the stereotypical image of the Germans by depicting them through the lens of national trauma. The author suggests examining this trauma through events that continue to constitute an unconscious collective experience. As the researcher highlights, "The models of memory are diverse and manifest through various worldviews held by the characters. These worldviews include: a desire to distance themselves from the past, recognizing that history has the potential to harm future generations; an inclination to acknowledge historical facts while rejecting the socially constructed model of pan-German guilt for the actions of the Nazi Party; an effort to transform history into culture, as only such memory can be constructive, while real history often gives rise to social conflicts; a willingness to forgive, understanding that all citizens were victims of the political system during that period; a choice to forget history and concentrate on the present; a commitment to uncover the truth about past events; a determination to identify war criminals and punish them." Additionally, the research underscores the position of personal involvement in the protagonist's narrative, fostering a sense of responsibility for the war crimes committed by the older generation (Krupka 2020, p. 57). Brian M. Puaca analyzes two key trends in addressing World War II in German historical works. Firstly, the study demonstrates a growing openness to discuss German suffering during and after World War II, though in the context of other nations' hardships. Secondly, it reveals an emerging willingness to address German culpability for crimes committed during the war. Contrary to the prevailing belief that the Germans have avoided confronting their past, the article shows that discussions on German suffering have been present for decades, challenging this notion (Puaca 2011).

Our research's primary aim is to focus on the Holocaust, viewing past events through the prism of recollection, personal identification, and exploring the concept of genetic memory as the experience of a human's ancestors, as defined by C. Jung (Jung 1969). Over time, socio-cultural and global political changes tend to erode collective historical memory, leading to a diminished interest among newer generations. Therefore, understanding the importance of historical memory for each subsequent generation becomes crucial. Historical memory, according to A. Kiridon, can be defined as a collection of notions about the societal past which exist within society on both mass and individual levels, encompassing their cognitive, imaginative, and emotional dimensions (Kiridon 2009). Additionally, the study aims to explore how an individual character's psyche can encapsulate the collective unconscious of an entire nation. While this subject demands a comprehensive analysis involving numerous authors and their works, the examination of Larysa Denysenko's novel *Echoes: From the Dead Grandfather to the Deceased* appears to be appropriate at this stage.

To achieve the research aim, the following tasks are set:

- Delineating the interplay between the “collective unconscious” and the “personal unconscious”;
- Identifying the artistic role of details and symbols in the novel;
- Outlining distinctive aspects of the artistic portrayal of ideas, aiding in the comprehensive understanding of the central theme of the work.

The main focus of the research revolves around the Holocaust and how it is artistically depicted, allowing for a broader understanding of historical memory pertaining to the persecution and destruction of people based on their ethnicity and nationality. By exploring these themes through the novel’s artistic means, the research aims to shed light on the profound impact of historical events on collective consciousness and the significance of remembrance in shaping a more tolerant and empathetic world.

2. Methodology

A crucial component of this research lies in conducting an in-depth analysis of Larysa Denysenko’s novel, *Echoes: From the Dead Grandfather to the Deceased*, with a primary focus on its artistic elements, symbolism, and narrative techniques. To comprehend how historical memory of the Holocaust is conveyed through creative self-expression, several research methods are deployed. An essential aspect of the methodology is the application of a historical–genetic analysis to uncover how the historical memory of the Holocaust is passed down through artistic expression. This approach seeks to trace the evolution of Holocaust memory and its impact on individuals and communities. Interpretative and narrative analysis techniques are employed to delve into how symbols and artistic details within the novel are used to convey historical memory and identity. This method allows for the exploration of the novel’s narrative structure and artistic symbolism, shedding light on the intricacies of memory representation. A psychoanalytic approach is also integrated into the research methodology, enabling the identification of unconscious processes that drive the actions and behavior of the main character. This psychological analysis aids in revealing the core themes of the novel, identifying causal relationships, and uncovering hidden motivations.

3. Tracing Parallel Narratives: Unraveling the Ukrainian and Jewish Experiences

The present will always be intertwined with the historical past and have a projection into our desired future. Perhaps the most important pursuit for a modern individual should be the desire to understand and preserve their past. Clearly, the study of historical archives and the reading of literary works should be complemented by individual eyewitness accounts, as historical aspects carry and shape the ideological basis of a specific country.

For instance, the knowledge of the Holocaust among Jews and Ukrainians differs significantly, even though the Jewish community has a long history on Ukrainian soil. It is noteworthy that some Ukrainians collaborated with the Nazis during their occupation, actively assisting in the merciless annihilation of the Jewish population. Such characters appear in the works of several Ukrainian writers, including O. Dovzhenko, V. Barka, U. Samchuk, and V. I. Bahrianyi. Notable among foreign authors who delved into the history of the Holocaust in Ukraine is Patrick Desbois, who unearthed the truth about these atrocities through eyewitness accounts. Desbois aptly notes that the most challenging battle over all these years has been against indifference—the human indifference to mass atrocities. Conquering this indifference is an arduous task, and he doubts if it can ever be fully conquered. People tend to focus on their immediate surroundings, seeking enjoyment in life, and often turning a blind eye to the suffering of others. Unfortunately, this is the harsh reality of humanity (Desbois 2008).

Johan Dietsch examines how the Holocaust was addressed in Ukrainian history textbooks from the period of independence to 2006. The analysis uncovers two conflicting narratives, both of which externalize and relativize the Holocaust. The Holocaust is used as a template to interpret the 1932–1933 famine in Ukraine, known as the Holodomor,

resulting in the famine overshadowing the Holocaust. Furthermore, the propagation of the Judeo–Bolshevik myth in these narratives portrays Jews as the main perpetrators of the Holodomor. The complex relationship between history, historical culture, and contemporary politics in Ukraine adds to the tension between national history and the reality of the Holocaust. The historical Sovietization of Holocaust victims has been challenged by historians in the Ukrainian diaspora, aiming to shift the narrative to portray Ukrainians as central victims, not perpetrators. However, this nationalization, along with obfuscation and competition among victim narratives, has led to a complicated portrayal of the Holocaust in Ukrainian historical accounts (Dietsch 2012).

Rebekah Moore explores the dynamics of comparisons between the Holocaust and other historical atrocities, specifically focusing on the Holodomor in the context of Ukrainian and Russian politics. The Holocaust's centrality in discussions of genocide has led to a phenomenon termed "Holocaust envy", where other atrocities are measured against it for recognition and importance. Some scholars draw parallels between the Holodomor and the Holocaust, seeking to present the former as a "worse" atrocity. The concept of "uniqueness" is used to emphasize the Holodomor's exceptional character. However, such comparisons and competition for recognition overlook the profound similarity shared by both events—the massive suffering and death of innocent people (Moore 2012).

In present-day Ukraine, the Holocaust remains a contentious and polarizing topic, and the memory of Jewish history, including the Holocaust, is either suppressed or downplayed, often using vague language and distorted narratives (Bartov 2008).

4. The Analysis of the Novel *"Echoes: From the Dead Grandfather to the Deceased"*

The word "echoes" can be used metaphorically to describe a recurrence or resurfacing of a sentiment, idea, or event from the past, often with similar implications or consequences. These seemingly simple words hold a peculiar significance when applied to the events described in the novel, which carry the genetic code of pain, death, aggression, and the uncertainty of the future across ages. In particular, the sounds of death echoing from distant eras are emphasized, and this narrative of death becomes etched in memory and inherited since no civilization can eradicate the bloodlust of past atrocities.

The Holocaust remains a relevant and deeply painful topic, not only in Ukraine but worldwide. It is a transnational issue that intertwines the past with the present. When this connection is disrupted, the genetic code of memory itself begins to fade, even though it should be nurtured and used to form the foundations of present-day rituals of collective remembrance.

Human memory, including genetic memory, also encompasses personal experiences. To preserve the integrity of collective memories, it is essential to prevent reality from being distorted to fit desired narratives. For instance, the Weichen family's collective memory was artificially reconstructed to portray Baron Otto von Weichen as a heroic figure during World War II, aligning with the wishes of his son. A constructed cult of the deceased hero emerged, representing the collective unconscious commemoration of a German soldier who died in combat in Ukraine, as a puzzle piece of national culture and memory within the family.

Subsequently, after his "deceased" father's passing in an insane asylum, the son attempted to justify this artificiality, fearing harm to the family's reputation due to his father's Nazi actions, particularly as he possessed a second-generation legal education. He understood that the family took pride in his father's education, viewing him as a role model for future generations. The reality clashed with the constructed image, creating a sense of contrast and fear. The son reveals how his father's past and actions were covered up and the potential repercussions they could have had on their lives.

"You know what the committee members used to call my father? Sug Zayn. It was his code nickname, it means seventh grade, the lowest, the most disgusting. In a word, shit. It's also the Hebrew word for a phallus. Funny jokes of the committee members . . . So . . . information about my living Nazi father, who was also deranged, could have harmed

me. It could have harmed all of us . . . ” (Denysenko 2012, pp. 84–85). Thus, an artificially created image formed the foundation of the family’s memories and was meant to be passed down through generations as something pure, brave, and worthy of emulation. It was only by chance that the concealed code of the genetic national memory was revealed, allowing people to discover the authenticity within their family relationships and ultimately gain a deeper understanding of one another.

Thus, Martha’s father deliberately shapes the cultural memory, triggering a process of cumulative and functional forgetting. After receiving the key to authenticity, Martha restores and directs this memory towards the future—for both hers and the generations to come.

Focusing on the concept of genetic memory, it is worth mentioning the collective unconscious and the personal unconscious. Based on Carl Jung’s research, a clear understanding of the fundamental structure of the collective unconscious emerges, which often mirrors the personal unconscious, shaping a hierarchy of archetypes for individuals and society as a whole. In the current study, the collective unconscious is viewed as the genetic memory code, evident in the portrayal of the novel’s main characters, some of them being part of the family of both a former Nazi and Martha.

The foundation for its development lies in the content of the personal unconscious, generated by emotional components, reflecting the personal, intimate, and mental aspects of Otto von Weichen’s life. According to Jung’s theory, the more or less superficial shell of the unconscious is the personal unconscious. However, he believes that it is concentrated on a deeper level, not formed solely from one’s individual experiences. This innate collective unconscious shapes the content and overall model of behavior, creating a universal suprapersonal substrate present in every individual (Jung 1969).

“You never know what can turn your grey everyday life upside down in an instant”—these are the words of Martha von Weichen. Born in Germany to a federal judge, the young lawyer lived a rather monotonous and meaningless life according to the laws established by her father. The girl’s father, a well-known personality, aimed to raise his children strictly and send them on a path similar to his own. The children (Martha and her brother Manfred), brought up without proper love, tried to quietly pursue their life plans, but their father’s omnipotent control was always there. Martha, as her father wanted, received a law degree, but she refused to become a judge and chose the path of a teacher after completing her PhD in law. In her late 30s, she was unmarried because her father controlled her personal life. Martha met Derek at a scientific conference. For a year, she lived between Vienna and Berlin. Then he disappeared, leaving her psychologically dependent and lonely. After a while, he introduced Martha to his new girlfriend, a Polish woman named Natasha Czenski. It was this girlfriend who would help the young lawyer to start an investigation into the case of her grandfather Otto von Weichen. The monotony of Martha’s life was interrupted by the appearance of Olaf Koch, the family’s attorney: he brought news of her grandfather’s death, who was allegedly killed during World War II and buried in a mass grave in Ukraine. As it turned out, the father of the federal judge and grandfather of the law professor, Otto von Weichen died of spinal cancer at the age of ninety-four in a mental hospital, considering himself a Hasidic Jew. Martha’s father’s family secret, that he had been concealing all his life, suddenly came to light. The girl decided to find out who was buried in 1943 near Zhytomyr in Ukraine. The father tried to explain his actions and dissuade his daughter. Martha decided to reveal the secret of her grandfather, a Nazi, and not her grandfather, a hero, as she had previously believed. As mentioned above, the person who helped Martha make the decision to go to Ukraine was Natasha Czenski. She found friends who could meet the lawyer in Kyiv and take her to Zhytomyr. Martha did not stop in Kyiv, only asking a new acquaintance to take her to Babi Yar, the place where Jews were shot during World War II. On the very first day in Zhytomyr, a strange man ran at Martha, almost knocking her to the ground.

“Are you German? What a good sign!”

“What kind of sign?”

“Imagine, I came back to this city to prove that my mother was Jewish and had a Jewish surname, to prove my Jewishness and then to go to Germany through the Jewish line, where my research project could be evaluated, and here I come across a real German. This means that everything will work out for me, despite all the problems and bureaucratic absurdity”.

–“Is the project also Jewish?”

–“No, it’s not. It is universal”. (Denysenko 2012)

This is how Martha met Marat Shevchenko. By coincidence, Marat’s aunt lived in the village where Baron Otto von Weichen was supposedly buried in 1943; the village where he killed Ukrainians, Jews, and all those who were unworthy in the eyes of the Nazi officers. In the village, Martha tried to find traces of her grandfather’s stay, learnt about the culture and customs of the Ukrainian people, and met old-timers who remembered WWII. Due to the lack of witnesses, she was unable to find any traces of her grandfather, but this journey became a kind of cleansing from her family burden. When Martha returned from Ukraine, she brought Marat’s research project to Berlin. After taking the project to a certain address, she met Rainer Graf, who would later become her husband and the father of her unborn child. All the way from her grandfather’s burial to meeting Rainer, Martha felt the presence of a third person. It seemed to her that someone was watching her all the time. After a while, she received a letter in her mailbox from an unknown sender. The addressee was Hans Lenz, her grandfather’s best friend. This is how Martha found out the truth about her grandfather, a Nazi, and destroyed the image of her heroic grandfather. He told Martha about a new interpreter who had been brought to Otto and who had not been killed for being a Jew only because she spoke German. In her face he saw his reflection; they resembled each other as if they were twins. In a fit of anger, he cut her throat with a piece of glass and then disfigured her face so that no one could see their identity. Otto managed to write a letter to Hans in which he told him what had happened. According to his friend, the young Nazi did not go crazy, he hid from the world, feeling afraid of the possible truth, because the worst thing was to find out that you were not German but Jewish. When he was being transported in a wagon, he took off a dead man’s Hasidic hat. In the hospital, he was given a Bible, which he opened only on pages with the same numbers—11, 22, 33, etc. Hans then confessed that it was he who had set Martha up with Marat, because he knew who his grandmother was (by all accounts, the interpreter Otto had mutilated), and where she was buried. This is how Martha learnt all about her grandfather. After a while, Marat would become the godfather of little Otto Marat Graf. This is how the young lawyer completed her family history with her deceased grandfather, Baron Otto von Weichen.

It is worth mentioning Martha’s personal ordeal: though she has laid the foundations of a happy life, she is always in pursuit of the future, clinging to the past, and neglecting the present. It is only after her trip to Zhytomyr, meeting Marat, immersing herself in Ukrainian culture, and delving into her grandfather’s Nazi–Jewish past that she reunites with the collective unconscious. This transformative experience allows the heroine to truly discover herself, embrace her identity, find a deeper understanding of happiness, and live in the present moment.

This transformation is exemplified by the birth of a new life, symbolizing continuity, but now with a rejuvenated genetic memory, newfound freedom, a sense of renewal, and the liberation from the sins of past generations, all for the sake of a pure and promising future. Consequently, the younger von Weichen marks the beginning of a new era, leading to a shift in the behavioral patterns of her family’s collective unconscious.

It is quite intriguing that Martha’s personal and professional paths are not fulfilling. Despite having the prestigious name of her high-ranking father and being the third generation in her profession, there is an invisible burden that hinders her from experiencing true happiness. Her chosen life appears to be a lingering remnant of her past, one that does

not bring her joy but rather drags her into a void of unhappiness. Only later does Martha come to realize that she unconsciously bears the burden of her Nazi grandfather's past. He burdened his relatives with guilt for the lives of the Jews he took during his life.

This unexpected revelation about her grandfather's true nature, who did not die heroically in 1943 but lived with his Nazi past until the age of 94, transforms Martha's perspective on her own life. "Only by coming to terms with your past can you become stronger and feel more confident. I know I'm going to have a boy. He will also be someone's grandfather. And I want his life to be transparent to his grandchildren."; reflecting on this, Martha von Weichen concludes her journey.

The author skillfully creates an intriguing circle, in which the heroine can unburden herself by delving into her family's past. Unfortunately, this past remains largely unknown to Martha. As she looks back, she finds herself confronted with the memories of many people, some of whom she encounters for the first time in her life, yet they become an integral part of her being.

First and foremost, Martha uses retrospection to immerse herself in her deceased grandfather's letters, aiming to gain a new perspective on Baron Otto's image. Previously, she knew her grandfather as a war hero who perished during World War II, a dutiful soldier following his country's orders. Martha's father even took the family to Zhytomyr to pay respects to her grandfather's ashes. This journey was not without its challenges, as the Soviet authorities conducted thorough checks before permitting Germans into the Soviet Union.

Furthermore, Martha discovers her authentic self through her interactions with Marat's family and Ukrainian customs and traditions. Experiencing the energy of Ukrainian cities, the beauty of Ukrainian nature, and the historical context in which she is entwined, Martha unearths her own identity. Even if it bears some tarnish, it remains genetically imprinted within her.

It is worth examining the typological type of narrative, and in this context, Wolf Schmidt's description of the narrative category is applicable as the story is presented through a mediator–narrator (Papusha 2007). According to Schmidt's theory, any narrative text is grounded in a real, factual event. "It is important that within the fictional world, the event takes place, and not that the character merely dreams about it. Factuality is linked to the requirement of effectiveness: the event must occur before the narrative's conclusion" (Papusha 2007). This type of narrative perfectly fits the factually completed story of Martha's Nazi grandfather in Ukraine, following her journey through the Zhytomyr region, meeting Marat, his friends, and Rainer, who becomes part of the renewed Weichen family lineage. As a result, Martha's main role as a heroine allows her to participate in the story and observe and interact with her own and other people's destinies.

In line with Aleida Assman's study, *Spaces of Memories. Towards a Cultural Construction of Time and Identity*, the content of the novel under examination is intriguing. According to her research, the content is based on communicative and cultural memory. The former encompasses historical experiences acquired within individual biographies, while the latter pertains to mythically primordial historical events from the past (Assman 2012, p. 13). Naturally, the concept of content is inseparable from its form.

Considering the main idea within *Echoes . . .*, the reader perceives the primary narrative solely in the context of past events, as the protagonist, Martha von Weichen, like other family members, is entirely disconnected from the family's ties to Baron Otto von Weichen's past. Hence, her father, a federal judge, constructs an illusory version of the past, depicting his father who died during World War II in Ukraine (where he rests in a mass grave) as a figure void of any negative ideological narrative—a fallen warrior of war. During the Soviet era, with considerable difficulty, the judge managed to bring his family to his father's grave in Zhytomyr to pay homage to his ashes and honor his valor as a soldier. Scholar Aleida Assman begins one of her chapters with the words: "The anthropological core of cultural memory is the memory of the deceased. Religious memory of the deceased

relies on the recollections of the living. The oldest and most widespread form of social memory that unites the living and the dead is the cult of the dead" (Assman 2012, p. 141).

The lawyer, Martha, cherished fond memories of her deceased grandfather, preserving the collective image of an officer, family man, father, and grandfather. However, by chance, the heroine discovers that her aristocratic grandfather did not perish over half a century ago but has been residing in a mental institution all this time. The past emerges from oblivion and becomes a catalyst for reevaluating one's genetic code, family heritage, and, most importantly, for shaping one's personal life through purification and shedding the unverified and hidden.

Emphasizing cultural memory involves a ritualistic communication, a seamless transition from content to form: Martha rediscovers her true self through connecting with those who were somehow linked to her deceased grandfather's past.

To achieve artistic expressiveness, emphasize the narrative strategy, and heighten the impact of the event, the author skillfully establishes a contrasting field right from the opening lines of the novel: "I don't know about others, but for me, there is a noticeable difference between my grandfather who perished during the Second World War and my grandfather who passed away in 2011. The former might have the chance for some forgiveness, as at the age of 25 and not fully understanding the truth of the world still permits an unconscious awareness and the potential for certain mistakes. What ideologies did the latter depart with? Did he assimilate to one that brought him salvation? The first one, at 25, died on foreign soil, leaving a widow with two children, while the second one, at 94, was left widowed by his wife instead" (Denysenko 2012).

Contrast involves "a sharply defined opposition in something: character traits, properties of objects, or phenomena. It relies on the antithetical principle of world perception" (Dictionary of Literary Studies 1997). The contrast field is evident from the initial encounter with the baron and permeates the entire narrative. It consistently shapes character actions and color choices, serving as a key element in portraying unique themes and engaging readers. O. Kopus' research highlights how a comprehensive analysis of the novel reveals these distinctive features. This cultural characteristic mirrors the contemporary socio-cultural, postmodern, world, bridging the gap between personal and societal realms and spanning two geopolitical zones: the former Soviet Union and contemporary Europe. Within her novel, the author draws parallels between the historical events of these two states, highlighting the evolution of the protagonist, symbolizing almost a century of transformations in consciousness, subconsciousness, and reality, among other aspects. The individual's identifying characteristics are manifested in their character and portrait. In this context, color emerges as a paramount evaluative category for interpreting artistic images. Its "presence" facilitates a profound representation of various elements within an individual's linguistic and mental consciousness, which, in turn, reflects collective consciousness encompassing feelings, beliefs, and traditions (Kopus 2015). For instance, Martha, portrayed as a somewhat uncertain individual with endless hesitations prior to her journey to Ukraine, consistently appears before the reader clad in grey and beige attire. She explains, "All my clothes are in cool grey and brown shades, and I also allow myself beige. I avoid pure and frank, strikingly bright colours, even such as white or black. They seem one-dimensional to me. For a person for whom it is important to say 'yes' or 'no,' this choice of colours is quite natural . . . The only and brightest colours in my wardrobe are dirty pink, hazy lilac, and dull green" (Denysenko 2012, p. 42). In stark contrast, Natasha Chensky is described with "grass-green eyes" (Denysenko 2012, p. 41) and dresses vividly and boldly. Martha's internal anxiety and uncertainty undergo a subconscious transformation in Ukraine, where she is significantly influenced by her surroundings. The vibrant image of her aunt Olha is a testament to this transformation, as she is portrayed as " . . . elegant and refined, wearing a snow-white blouse embroidered with flowers, diamonds, small patterns in red and black, lush sleeves embroidered with intricate diamonds, followed by juicy, bright red lilies, and a little lower, small four-petaled flowers, open, lush roses . . ." (Denysenko 2012, p. 198). In this manner, color serves as a means of reproducing the psycho-emotional state of the

protagonist, enabling the reconstruction of emotions, events, changes in mood, and shifts in attitude towards circumstances and people (Kopus 2015).

The letters in the novel prove to be quite multidimensional and symbolic, unveiling the psychology of Baron von Weichen, who passed away in 1943 but remained alive until 2011. His personality is revealed through four letters to his wife. The image of the young, intelligent, and cultured Baron, who deeply loves his wife and children, presents a stark contrast. He values his family immensely, leaving a lasting impression on the memories and imagination of his granddaughter Martha. Through his candidness, affection, and observations, he cements his presence in her memories, ensuring a lasting legacy of himself. This romantic image is juxtaposed with that of an officer who contemplates the deaths of his enemies in the name of heroism. He firmly believes in his superiority, relegating his enemies to a secondary, inferior status. He has a clear awareness of his high origin and an unambiguous position as a Catholic Christian. The concept of "Death for the sake of heroism" is evident, but the question arises, death of whom? His first, mental, death also stems from contrast: he becomes mentally unstable because he struggles to accept his different origins and cannot let go of the idea of his perceived second-class status. This duality remains with him until his death, as he reads the Bible and learns Hebrew, and identifies himself simultaneously as a German baron and a Hasidic Jew ("My grandfather was a Jew?—Martha, your grandfather was a German baron.—Do you mean to say, Olaf, that my grandfather was a German baron who wears a Hasidic hat and is convinced that he speaks Hebrew?" (Denysenko 2012, p. 18). This conflict shapes him into a unique person who never fully embraces his true self, relinquishes his sense of superiority, or experiences spiritual enrichment by letting go of his past. Poetically, this inner conflict is again expressed through contrast: the Baron lays, exhausted by illness, wearing shoes of different colors and shapes, with mismatched lengths of laces and socks of varying hues. "Mr. Baron did not like identical things, they increased his anxiety, he was very nervous when he saw something identical . . ." (Denysenko 2012, p. 60).

Speaking about the Baron's demise, it is essential to delve into the concept of motive, particularly the motive of death. Death, in this context, transcends the physical realm and takes on spiritual, mental, and existential dimensions. Philosophers and writers often craft an inner world that is reinterpreted in the face of death. This inner world represents a sense of fullness and substance that should permeate every moment of human existence, becoming intertwined with an intellectual understanding of one's essence and a quest for authenticity. In general, awareness of the finitude of existence can evoke two contrasting perspectives: a conditionally tranquil acceptance of the journey traveled, understanding the completeness of one's life, and the richness of experiences; or an unconscious fear of the end (and perhaps the beginning) of life.

Baron Otto was a man who pondered deeply about the semantics of his being. He was an educated and philosophical individual, reflecting on what victims might feel before their demise. His love illuminated the lives of his wife and children, leaving them with little to desire. And yet, this handsome man, a lawyer (!) by profession and a baron by birth, stood alongside those who ruthlessly killed the "lower stacks", deeming them unworthy of coexistence. He sincerely believed himself to be superior to others. In his perspective, "being a hero changes people, their behavior, self-esteem, and character. My origin, genes, education, and family have always been part of me, shaping my self-respect and the respect others have for me—more reliably than any insignia pinned to a uniform. All these embellishments may fade, and honoring heroes can grow tiresome, but I will forever remain a baron and a lawyer. A janitor may stop being a hero, but he can never stop being a janitor" (Denysenko 2012, p. 112).

The awareness of his superiority, the value of life, and its transcendence over death were central to the Baron's existence. Yet, within the humanistic concept of existentialism, the love for oneself and one's own kind dominates. For him, death hardly existed as the mere cessation of life; instead, it might have taken on an archetypal symbol of immortality.

However, the encounter with his doppelgänger turned everything upside down in the Nazi's mind.

This is how his death occurred—a mental death. A “false” existence distances a person from their true essence. On the other hand, death, being an exclusively individual manifestation of existence, transcends all the boundaries of “false existence”. Yet, sometimes, individuals manage to overcome the inherent limits of existence, experiencing existential fear. According to Heidegger, fear is the primary content of human existence, with every fear ultimately being rooted in the fear of death. “Fear opens up the prospects of death for a person” (Kikot and Sklovskyi 2012, p. 50). Thus, the tragedy, which the subconscious could hardly accept physically, chose the transformation of oblivion. The concept of Baron Otto von Weichen's death, therefore, acquired a double meaning: mental death, spiritual rebirth, and, only half a century later, physical death. By detaching himself from the context of physical existence, the hero returned to his true self (perhaps) through an accidentally reflected opportunity to confront death itself.

Thus, Otto's mental “death” did not stem from a sense of guilt, but from the shattering of his worldview, and his inability to accept that he could belong to the lowest (in the Baron's own opinion) stratum of society, the very stratum that he despised and killed, all under the guise of cleansing the world of those he deemed undesirables. “Yesterday I was thinking about these, the secondary ones, the enemies. About Jews, Gypsies, Ukrainians, communists. Communists are not a nation; they are mechanical dolls whose veins happen to have blood in them. Communism is an artificial phenomenon; it will exhale when the fuel runs out. I would not even waste my energy fighting it. Jews, Ukrainians, and Gypsies are alive. And we need to solve the problems. (Denysenko 2012, p. 117). Escape from reality, painful experiences, and going beyond the limits of the experience became a way to overcome a problem that could not be solved. Thus, Baron Otto von Weichen hid from himself for almost 70 years to avoid his own truth.

Another intriguing memory model from a psychological perspective is the one that reveals the basic processes where the foundations that reflect objective reality lie. Our experiences, perceptions, and observations do not vanish without a trace; they can be reproduced under certain conditions. Psychologists define memory as the ability of an individual to record, store, and reproduce data from previous experiences. Throughout an individual's life, they encounter an inexhaustible array of situations that can be traumatic, exert a negative and ambiguous impact, and lead to various consequences. At times, these experiences can significantly affect a person's mental well-being. Mental pain reflects psychological distress and initiates the mechanisms of mental healing, such as defense mechanisms like displacement and suppression, or a response. The response to a traumatic impact is always present, and the more intense the trauma, the more pronounced the external actions or internal experiences (Turinina 2017, p. 13).

Baron Otto was a devoted Reich officer who wholeheartedly embraced his role. His letters to his wife and the testimonies of his former friend (or rather, companion during the murders) Hans Lenz reveal his unwavering belief in his own greatness and superiority over others whom he considered “secondary”.

However, everything changed when an interpreter was brought before him. Her face became the pivotal moment, revealing the potential to block out the destructive reality that could turn into a haunting memory. He was stunned by his striking resemblance to the Jewish woman who was brought to him as a new interpreter. All the previous ones had been killed. Otto von Weichen saw his face in hers. This resemblance ignited a surge of hatred and revenge in him, leading him to commit a brutal murder and disfigure the woman's face. The fear and anger that followed led to a state of insanity, driven by the impossibility of acknowledging any perceived “inferiority”. This traumatic event caused a reformation of memory, influenced by fear. The scene of the brutal murder exposes the inner inauthenticity and inconsistency of the cruel baron-officer, revealing his ambition and narcissism, as he desperately attempted to hide any connection to the Jewish nation and the haunting physiognomic resemblance from the world.

It can be deduced that the Nazi's reaction to his double triggered a post-traumatic stress disorder, stemming from a catastrophic threat to the narcissistic baron's self-perception. The analysis of his years in the insane asylum makes it evident that the baron's second life involved episodes of repetitive experiences, intrusive memories (the hat . . .), physical numbness, emotional inhibition, alienation from others, and avoidance of actions and situations reminiscent of the trauma. His insanity becomes chronic, resulting in a persistent personality change.

The significance of symbol semantics is equally important in "*The Echoes . . .*". Most of these symbols are used to highlight the main characters' connection to the Jews. For example, the items Martha inherited from her deceased grandfather: a Hebrew textbook, a wide-brimmed Hasidic hat, drawings with Hebrew captions; Wagner's music and Himmeler's chair, frantically searched for by Martha's ex-fiancé; the stories about Jewish girls who survived the war collected by Natalia, a Polish woman. Alongside these symbols, there is also the symbol of the cross, presented in a rather contrasting manner.

According to I. Lysyi: "Variants of the generalizing interpretation of the cross include viewing it as a symbol of the unity of life and death, or the union of spirit and matter, or even the symbolization of prosperity" (Lysyi 2003, p. 176). The scholar also notes that Christian dogma refers to the cross as a mystery of faith. This mystery has two sides: the mystery of joy and sorrow, the mystery of glory and shame (as the real cross was an instrument of cruel and shameful death penalty for the Romans). However, the dominant semantic aspect in the controversial mystery of the cross is the victory over death by the cross. After all, the death on the cross is also the Resurrection, the rebirth of a new, eternal, life (Lysyi 2003).

The first time the cross appears in the novel is at the beginning: it is given to the protagonist by her father's attorney, Olaf. In our interpretation, putting the cross in the hands of a Nazi officer conveys a form of sacredness, combining holiness (Baron Otto von Weichen was a rather religious man) and profanity (a person who believes in God calmly kills people of other faiths and nationalities). His subsequent stay in the insane asylum bears the mark of a cultic act: keeping things that were important before he met the Jewish woman (a Bible, a cross) and things that were once not just alien, but something that the baron destroyed on his way on the orders of the Fuhrer (a Hasidic hat, a Hebrew textbook).

Later, when Martha manages to find the Baron's four letters to his wife, the reader encounters the image of the cross at the level of the hero's unconscious guilt. It is unconscious, instantaneous, the kind that finds you only in those seconds when you do not follow the order and do not kill . . . it is like a secret of joy and sorrow (he is happy to be alive and has the confidence that he will see his wife and children). "Imagine, my dear, that you are walking in a field, stepping on straws and ears of grain, which shoot short curses at you, the sky above your head is as calm as a madman's gaze, and suddenly you see a cross, a wooden one, as tall as a grown man, and you run to it because it seems that it will take you in its arms. . . . but in a few steps, you realize that there is a cross with its arms outstretched, like a confused person who has lost everything: a sense of reality, family, landmarks" (Denysenko 2012, p. 116).

But in contrast, another kind of joy emerges: the joy that arises from the certainty of the righteousness of the crimes committed. A certain symbiosis is found in the combination of guilt for the actions of one's relatives and the desire to seek purification. For Martha, he becomes the personification of purification and deliverance from the burden of the genetic memory that her grandfather passed on to everyone—a genetic memory containing the death of innocents, contempt, and the cultivation of the concept of inferiority among the peoples who encountered the path of the Nazi army.

Martha's first request upon arriving in Kyiv was to be taken to Babi Yar. This is how the inherent guilt for the evil committed in the past was transmitted. At a personal, very profound level, the heroine experienced a rather diverse semantic content—an unconscious desire to feel the sacredness of this place. "At first, I was feverish, and then suddenly everything stopped, as if nothing had happened . . . I don't know why I went to that cross.

It was as if I wasn't going to; it was strange to trust my feet for the first time" (Denysenko 2012, p. 183).

Quite symbolically, the protagonist encounters a young couple at the cross who are reading Olena Teliha's poetry about the events of Babi Yar. Back in the village, at Marat's aunt's house, Martha goes to the grave of her grandfather, who is not there, but who turned the German soldier's life around, karmically making him answer for the crimes he committed with his madness. The heroine, there, at the grave, listening to the recorded poem recited by the young couple, finds a way to relieve herself of the burden that the former Nazi, Baron Otto von Weichen, had bestowed upon her. Traveling through Ukraine becomes a form of catharsis for her. Hans's last letter unveils the truth about her grandfather. Revealing the secret that her father had concealed allows her to let her grandfather's sin pass through her, to live it out internally. And only then a new life emerges in her.

The symbol of truth and resistance takes form in the image of the young female interpreter who confronted Baron Otto von Weichen. This marked the conventional endpoint of the Nazi's psychologically stable existence. On one side, there are Marat and his aunt Olha (only later, at the end of the novel, it becomes apparent that they are descendants of the lady killed in a fit of rage by an enraged officer), characterized by pure and genuine hearts, wisdom, and harmony. On the other side, there is a narcissistic, cruel, self-assured, and vengeful German. The interpreter's death signifies the culmination of his mental life, symbolizing the futility of one nation's destruction by another. It underscores the pointlessness of all the preceding deaths inflicted and the impossibility of maintaining faith in God, love for children, and affection for women amidst the physical and moral torment of others. Conditional death becomes a representation of the loss of one's entire self, a forfeiture of personal identity. The fear of external judgment and the comparison to those he despised served as the impetus behind the erosion of his integrity. Subsequently, Otto's erratic behavior becomes emblematic of disobedience and a refusal to relinquish his identity. It is a manifestation of his self-concept through protest, a form of kitsch, evident in his choice of attire: a Hasidic hat, colorful socks, mismatched shoes, a Hebrew textbook, and the Bible. It is worth revisiting the inception of Martha's investigation. Her decision to uncover her grandfather's connection to the Holocaust intersected with individuals and events linked to the nation. Initially, Martha sought assistance from her former boyfriend, Derek, following von Weichen's death. His girlfriend, Natasha, expressed empathy for the situation, as Derek was actively searching for Himmler's belongings at auctions. Natasha, being of Polish descent, had her own familial connections to the Holocaust, as her relatives had also experienced these events during the war. Her narrative recounted the stories of girls deported from Ukraine, who clung to symbols like dried rue, daisy, and lily as representations of eternal youth, resilience, and strength. Consequently, images within the novel undergo ideological transformations, often becoming abstracted, and imbued with symbolic significance.

5. Conclusions

In *Echoes: From the Dead Grandfather to the Deceased*, the novel weaves together parallel narratives of historical events, genetic memory, and personal experiences, particularly in the context of the Holocaust and its impact on the characters' lives. Through the protagonist Martha von Weichen's transformative journey to understand her family's past and reconcile with her genetic memory, the novel emphasizes the importance of preserving collective memory and understanding the interplay between the "collective unconscious" and the "personal unconscious".

Larysa Denysenko's use of literary techniques, such as symbols like the cross and objects associated with the deceased grandfather, deepens the emotional and psychological impact of historical trauma in the narrative. These symbols serve as a reminder of the sacredness and guilt carried within the characters, reflecting the complexities of the human psyche when confronted with historical atrocities.

Moreover, the novel portrays the protagonist's path of self-discovery and the significance of historical memory on individual and collective consciousness. As the novel unfolds, it highlights the importance of remembrance, recognizing that eroded collective historical memory can lead to indifference and apathy among newer generations. Understanding the past and preserving historical memory become crucial in fostering a more tolerant and empathetic world, preventing the recurrence of past atrocities.

In this exploration of the Holocaust and its artistic depiction, the research delves into the intricate relationship between historical memory, personal identification, and genetic memory. The study uncovers the lasting impact of past events on individuals and societies, demonstrating how history continues to reverberate in the present, shaping identities, and influencing actions.

Through the lens of Denysenko's novel, the research showcases the power of literature in conveying the emotional and psychological aftermath of historical trauma, using symbols and intricate details to paint a vivid picture of the characters' internal struggles and transformation.

Ultimately, *Echoes: From the Dead Grandfather to the Deceased* serves as a reminder of the importance of preserving historical memory, fostering a shared history, and understanding the complexities of historical trauma. By bridging gaps in historical understanding and embracing the lessons of the past, society can work towards a more inclusive and cohesive future, where the collective memory of events like the Holocaust unites Ukrainians and Jews, promoting empathy, tolerance, and peace.

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