No Novel for Ordinary Men? Representation of the Rank-and-File Perpetrators of the Holodomor in Ukrainian Novels

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Abstract

The article focuses on cultural representations of the rank-and-file perpetrators of the 1932-1933 famine in Ukraine, known as the Holodomor. While it is generally accepted that most perpetrators of mass violence are ordinary people with rather banal motives, the rank-and-file perpetrators of the Holodomor remain on the margins of cultural memory in Ukraine. When they become the focus of artistic expression, perpetrators are often framed according to several distinct modalities based on the vesting of agency. In samvydav novels this agency dispersed: some perpetrators are indoctrinated, some settle scores, many simply follow orders, whereas authors in post-Soviet Ukraine and in the diaspora tend to displace agency by locating it with the savage, ethnically different Other or locals influenced by the Other. In the Soviet novels, by contrast, the agency is embraced. The article traces and analyses these modalities following a sequential chronological trajectory.

Keywords: Holodomor, rank-and-file perpetrators, representation, cultural memory, the Other, agency

The all-Soviet famine of the early 1930s claimed millions lives in several regions of the USSR. A number of legislative provisions applied specifically to Ukraine between late 1932 and early 1933 resulted in four million deaths in the Ukrainian republic alone.[1] The enforcement of these policies – the confiscation of all foodstuffs and valuables, sealing the borders of Ukraine and confining the peasants to their villages, the refusal of state relief and increased grain requisitions –prompted a critical body of scholars to refer to the famine of that period in Ukraine as the Holodomor, which means *deliberate death by hunger* in Ukrainian. The scholarship on the Holodomor has been dominated by descriptions of the starvation, estimations of the demographic losses, debates on the intentions of the party leadership and whether or not the famine constitutes a genocide. Hundreds of thousands of men and women who facilitated the Holodomor on the ground – village and district officials, various party plenipotentiaries and local activists whose direct or indirect actions led to the deaths – have so far attracted little scholarly attention[2]

1 Estimations of the number of victims vary; most demographers accept a number closer to 4 million. See: Jacques Vallin, France Meslé, Sergei Adamets, and Serhii Pyrozhkov "Kryza 1930 rr.," in France Meslé and Jacques Vallin eds., *Smertnist ta prychyny smerti v Ukraiini u XX stolitti* (Kyiv: Stylos, 2008), 37-65; Omelian Rudnytskyi, Nataliia Levchuk, Oleh Wolowyna, and Pavlo Shevchuk, "Famine losses in Ukraine in 1932 to1933 within the context of the Soviet Union," in Declan Curran, Lubomyr Luciuk, and Andrew Newby (eds.), *Famines in European Economic History: The Last Great European Famines Reconsidered* (London, 2015).

2 James Mace, "Komitety Nezamozhnykh Selyan and the Structure of Soviet Rule in the Ukrainian Countryside, 1920-1933," *Soviet Studies*, no. 4 (October, 1983): 487-503; Stepan Drovozyuk, "Povedinka silskykh aktyvistiv pid chas sutsilnoii kolektyvizatsii ta Holodomoru ukrainskoho narodu (1932-1933 rr)," *Istoriia Ukrainy. Malovidomi imena, podii, fakty*, vol. 34 (2007): 67-79; Olena Lysenko, "Typolohiia povedinky silskykh aktyvistiv u konteksti zdiysnennia sutsilnoii kolektyvizatsii silskoho hospodarstva v Ukraiini (pochatok 1930-kh rr)," *Istoriia Ukraiiny. Malovidomi imena, podii, fakty*, vol. 36 (2010): 189-203; *Partiyno-radianske kerivnytstvo Ukraiinskoii SSR pid chas Holodomoru 1932–1933: Vozhdi. Pratsivnyky. Actyvisty. Zbirnyk dokumentiv ta materialiv*, ed. Valeriy Vasyliev, Nickolas Werth, Serhii Kokin (Kyiv: Instytut istorii Ukraiiny, 2013); Valeriy Vasylyev and Lynne Viola, *Kolektyvizatsiia i selianskyi opir na Ukraiini (lystopad 1929 - mart* 1930) (Vinnytsia: Logos, 1997); Andriy Pashchenko, *Provedennia sutsilnoii kolektyvizatsii ta organizatsiino-hospodarske zmitsnennia kolhospiv* (1929-1937) (Dnipropetrovsk, 1961), 28.

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though they loom large in cultural memory. Considering the long history of Ukrainian literature serving both as a public forum and a repository of cultural memory,[3] Ukrainian novels are constitutive in constructing the image of the perpetrators.

While it is generally accepted that most perpetrators of mass violence are ordinary people with rather banal motives,[4] the rank-and-file perpetrators of the Holodomor remain the marginal element of the village community or the Other in the cultural memory in Ukraine. When they become the focus of artistic expression, perpetrators are often framed according to several distinct modalities based on the vesting of *agency*. Representation of the perpetrators in Soviet prose, for instance, corresponds with the Soviet narrative of collectivization, in which agency is vested in characters who embrace participation. In *samvydav* novels, by contrast, this agency *dispersed*: some perpetrators are indoctrinated, some settle scores, many simply follow orders. Authors in post-Soviet Ukraine and in the diaspora, by contrast, tend to *displace* agency by locating it with the savage, ethnically different Other or locals influenced by the Other.

The title of this article, which is a rewording of the opening line to William Butler Yeats' poem *Sailing to Byzantium,*[5] is the question whether Ukrainian novels on the famine reflect the participation of various perpetrator groups or instead offer a reductive reading of the perpetrators. To answer this question in a comparative frame, Smeuler's overarching typology of perpetrators of mass violence is employed.[6] This typology includes seven groups of perpetrators based on their motivation: trained perpetrators like police or military, fanatics or ideological actors, careerists, profiteers, sadists, conformists and compromised perpetrators (who are forced to participate).

The novels chosen for analysis are the ones that reached the mass reader in Ukraine and thus became part of cultural memory. They include the Soviet novels that were distributed to the public libraries from the 1930s onwards; the novels written in diaspora that were included in school curricula after 1991 and used as film scripts;[7] post-Soviet works that received literary acclaim; and works recommended for commemoration events by the Institute of National Memory of Ukraine.[8] The novels are split into four groups, based chronologically on the political context in which they were produced: the first group is compiled of

3 Cultural memory is understood as a communicative memory of a fateful event maintained through cultural formation like texts, rites, monuments, museums, recitations, observances, and education. See Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," *New German Critique* 65 (1995): 129.

4 Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem – a Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin Books, 1964); Raul Hilberg, *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders – the Jewish Catastrophe* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1992); Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men - Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: Aaron Asher Books, 1992).

5 The original line "That is no country for old men" laments the young neglecting the wisdom of the old, which could also relate to the young perpetrators of the famine defying the older generation that was reluctant to support Soviet policies in the village.

6 Alette Smeulers, "Perpetrators of international crimes: towards a typology," in *Supranational criminology: towards a criminology of international crimes*, ed. Alette Smeulers and Roelof Haveman (Antwerpen: Intersentia, 2008), 233-265.

7 Although Vasyl Barka's novel *The Yellow Prince* – a visceral account of the Holodomor centred on the fictional Katrannyk family – appeared in *samizdat* as early as 1962, it was published in Ukraine only in 1991.

8 Hanna Baikienich and Olena Okhrimchuk (eds.), *Zbirka metodychnykh rekomendatsiy do vidznachennia pamyatnykh dat u zahalnoosvitnikh navchalnykh zakladakh*, (Dnirpo: Lira, 2017), 90-108. http://www.memory.gov.ua/sites/default/files/zbirka_metodichnih_rekomendaciy.pdf

Soviet novels, the second group – novels by Soviet dissidents, the third group – novels written in the diaspora, the fourth group – novels composed in post-Soviet Ukraine. This exploratory overview therefore starts with Soviet novels and then moves to works that have become available to the general public in Ukraine after 50 years of silence about the famine. It includes dissident prose that was first disseminated via *samvydav* or *samizdat*, Ukrainian prose in diaspora and post-Soviet novels.

Soviet Novels

While Ukrainian Soviet literature of the early 1930s was subjected to censorship and was supposed "to show the most important, positive side of collectivization; to illuminate the key role of village activists and Party cells in the socialistic transformation of the village,"[9] it nevertheless offers an elaborate picture of collectivization in Ukraine and even the occasional mention of the famine. Indeed, many Soviet writers were, if not perpetrators themselves, then at least witnesses of the famine offering first-hand accounts of the starvation in the village. Arkadii Liubchenko, the author of the first Soviet short novel about the famine, titled *Kostryha* (1933),[10] based his narrative on his visits to the countryside at the time.[11] The protagonist Matvii Kostryha is a "middle peasant" who hides grain from officials and watches his family starve. Such presentations of peasants hiding grain can also be found in the memoirs of the Holodomor perpetrators.[12] When Kostryha repeatedly refuses to submit grain on requests from "a man from the district," "the commission" and "the village council," they take his potatoes and confiscate his property, thus effectively contributing to the starvation of his children. The perpetrators are nameless but omnipresent: "All teachers in the district were organised, together with pupils, to 'pull peasants out of the debt to the state'."[13] These representatives of state ask Kostryha's son where his father has hidden grain. Eventually the officials find the grain and take his children away:

You can do what you like, Matvii, but [you] *cannot torture the children. We are taking your boys to a pioneer camp. They will be better off there, and their future will be certain.*[14]

Likewise, Ivan Kyrylenko, the author of a novel about collectivization titled *Avanposty* (*The Outposts*, 1933), had knowledge of the perpetrators on the ground through his position as a personal secretary of the Chairman of the TsVK of Soviet Ukraine, Hryhorii Petrovs'kyi. During the Holodomor, Petrovs'kyi received thousands of letters from the countryside, some of which were from the perpetrators commenting on their colleagues. The author of one letter notes how collective farm management and members of the RPK profit from violence in the village:

Binge drinking, threats... even the cases of physical violence… The dekulakized are forced to live in the dugouts. They are sentenced to starvation. The

9 Anatolii Dimarov, *Prozhyty i rozpovisty: povist' pro simdesiat lit. Part III* (Kyiv: Dnipro, 1998), 181.

10 *Kostryha* is a surname of a character. The story was published in *Communist* on January 11, 1933.

11 Liubchenko describes one of his visits in April 1933 in the short novel *Ioho taiemnytsia* (*His Secret)* in 1966.

12 Kopelev, *I sotvoril sebe kumira*, 250.

13 Arkadii Liubchebko, "Kostryha," in *Zbirka Ukraiins'kykh novel* (New York: Naukove Tovarystvo im. Shevchenka v Amerytsi, 1955), 151.

14 Liubchebko, "Kostryha," 154.

officials say: we do what we want. Such facts are not exceptional but common.[15]

As secretary, Kyrylenko was doubtlessly aware of this correspondence, which offered extensive details on the mechanism of the Holodomor and the various types of its perpetrators.

The protagonists in *Avanposty* are officials involved in grain procurement: a village Komsomol leader Pavlo Motora; a worker from Kharkiv and TsK plenipotentiary Marko Obushnyi; and the head of the village council Dovbnia, among others. It is not a first assignment for Obushnyi, who has "beautiful intentions to transform the village."[16] Together with Motora he is determined to find and liquidate class enemies and everyone sympathetic to them. Obushnyi promises village activists to "sizzle" the enemies in order to meet procurement targets. The name of the novel is telling: French *avant poste* means a guarded beacon established during the offensive. Similarly the novel presents perpetrators in militaristic terms, as soldiers in a hostile environment who follow orders, demonstrate vigilance, bravery and firm beliefs. They are contrasted with characters who desert, profit or question the orders. One of these characters is Dovbnia who is reluctant to "reveal enemies"[17] in the collective farm, refuses to punish peasants for stealing the grain and calls the grain procurement plan unrealistic. As officious as Dovbnia is, he avoids making any decisions and uses his position to pursue his love interests. Only when the woman refuses Dovbnia does he try to use the law on protection of socialistic property to punish her for "pilfering" in 1932 – which implies she was starving at the time. In other words, the perpetrators in the novel are, based on Smeulers's typology, either fanatics or profiteers.

Female perpetrators in *Avanposty* are ideological perpetrators too. The two women among the activists – a Komsomol Varvara Nezhurbida and a widow Khrystia – are later joined by another widow Maria. These women complain to Obushnyi that Dovbnia is not involving other women in the campaigns. In fact, most women in the village, according to Kyrylenko, remain 'backward' and openly hostile to the female activists. The peasant women spread rumours about Varvara being promiscuous and nearly lynch Khrystia and Maria. The general condemnation of Varvara is exacerbated by her defying gender expectations: together with Motora, she "fights the neighbourhood, *dosvitky*,[18] perennial peasant passivity…"[19] and does not sleep at night in hope to catch other peasants milling grain. In the end Khrystia is promoted to become a member of the collective farm board, Varvara is engaged to Motora, and other women in the village reconcile with them.

Kyrylenko's fanatic perpetrators, however, vary in the degree of indoctrination. An episode in *Avanposty* that reads like a document is a speech by the secretary of Central Committee

15 From the letter from the students of Military Airforce Academy of RSChA to Hryhorii Petrovs'kyi, on their participation in Novopskovs'k district, Luhans'k oblast'. TsDAHOU, f. 1, op. 7, spr. 145, Ark. 62-67.

16 Ivan Kyrylenko, 'Avanposty,' *Molodniak: Molodyi Bil'shovyk*, no. 4-5 (1933): 9.

17 See P. Kapelgorods'kyi collection of stories *Znyshchyty iak klas* (*To Destroy as a Class*). The task of revealing was delegated to the local officials, activists and collective farmers.

18 Traditional meetings of unmarried young men and women during which they danced, sang and courted. These meetings disappeared during collectivization, and were replaced by gatherings in the village clubs.

19 Ivan Kyrylenko, 'Avanposty,' *Molodniak: Molodyi Bil'shovyk*, no 3 (1933): 6.

at the orientation for Party plenipotentiaries like Obushnyi: "Three hundred Bolsheviks heard the words and dressed them in familiar pictures of class struggle in the village."[20] Three hundred Bolsheviks, like three hundred Spartans, are outnumbered in their fight in the countryside. Most of them, like Obushnyi, worked in the factories or mines where their lives evoke those in Emile Zola's *Germinal* (1885) – i.e. characterised by a struggle for a better future. The wording of the official speech is strikingly similar to the speech of one republican leader recalled by Victor Kravchenko, who was also sent to the countryside in 1932.[21] He remembers feeling inspired by militaristic slogans and anxious to meet expectations, although he had no "familiar pictures of class struggle" and lacked specific instructions. According to Kravchenko, such ideological conditioning was enough to make many workers say that the starving peasants were somehow responsible for the famine and to make them enforce brutal policies on the ground. While Khlevniuk, one of the leading historians of Stalinism, posits that this line of thinking was shared by many Soviet officials and imposed on them from above,[22] General Petro Hryhorenko, himself a participant of those events, argues that these words were what many perpetrators *wanted* to believe as it made their life *safer*.[23] Indeed, such testimonies present perpetrators in a positive light but do not necessarily reflect their actual motivation.

A close reading of *Avanposty* also reveals a number of other perpetrator types. The secretary of the RPK Havrysh explains the lack of local support of the officials to Obushnyi by stating that many peasants did not support Soviet rule when it was established: "At that time every fifth [person] here was fighting for Petliura or in gangs. We can count on few."[24] Coincidentally, the comments of this fictional character echo the words of local perpetrators in Kopelev's memoir. In late 1932 Kopelev was sent to procure grain in the village of Petrivtsi (the name resembles that of Petrivka in *Avanposty*) in the Poltava oblast'. A local DPU plenipotentiary explained the lack of local support to Kopelev in similar terms:

There are counter-revolutionary elements in all villages here. In Petrivtsi there are about 20 of those who took arms against us and spilt our blood. The district is full of those who fought for Petliura, Makhno, Marusia… There were as many gangs in Civil War here as there are fleas on a dog.[25]

In *Avanposty*, Obushnyi remains a cultural Other for many peasants given his standing as a plenipotentiary from the city, so his enemies spread rumours about him seducing Motora's girlfriend Varvara: "All those city folks are fooling us simpletons. They come over, spoil our girls, take our bread and are off …"[26]

These initially hostile activists eventually come to support Obushnyi. They correspond to another perpetrator type: conformists. They accept the orders from the authorities but do not necessarily approve of them. Upon his arrival, Obushnyi summons Red Army veterans, all members of the village council and collective farm board, poor peasants (members of KNS), and shock collective farmers – approximately 25 people. He notes to himself that only a few

20 Ivan Kyrylenko, *Avanposty* (Kharkiv: Khudozhnia literatura, 1935), 11.
21 Victor Kravchenko, *I Chose Freedom*.
22 Oleg Khlevniuk and Marta D. Olynyk, 'Com-ments on the Short-Term Consequences of the Holodomor,' *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 30, no. 1/4 (2008): 150. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23611470.
23 Petro Hryhorenko, *Spohady* (Detroit: Ukraiinski visti, 1984), 109.
24 Kyrylenko, *Avanposty*, 42.
25 Kopelev, *I sotvoril sebe kumira*, 248.
26 Kyrylenko, *Avanposty*, 18.

of the assembled genuinely embrace the idea of class struggle, whereas the vast majority are indifferent.[27] One of these activists regards his participation in house searches – during which he receives verbal abuse from women and hears repeated denials of hiding grain from men – as an unpleasant job. Having concluded that the ideological education of prospective activists would be futile, Obushnyi threatens them with repression. He reminds them that the Party will punish those who tolerate the enemies even "after the battle is over." Lastly, to ensure control over the activists, Obushnyi splits the peasants into small search brigades with one trusted comrade in each. He instructs them to "shake the grain out" only when told to and to "press harder" on the individual peasants rather than on the collective farmers.[28] Each search brigade is given a target and a part of the village in which to work and is subsequently assessed on its performance. After a few weeks, the trusted comrades from each brigade merge into one brigade in which all members are either relatives or close friends. Such a brigade, according to the activists, will organise "a true devastation."[29] They abide by the rule, "No hesitation at the front. Get an order – follow it!"[30]

Kyrylenko also presents the reader with compromised perpetrators: young ambitious men and women in the Komsomol who follow Communists. They destroy the icons worshipped by their mothers. More innocuously, they play the accordion, an instrument that replaced the traditional kobza or fiddle during collectivization. This generational divide is addressed by other writers of the early 1930s: in *Istoriia radosti* (History of Happiness, 1934) Ivan Le portrays a pioneer Phonia who denounces his father for hiding grain and has a mental breakdown. In the same novel a character named Mykyta Korovainii participates in the dekulakization of his own parents in order to become a chairman of the collective farm. In *Voseny* (*In Autumn*, 1933) by Mykola Dukyn, Komsomol Kyrylo reminds his mother that he might shoot her if she steals even a handful of grain from the collective farm again. He guards the barn and, at one point, shoots a peasant in the back.

In a similar vein, Hryhorii Epik portrays several groups of perpetrators in his novel *Persha Vesna* (The First Spring, 1933). Epik names over thirty people involved in grain procurement and collectivization in the village of Bahva where the head of the village council Khymochka struggles to establish a collective farm. Though he is backed by district officials and local poor peasants, most farmers oppose him. In such a way, Epik argues, the peasants want to minimize their losses. Even when local delegate Pola reassures Komsomol plenipotentiary Lohvyn that the poor peasants will follow "where you take us,"[31] he backs a local wealthy farmer Lytka who holds real power in the village at the time. Then Lohvyn engages local youth in grain procurement by promising them Komsomol membership if they prove themselves in finding grain. They respond with enthusiasm: "We are not new at this! Who collected all the bread but us?," implying that they are already initiated the enforcement of violent policies.[32] The antagonist Lytka comments that the support of these locals is crucial for grain procurement:

27 Kyrylenko, *Avanposty*, 73.
28 Ibid., 76-77.
29 Ibid., 8.
30 Ibid., 57.

31 Hryhorii Epik, *Persha vesna* (Kharkiv: Literatura i mystetstvo, 1933), 91.
32 Epik, *Persha vesna*, 110.

If it were not for them, those city commissars would not find anything. They would have walked, sniffed and left. [But the locals] *searched all over. They took everything and have not left a thing; they damaged* [it all] *and lived off some of it.*[33]

In Epik's representation, most activists are conformists who follow the orders of authorities.

A more fanatical type, represented by Lohvyn, is murdered by a mob. The women in the crowd also sexually assault several activists and destroy the newly created collective farm. Indeed, these were the risks that many perpetrators faced on the ground. In Mykola Dukyn's short novel *Did Topolia* (Grandpa Topolia, 1933), a plenipotentiary from Moscow named Toporkov who chaired a Party cell and 'organised the masses' in a village is shot dead, like Lohvyn, through an open window by "kulaks."[34] Before Lohvyn dies in Epik's novel, he condemns peasants who do not appreciate the changes that he is fighting for: "What bastards! You work for them, and they kill you."[35]

Some of Lohvyn's comrades-in-arms, who are brutalised by the events in the Civil War, display traits of sadism. Red Amy veterans Vol'ha Bosa and Mykola Chubuk remember local peasantry supporting the Whites during the war and killing Vol'ha's husband. They now seek revenge: "You, comrades-KNS-members, are not KNS until you break a skull of a *kulak*."[36] The presence of perpetrators in the village becomes intimidating: at night they ride from house to house with torches and instantly decide on individual cases of refusals to join the collective farm. Epik even compares the village council to the military headquarters of historic offensives on "perennial traditions of peasant backwardness and famines" – in line with the official interpretation of the aims of collectivization.[37]

In fact, many perpetrators on village and district levels in Epik's novel see violence as a necessary tool to subjugate the majority in the village who are too backward to be persuaded with words. When the secretary of the RPK Kholod goes to Bahva after a lynching, he has no reservations about violence, even against the poor peasants who need to be "squashed without mercy... they are dark."[38]

In a conversation with the village officials, Kholod dehumanizes the peasants further by comparing them to dormant parasites. At the village meeting following the death of Lohvyn, he ignores the questions about helping the starving children of the repressed and announces that the village will be punished further. Likewise Vol'ha and her comrades laugh at the claims that people are dying from hunger and "fall dead like flies."[39]

If Epik mentions the famine only in passing in 1933, Dokia Humenna writes about the conditions laying the groundwork for the devastation to come in her novel *Lysty zi Stepovoii Ukraiiny* (*The Letters from Steppe Ukraine*, 1928). In her work, she awkwardly presents Soviet officials as unable to estimate how much "excess" grain would be stored by the individual peasants who refused to join the collectives. As a result, they have to "pump out" all grain and resort to "excesses."[40] Humenna concentrates on the management of one collective farm, highlighting its incompetence in agriculture,

33 Epik, *Persha vesna*, 168.
34 Mykola Dukyn, "Did Topolia," in *Chervonyi Shliakh*, no 2 (1933), 56.
35 Epik, *Persha vesna*, 201.
36 Ibid., 158.

37 Ibid., 134.
38 Ibid., 24.
39 Ibid., 151-153.
40 Dokia Humenna, Lysty zi stepovoii Ukraiiny, in *Pluh*, no 10-11 (1928), 40-41.

dependence on state investments, and even sexual corruption. In short, she presents the concerns of many farmers resisting collectivization at the time, many of which were ridiculed by other Soviet writers. Humenna reveals a foundational connection between these Soviet policies in the countryside and mass famine, portraying the perpetrators as marginal elements of the village community. Her critical depictions of collective farms were enough for Humenna to be refused membership in the Writers Union of Ukraine and all the benefits it brought at the time, including employment, ration cards and accommodation.

Soviet prose during the Thaw

This sympathetic depiction of collectivization and its perpetrators, which was more or less in line with the official ideology at the time, continued until the death of Stalin. After Khrushchev denounced Stalin's crimes and the "cult of personality" at the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956, however, some Ukrainian Soviet writers dared to allude to collectivization and the famine again. As critical as he was of Stalinism in the so-called "Secret Speech," Khrushchev did not question the official interpretation of collectivization and the role its perpetrators played at the time. Yet a number of Soviet writers did question this interpretation in an attempt to reassess the events of 1932-1933. Famed Ukrainian writer Oles' Honchar mentions the famine in his novel *Liudyna i Zbroia* (Man and Arms, 1958). One of his characters, Reshetnyk, describes his experience of the Holodomor to his comrade-in-arms during the Second World War. The only survivor in his family, Reshetnyk used to cut the ears of wheat while trying to avoid the field guards, who called children like him "kulak hairdressers."[41] He concludes that they were only hungry people, not *kulaks*. While Honchar does not explain who these field guards were or how the famine was organized, his very mention of its perpetrators mistaking the victims for enemies is significant in the cultural memory of the Holodomor, especially given the novel's reach to a wide readership.

Another novel that overcame the bounds of conventional censorship is Mykhailo Stel'makh's novel *Chotyry Brody* (*The Four Fords,* 1978), which received the prestigious Shevchenko award in 1980. In the novel, Stel'makh describes many aspects of the famine that censors normally insisted on excluding, thus delaying the novel's publication. Stel'makh describes how local officials tried to save the starving and blames the famine in the "wicked" year on the poor harvest exacerbated by primitive agriculture, which the Party sought to change. From brief comments, we learn that some bread was taken away from the peasants as taxes or surplus. Stel'makh, coming from a KNS background and a student of agriculture during the Holodomor,[42] was very likely to be involved in grain procurement himself. Therefore he avoids explaining who requisitioned the grain, mentioning house searches only in passing.

The protagonist Bondarenko in *Chotyry Brody* is an ideological perpetrator. Like Stel'makh himself, he returns to his native village as a teacher and confiscates grain in 1932-1933. The author does not delve into the process of house searches but repeatedly stresses Bondarenko's firm socialist beliefs, his desire to change life for the better, and his incompetence in managing the collective farm. Bondarenko is

41 Oles' Honchar, *Tvory v 7-y tomakh*, vol. 4, (Kyiv: Dnipro, 1988), 122.
42 Ivan Semenchuk, *Mykhailo Stel'makh: narys tvorchosti* (Kyiv: Dnipro, 1982).

appointed as chairman of a collective farm by district officials Musul'bas and Sahaidak, who are likened to fearless but fair kozaks and who, like other perpetrators in Soviet novels, are Red Army Veterans. Moreover, Sahaidak assigns Bondarenko the task of "saving people" and completing the sowing campaign in 1933 despite having no seeds. Having a *carte blanche* from the superiors who promise to "keep their eyes open but not to slap his hands," "Bondarenko orders his friend and a collective farmer, Vasyl," to leave some of the procured milk for the newly organized village nursery. When Vasyl' reminds him that they would face trial for such action, Bondarenko reasons that they might not. Later in the novel Vasyl' becomes a policeman, while Bondarenko stays in his position of the farm chairman.

A group of perpetrator-fanatics, however, compromise their beliefs when they tolerate the profiteers and careerists. Bondarenko believes it is the profiteer Mahazanyk who has exacerbated the famine in the village. Indeed, Mahazanyk uses the famine to his benefit: he sells the grain that he acquires through participation in requisition to desperate peasants at extortionate prices, settles scores with former enemies and pursues various love interests. Mahazanyk is a former Ukrainian national activist and a successful entrepreneur who does not follow any ideology and welcomes the Nazis during the war when it means profit for him. When he approaches Bondarenko with business ideas about how to develop the struggling collective farm, Bondarenko refuses and lets the produce rot.

The careerist district prosecutor Stupach is a convinced Communist, always dressed in military uniform. From short remarks we learn that he is a Jew. Born in a small town, he "does not know the village and does not want to know it" and "the early 1920s pushed the soul out of him." He dislikes peasants who compare him to a vulture despite his handsome appearance. Ambitious, Stupach tends to see conspiracy everywhere and prefers to employ terror in his work "so that one would be scared of their own." He insists on taking all of the harvest of 1932 out of the village. Perpetrators Sahaidak and Musulbas comment on the necessity to tolerate people like him while constructing a better future. Stupach matches the description of the Chekist commissar of the post-revolutionary years provided by Bilynkis:

A typical, rather good-looking man, he had the most unpleasant employment. He was sent, or maybe himself volunteered, whenever there was a need to abuse and insult someone.[43]

Through the words of Bondarenko, Stel'makh explains that executives like Stupach with their hatred towards the peasants are to blame for the 1932-1933 famine. According to Myroslav Shkandrij, Jewish cadres were less visible in the violence of the Holodomor or in the terror of the thirties compared to the early years of the revolutionary and post-revolutionary period.[44]

A similar depiction of the perpetrators could be found in other Soviet novels that remained firmly within the canon of social realism, such as *Liudy ne angely* (People Are No Angels, 1962) by Ivan Stadniuk and *Nevmyrushchyi Khlib* (Immortal Bread, 1981) by Petro Lanovenko.[45] The famine is explained as a temporary phase

43 Lazar Bilynkis, 'Hromadianska viina na Ukraiini ta ievrei (Fragmenty spohadiv; publikatsiia L. Padun-Luk'ianovoii),' *Khronika 2000,* (1998), 237.

44 Myroslav Shkandrij, *Jews in Ukrainian literature: representation and identity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 146.

45 O. Samiilenko, 'Velykyi Holod u tvorakh radians'kykh pys'mennykiv,' *Suchasnist'*, 1989, no 6 (338): 23.

in the socialist transformation of the village, caused by poor local management, *kulak* sabotage or natural causes. Its perpetrators – village activists, workers, teachers, village and district officials – are ideological perpetrators who are concerned about the lives of the peasants. As in *Chotyry Brody*, the famine is blamed on local officials who were either careerists or counter-revolutionaries.

Samvydav and _Tamvydav_ Novels of the Soviet Period

Anatolii Dimarov's *I budut' liudy (There Will Be People*, 1964*)* initially had a chapter on collectivization and the famine, but it was deemed inappropriate by reviewer Mul'tykh from the Institute of the History of Party.[46] Dimarov's own father was dekulakized, and his mother relocated as a teacher to another village with the children and changed their surname. In their new village, she too had to participate in dekulakization, so Dimarov knew the perpetrators' experience well.[47] But Multykh's revision of his novel criticized his representation of perpetrators and epitomizes the guidance for the authors' writings about the 1930s:

[...] *completely re-evaluate the events in the village in late 1929 – early 1930 according to the documents and existing historiography* […][48]

The chapter was published as a separate novel *The Hungry Thirties (A Parable About Bread)* abroad in 1989 and in Ukraine in 1990.

In this work Dimarov explores different types of perpetrators of the famine as well as their hierarchy – from village activists to the provincial leaders and Stalin from 1929 to 1933. The events start in Khorol, where Hryhorii Ginzburg, the secretary of the RPK, finds himself under pressure from the oblast' committee to speed up collectivization in his district. He is also confused with the discrepancy between Stalin's views on collectivization and his own experience.[49] Ginzburg writes a letter to Stalin criticising his policy. He is then summoned to the first secretary of the oblast' Party committee, who expels him from the Party. Ginzburg shoots himself at the meeting. Such incidents indeed took place at the time. Maksudov, for example, notes the increased rates of suicide among Party officials during the famine as the result of their being "ridden with guilt and full of sympathy for the starving" as well as their inability to change anything.[50]

Following his death, the Khorol district committee is 'reinforced' with the careerist Suslov, who follows orders with the conviction that the transformation of the village requires violence. Most of Ginzburg's former colleagues immediately signal support for Suslov's methods. For instance, another member of the committee, Put'ko, supports Suslov by repeating his words and silently agreeing when he criticizes him. He travels to the village of Tarasivka in Khorol district to find like-minded executives. Together with Suslov, Put'ko expels from the Party the head of the village council and Red Army veteran Hanzha, who refuses to use repressions in the village. His partner and fellow Communist Ol'ha solemnly laments his imprisonment

46 Anatolii Dimarov, 'Na Volyni ia stav Ukraiintsem,' *Den'*, June 26, 2003, https://day.Kyiv.ua/uk/article/cuspilstvo/anatoliy-dimarov-na-volini-ya-stav-ukrayincem
47 Dimarov, *Prozhyty i rozpovisty...*, 1997, 37.
48 Ibid., 181.

49 Reference to Stalin's article 'The Year of the Great Break.'
50 Sergei Maksudov and Marta D. Olynyk, 'Dehumanization', 144.

and reluctance to conform but testifies against him, together with his nephew Volod'ka. A perpetrator and Red Army veteran like Volod'ka, Ol'ha receives a verbal warning for her lack of vigilance and is distrusted by Put'ko:

This woman raised her hand herself. Besides, she had been Hanzha's mistress. We won't let you forget that until the day you die, dearie! You'll remain forever under suspicion.[51]

At the same time Volod'ka is appointed as chairman of the collective farm that he is to create. Initially he is enthusiastic and anxious to prove his loyalty to the Party and feels empowered by district backing:

After having been in town, Volod'ka suddenly felt that he wielded frightening power: he could run whomever he wanted to out of the village.[52]

Despite his threats, only 12 out of 37 activists join the collective farm "voluntarily." Worried that district officials would blame him, he gradually transforms into a committed perpetrator, compiling a list of people to be deported to Siberia and refusing to return food to his father-in-law who dies from starvation.

Dimarov suggests that ideology alone cannot adequately account for Volod'ka's participation in the Holodomor, given the refusal of convinced Communists Ginzburg and Hanzha to participate. He therefore raises the question of the role of the modern state, and above all the culture of fear, in the vertical structure of the totalitarian state. When Ginzburg waits for a meeting in the reception room of the first secretary of the oblast', he finds himself in the company of other district officials waiting anxiously to be seen behind the big black leather doors. The material of these doors reminds him of the black leather of the Chekist uniform, which communicates the authority of higher Soviet officials over the rank-and-file officials. While Ginzburg gradually submits to the intimidation of the big black doors, he eventually finds the courage to protest – something most perpetrators in the novel cannot, or do not, do. In other words, Dimarov suggests that it was bureaucracy of the state that made people like Volod'ka dangerous, weaponizing their dutiful official conscientiousness to facilitate the famine in his village.

Indeed, Volod'ka is similar to Adolf Eichmann in his motives and his character. He is unaware of the wickedness of his actions:

Had he wanted people to die like this? Had he thought about this as he swept the grain out of the village? Sweeping it out to the last granule, just to fulfil that forthcoming plan […][53]

He has neither killed anyone personally, nor has he ordered anyone to be killed. He is not a sadist or psychopath; nor are his subordinates, who take the grain from the families in winter to save it for spring sowing and from "being fed to your children."[54] They seem "terribly and terrifyingly normal."

Dimarov's character of the teacher Tania is a classic example of a compromised perpetrator. During a meeting on dekulakization, she disapproves of the list for deportation, but remains silent as she fears for herself and her children. Defined through her relations to the men – her father was a priest, her husband is *kulak*, her brother is repressed – she feels

51 Anatolii Dimarov, *In Stalin's Shadows* (Melbourne: Bayda Books, 1989), 137.
52 Ibid., 132.
53 Dimarov, *In Stalin's Shadows*, 157.
54 Ibid., 152.

insecure and is grateful not to be included in the dekulakization brigade. Tania lives with her two young sons in the house of the deported; she is swollen from hunger and fears even responding to the school warden who comments on children suffering needlessly in the famine. Tania prefers not to discuss the intentions of the leaders out of fear of losing her job or being arrested. Vulnerable and alone, Tania is desperate to survive and keeps her silence until her death in the 1980s.

Finally, Dimarov completes the circle of perpetrators by taking a local old man Grandpa Khlypavka to Stalin. While following the orders of Volod'ka to keep the starving away from the village grain store, Khlypavka believes that Stalin is not aware of the dire situation and decides to travel to Moscow to inform him. His son works at the railway and helps Khlypavka travel to Kharkiv in a first-class compartment – something impossible for most starving peasants at the time. His trip is cut short by cordons near Moscow, and he deduces that Stalin is aware of the starving peasants trying to reach the capital and does not want to see them. After the old man dies, he demands God punish Stalin and alleges his complicity in failing to do so:

You teach us in the Holy Scriptures that all who pass by a crime become criminals themselves, that all who help bandits become bandits themselves. So who can judge us, if You turn from us?[55]

When God asks the victims of the famine who killed them, they all point at Stalin. While God finds no adequate punishment for the "horrific crimes" of Stalin, Dimarov does not discuss punishment for Suslov, Khlypavka, Volod'ka and others who passed by a crime.

Dimarov's other novel set during the Holodomor, *Samosud* (Lynching, 1990), focusses entirely on careerist Danylo Sokalo and follows his rise from the village level perpetrator to the secretary of the RPK. An ambitious Komsomol, Danylo fights with religion in his village and ironically takes down a giant cross erected by his distant Cossack ancestor, after whom the village was named. To prevent it from being erected again, Danylo defecates on top of it. He also ensures that the village is renamed 'Chervona Kommuna' (Red Commune) to prove his loyalty to the cause. Having secured a gun from district authorities, "he has already felt important." Danylo is driven not only by career aspirations, but by jealousy: "The older he got, the more he hated anyone who dared to live better than him."[56] When he accidentally shoots his hand, he blames Vasyl' Kovalenko for the failed assassination attempt – simply because Vasyl' had better shoes than Danylo long ago. On advice of a policeman, he accuses four more men from the village, all of whom are executed after a widely publicised trial.

In 1932 Danylo jumps at a chance to advance his career by volunteering to enforce grain procurement. At a key meeting with a member of the TsK KP(b)U, where other village officials argue grain procurement quotas are impossible, Danylo raises his hand to promise 200% of the target. A careerist and a profiteer who keeps possessions of the deported for personal use, Danylo feels elated with his grand plans: "I will procure grain! I will do everything, comrade secretary! I will smash myself, but I will do it!" He organises agitation brigades with teenagers, Komsomol, KNS and "poor teachers who are responsible

55 Dimarov, *In Stalin's Shadows*, 172.

56 A. Dimarov, *Samosud: povisti, opovidannia, etiudy* (Kyiv: Ukraiins'kyi pys'mennyk, 1999), 81.

for everything" and bullies the peasants into the collective by boarding up their houses and deporting those who resisted. While searching for grain, he starts with individual farmers who left the collective in 1930, avenging them for undermining his efforts and achievements in the past. He learns of metal rods to prod the surfaces in the district and orders a local blacksmith to make some for his brigades. During the searches, he brutally kills, directly and indirectly, half the village. This loyalty eventually pays off, and he moves to the district and eventually becomes the secretary of the RPK.

Danylo's life changes quickly during the German invasion in 1941. Having stayed on the occupied territory, he destroys local supplies and accidentally kills his former Komsomol colleague Vustia, a conformist and a diligent worker herself. Now the chairwoman of the collective, she tried to prevent Danylo from burning the barn with hundreds of calves. One more murder later, he is arrested by Vasyl' Kovalenko who returned to the village, and is now in the German police. Kovalenko allows the mob, headed by Vustia's mother, to lynch Danylo. The murder is highly publicised in German newspapers. Once the village is freed from the Germans, it is burnt to the ground by the NKVD as collective reprisal for the lynching of the secretary of the district committee. Its male inhabitants are executed, whilst its surviving women and children are sent to camps in Siberia.

Another novel set during the famine published abroad and circulated in *samvydav* is Vasilii Grossman's *Vse techet* (*Forever Flowing*, 1970). Grossman presents the perpetrator of Stalinist policies according to four types: sadists, conformists, the compromised, and the ideologically driven. Grossman also includes a confession of a Party plenipotentiary deployed in Ukraine to procure grain named Anna Stepanovna Mikhaliova, a war widow living with her nephew in southern Russia. She finds a soulmate in the protagonist of the novel and confides in him. A few weeks later, Anna dies of lung cancer. Her account of the rank-and-file perpetrator is strikingly elaborate.

In an interview, Grossman's daughter, Ekaterina Korotkova, confirmed to me that he based Anna's character on a woman named Pelageia Semenova, who was indeed a perpetrator of the famine in east Ukraine.[57] Yet as opposed to Anna, Pelageia Semenova lived a long life and resided in central Moscow and worked as a maid in the family of the poet Nikolai Zabolots'kii, whom Grossman knew well. Semenova was born into a peasant family in Likhoslavsk, Tver oblast'; after the famine, she returned to Russia. It is unknown how she reflected upon her participation in the Holodomor or how she explained her motivations. Controversy was not uncommon in her life: Zabolots'kyi, repressed in 1938 and released from the camps after Stalin's death, actually suspected that Semenova was reporting him to the secret services and eventually asked her to leave. She then came to the Grossmans.[58]

In Grossman's novel, Anna compares her memories of grain procurement to a piece of shrapnel in her heart. At the time of collectivization, Anna was 22 years old; as she puts it, she was beautiful but unkind inside. She worked as a cleaner at the district executive committee in Russia and heard about the famine from the officials. She believed that starvation was caused not by collectivization but by extortionate procurement quotas and the confiscation of all foodstuffs. Later she

57 Interview with Ekaterina Korotkova in Moscow on 12.04.2014.
58 Ibid.

was sent as a bookkeeper to a local collective farm and then transferred to work in the same capacity in Ukraine, where collectivization was facing more problems because "private property rules the head of the Khokhol."[59]

When describing the village activists in Grossman's *Vse techet*, Anna notes that most people were honest or ordinary, but that their actions led to exactly the same results as the actions of those who were cruel to the victims. Most of the activists were local, she explains: they were representatives of the RPK and executive committee, Komsomol, the DPU, police and sometimes even the military. During dekulakization, the empowered activists perceived themselves as heroes and stopped seeing the peasants whom they procured grain from, dekulakized or deported as human beings. In Grossman's *Vse techet*, this dehumanization, which was exacerbated by propaganda, is at the root of their excessive violence. As Anna notes, she felt that the victims were 'dirty', 'sick' and 'backward'. She failed to see them as people, especially after regular meetings, special instructions and media messages about resistant peasants being nothing but 'vermin' and 'parasites'.

Anna was also included in a *troika* – as one of three officials with extended rights of executive power. She compiled lists for dekulakization. When it is decided whom to dekulakize at the village level, the principle for putting the list together is presented as far from ideological. In fact, the decision is often made to settle personal scores or to profit. Later Anna comments on her colleagues being ordinary people, some sentimental and few truly bad. She memorises all their conversations when they let down their guard while drunk. From all collected information, Anna concludes that the rank-and-file perpetrators were expected to provide their superiors with optimistic numbers, while the quotas from the top, based on those numbers, were disseminated back down. In her view, Stalin was aware of the famine but chose not to help the starving and carried on with the confiscation policy, thus killing Soviet citizens deliberately and hiding the truth from the world. What strikes her the most is that perpetrators like her, on all levels of the state machine, made this mass killing possible. This killing of men, women and even children convinces Anna that human life in the Soviet Union is worthless.

When peasants in Anna's village start howling from hunger, she feels that she had to eat her rations in the field. In the field she hears hungry cries from a neighbouring village. None of her colleagues share the rations with the victims. At the time, a plenipotentiary from the city Party organization joked: "Such parasites! They even search for acorns under the snow to avoid working."[60] Anna sees people driven by hunger to utter despair; these images stay in her memory for the rest of her life. When the last person in the village dies, the management of the collective farm is transferred to the city. Anna is offered a position of a chairwoman of another collective farm, a proposal she refuses. Instead she leaves Ukraine to work as a cook in Russia.

Grossman's Anna Mikhaliova consistently compares the man-made famine to the mechanism of the Holocaust: it involves a similar dehumanization of the victims, criminal decisions of the leadership against civilians, and local conformity. She attempts to make sense of the trauma by comparison in her confession. Anna gains a vantage point over her experience and looks at it from a distance,

59 V. Grossman, *Forever Flowing* (New York: Harper&Row, 1972), 149.

60 Ibid., 151.

an approach similar to that employed by the protagonist of Sartre's short novel *The Wall* (1939).[61] Witnessing the inevitability of death during the famine, like Pablo anticipating the dreaded wall before his execution during the Civil War in Spain, Anna finds that she no longer cares about life. Her death is delayed for 20 years, a punishment that comes despite her repentance, which involves Anna seeing the victims as human beings once again. She expresses empathy for many deported *kulaks* – women, the old and children who died in the crowded cargo trains even before reaching their final destination.

Another novel set during the famine that offers a nuanced approach in its depiction of perpetrators is *Sl'ozy Bozhoi Materi* (*The Tears of Our Lady,* 1990) by Ievhen Hutsalo. Like Grossman, Hutsalo avoids the dichotomy of reading perpetrators as either ideological fanatics or profiteers. All of them are local. Hutsalo confronts the violence in a Ukrainian rural community at the time, starting with an episode in which a lynching mob kills a teenager suspected of theft.[62] He then portrays various perpetrators in one village, none of whom benefit from the tragedy. The first perpetrator, Harkusha, who with his family starves to death, is neither an ideological perpetrator nor a sadist. He is simply a neighbour whom the protagonist does not like. The second activist, Vasyl' Hnoiovyi, enjoys the benefits of power and theft but loses his wife. Upon her death on the floor of a manger, Ol'ka asks Vasyl' and her sister to move in together, adding that "though he is a horrible thug, one can live with him."[63] While Harkusha explains his participation in mass violence and theft by his will for survival, whereas his colleague Mykola Khashchuvatyi seems to embrace the brutality and does not justify his participation.

Hutsalo then proceeds to a characterization of officials Matvii Shpytal'nyk, the chairman of the collective farm, and Kindrat Iaremnyi, the head of the village council. Both are careerists who display sadistic traits. In the midst of the famine, they play chess in front of the starving peasants working in the field. They use official language to mask the facts, calling the starving peasants *saboteurs* and their slave labour "a holiday." They question the ability of collective farmers to rise above their basic instincts and appreciate the modern music that they play in the fields. In a word, Shpytal'nyk and Iaremnyi do not see the victims as humans. When a collective farmer receives a bowl of soup in the field without having worked that day, Shpytal'nyk knocks the bowl out of her hands despite knowing that he is sentencing her to death.

No matter how callous their actions, these perpetrators are not subject to Hutsalo's judgement. In the novel, the line between perpetrators and victims is often blurred. One of the activists dies of hunger along with his children, while another is brutalized beyond return to normal life. Perhaps to stress the depth of the tragedy rather than a division between perpetrators and victims, Hutsalo describes an episode of a beautiful woman in a silk dress stopping in the middle of the village where she sees emaciated children. Her face is depicted as the face of Mary in Orthodox icons – with narrow

61 Jean-Paul Sartre, trans. A. Brown, *The Wall* (London: Hesperus, 2005).

62 A similar incident of lynching before collectivization is described in the memoir by Dmitrii Goichenko, *Krasnii apokalipsis: skvoz raskulachivanie i Golodomor* (Kyiv: Ababagalamaga, 2013), 20-21.

63 Ievhen Hutsalo, *Sliozy Bozhoi Materi, Ie. Hutsalo, Take strashne, take solodke zhyttia* (Kyiv: Tempora, 2014), 281.

black eyebrows and wide eyes full of empathy. She heads to the train station from the district centre with a partner Dmytro Dmytrovych, an oblique district official, who tells her that it is impossible to help all the starving children. As she gives away white bread to the starving children, she cries, with her tears "pouring" or "shedding" as in the novel's title.

The Ukrainian Novel in the Diaspora

Diaspora literature largely offers a different take on the perpetrators – from the position of the victim. While writers in diaspora have produced a number of works set during the famine, only a few have reached the mass reader in Ukraine since 1991. Today *Maria: Khronika odnoho zhyttia* (Maria: The Chronicle of One Life, 1934) by Ulas Samchuk[64] and *Plan do dvoru* (Annihilation, 1951) by Todos' Os'machka and *Zovtyi Kniaz'* (The Yellow Prince, 1962) by Vasyl' Barka are recommended for reading in school curricula; they now contribute to the work of cultural memory among younger generations of Ukrainians educated after 1991. Moreover, one of few fiction films related to the Holodomor, *Holod-33* (1991), is based on *Zhovtyi Kniaz'*. The perpetrators in these novelas are predominantly depicted as the ethnically different Other, which is in line with a Ukrainian nationalist ideology focussed on Russian aggression in Ukraine.[65]

Maria: Khronika odnoho zhyttia is the story of a Ukrainian peasant woman that starts with her birth and ends with her death in 1933. The events of the famine are depicted through the eyes of characters closely related to Maria. Their stories point to the destructive interference of the outside world with the Ukrainian peasantry. Shkandrij argues that the militarism and imperial power in such novels "transform a civilized peasant into an uncouth military man"[66] who verbally and physically abuses his family and speaks Russian. In order to escape this influence, one has to till his land and enjoy "the fullness of existence." The author Samchuk applauds Maria's second husband Kornii for becoming a farmer again: "God himself is following you in the fields with a wind, in the sky, with the sun! God himself!"[67] In Samchuk's interpretation, the Ukrainian village before the 1930s is "a golden country" and "a country of labour and bread" that the sun loves, warms and protects. That idyll is destroyed by locals who, according to Onats'kyi in his foreword to *Maria's* edition in 1952, "drown in the waves of evil and corruption of Moscow flooding."[68]

In such a way, Samchuk gradually constructs an image of the perpetrator as the Other who exploits the Ukrainian population. Most of the Holodomor perpetrators in *Maria* are repeatedly cast as the Other. The attack on the peasantry by Komsomol activists, for instance, is likened to a Tatar invasion; as one of the tortured characters exclaims, "Our country has not known such a Tatar-like plundering."[69] The field guards are not collective farmers but "the soldiers of great and bright future

64 Samchuk was long an advocate for the cause of independence in his publications in OUN periodicals, although he was not a member of that organization. See Shkandrij, *Ukrainian Nationalism: Politics, Ideology, and Literature, 1929-1956* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015).

65 See Natalka Doliak, *Chorna Doshka* (Kharkiv: Klub Simeinoho Dozvillia, 2014); Svitlana Talan, *Rozkolote Nebo* (Kharkiv: Klub Simeinoho Dozvillia, 2015); Halyna Marchuk, *Try Doli* (Kyiv: Priorytet, 2012); Serhii Loboda, *Vidlunnia* (Lviv; Kal'varia, 2010).

66 Myroslav Shkandrij, *Ukrainian Nationalism: Politics, Ideology, and Literature, 1929-1956* (London: Yale University Press, 2015), p. 232.

67 Ulas Samchuk, *Maria. Khronika odnogo zhittia* (Kyiv: Smoloskyp, 2014), p. 123.

68 Ibid., p. 12.

69 Ibid., p. 177.

that came here from the distant north" or the creatures with high cheekbones.[70]

Yet the very life of the protagonist Maria defies the existence of such an idyllic village prior to collectivization and the famine. Orphaned at the age of six and neglected by her relatives, Maria starts working at the age of twelve. She is illiterate; despite her hard work, she remains in the lowest social stratum. Her first three children die of infectious diseases that regularly ravage the countryside. Thus, the village was a place of "labour and bread" as well as a place of violence and premature and infantile death. Likewise, in Samchuk's novel, it is possible to find behaviour befitting a potential perpetrator among the locals prior to their exposure to the outside world or Communist ideology – i.e. the Other. As a child, Maria's own son Maksym steals, despises hard work, and tortures animals. His parents explain his character as being "born that way" and call him a "bastard" and "buffoon" in public, convinced he will become nothing but a poor farmer. Therefore the village is neither void of violence nor of violent types who, under the influence of the Other, become the perpetrators of collectivization and the famine.

Maria's son Maksym turns out to be the key village perpetrator. He represents the perpetrator-profiteer type. While Maria's first husband Hnat explains Maksym's participation by being possessed by the devil – he has a dream in which the devil oversees Maksym mutilating his mother – other farmers ridicule Maksym for trying to get rich without hard work. Maksym denounces his brother, disowns and evicts his parents, and sees his sister and infant niece starve to death. While Shkandrij regards him as one of many young fanatics who strip churches and "make a mess" out of farming, Maksym also supports Soviet policies for his own benefit. Indeed, he advocates for collective farming as well as for sexual emancipation and secularization, but at the same time he despises hard work, hires a maid and wants his children to leave the village to seek careers in the city. In the end Maksym is brutally murdered by his father – a premonition Maria had that "God will punish [him] not with a bat."[71] In short, Maksym combines many features of the Holodomor perpetrator: he is a Russian-speaking quisling, Communist, profiteer, sadist, and atheist punished by God. What is important here is that this character, however grotesque, places agency for the Holodomor back in the village. Local perpetrators are not simply unconscious' accomplices who with "demagogical slogans push the village to its moral and physical ruin."[72]

There are other perpetrators, and millions of them, according to Samchuk: Komsomol members who are "strange, very strange young people"[73] but also "monsters," "hyenas" and "children with sold souls"[74] who search houses, destroy everything in sight, and torture the victims. Samchuk also points to the role of the modern state as the prime mover of the mechanism of the Holodomor on the ground: the policies initiated in the Central Committee are leveraged down through various officials and the media with its countless poets, epics and academics and enforced by the Party, the army and the security service. He looks at various links between the *sil'kory* who provided intelligence and the security services and between propaganda brigades

70 Ulas Samchuk, *Maria. Khronika odnogo zhittia* (Kyiv: Smoloskyp, 2014), p. 187.

71 Ibid., 140.
72 Ibid., 15.
73 Ibid., 167.
74 Ibid., 176.

and "clever-eyed" shock-workers and their brigade leaders.

Plan do Dvoru (Annihilation, 1951) by Teodosii Os'machka, which was included in the school curriculum on Ukrainian literature in 2002,[75] is an episode in the life of a collectivized village in central Ukraine during the early 1930s. Os'machka was encouraged to write a novel on the man-made famine by Volodymyr Vynnychenko,[76] one of the leaders of Ukrainian national movement following the dissolution of the Russian Empire. In Os'machka's novel, the perpetrators are the ethnically alien Other and diametrically opposed to the victims:

[…] *armed, they* [killed] *the unarmed; full with food, they killed the starved and cold; smartly dressed, they killed the ragged and patched* […] [They] *killed without warning or asking questions as they would kill prey*.[77]

This opposition between perpetrator and victim is stressed throughout *Plan do Dvoru*: the antagonists – the conforming chairman of the collective farm Khakhlov and the corrupt chekist Tiurin – are Russians, and the local Komsomol, while dressed like ordinary Ukrainian young men in embroidered shirts, carry *Moscow* rifles. Like other victims in the novel, the protagonist Nerad'ko longs for an independent Ukraine and remarks that the Communists from Russia are enslaving it. While the actual grain requisition is mentioned only in passing, most of the groups instrumental in enforcing the famine are present: the DPU and police as trained perpetrators, village officials and brigade leaders at the collective farm, village Komsomol and the informants among the locals. Additionally, Os'machka mentions the role of education officials in persecuting the victims: when Nerad'ko refuses to cooperate as a teacher, he is reported by a school inspector who, according to the protagonist, is no longer Ukrainian and is "bought by Moscow."

Ethnic Ukrainians among the trained perpetrators are habituated to violence by the Other:

[They] *got used to arresting their fellow countrymen for nothing, and they take them to the prison in Balakleia day and night before dispatching them to Siberia, Kolyma, Solovky and some to the other world... The policeman shook his humanity off as if it was some awkward prostration.*[78]

The local Komsomols vandalise the church, detain the arrested and even serve as prison guards and assist the murders. All of them, according to the narrator, are merely food for the Soviet state, which he compares to a pig: sooner or later everyone is either eaten or chewed up. In such a way Os'machka removes agency from local perpetrators who do not fit the trope of the ethnically alien Other.

The key perpetrator on the ground, Iermilo Tiurin, heads both the district police and the DPU. He epitomises all the qualities of the savage, ethnically alien Other: he is a sadist, profiteer, careerist, rapist and murderer from Moscow. Tiurin stresses that in order to control countries like Ukraine one needs to use terror. He is feared even by his fellow Red Army veteran Khakhlov. Though Ieshka's surname is a derogatory term for a Ukrainian,

75 Snizhana Cherniuk, '*Obrazna symvolika u tvorakh Todosia Os'machky*' (PhD diss., Natsional'na Akademia Nauk Ukraiiny, Instytut Literatury, 2002).

76 Todos' Os'machka, *Plan do dvoru* (Toronto: Vydavnytsvo Ukraiins'koho Kanadiis'koho Legionu, 1951), *p.* 7.

77 Ibid., 171.

78 Ibid., 36.

he is a Russian worker from Moscow who has met Lenin. While he approves "all means to speed up the triumph of the working class," he is tired of torture and murder. After the suicide of one brigade leader, Ieshka is distraught and leaves for the district to report Tiurin but returns to consult with his domineering wife. Indeed, Khakhlov's wife Masha is involved in all her husband's decisions; however, her character might have been included for a different purpose. Os'machka was known for misogynist comments,[79] so it is conceivable that with Masha's domination Os'machka demonstrates Khaklov's impotence to confront Tiurin.

On the other hand, these antagonists would be helpless without locals who in the novel are the brigade leaders at the collective farm: Buntush, Tymish Klunok, Kopyt'ko and Skakun. In fact, Buntush also works as the secretary of the village council and knows of all planned repressions by Tiurin or Khakhlov, whom he also assists. Although these local perpetrators seem "like wordless trees" to the victim Shyian during the eviction of his family, he nevertheless appeals to compassion by calling them "brothers, comrades and parents."[80] In this poignant scene Shyian reminds them that he is a good person and helped each brigade leader in one way or the other. In his plea, he is joined by his wife and daughter. The sight of the desperate family makes Kopyt'ko move the hat over the eyes of Klunok, who presumably might show sympathy towards the victims: "Maybe it is better not to look at it."[81] In private conversations, however, these men express their disapproval of Soviet rule and the Russians policing Ukraine. Although they conform, not all of them survive: Klunok, for example, becomes increasingly paranoid and commits suicide. Such justice also extends to Tiurin, who is murdered, and to Komsomol Dulia, who is blinded while vandalising a church.

During this eviction Tiurin brutally murders Shyian, but it is only Skakun who confronts the DPU officer. In fact, the other three brigade leaders hold Skakun back, with Buntush calling Skakun: "You whore hydra of counter-revolution."[82] Skakun was known for his short temper in the village and once tried to take his own life. When he is ordered to assist the eviction, Skakun takes a carving knife with presumable intention to kill Tiurin. On the way to the farmstead he is dissuaded by the girl he loves, and she takes his knife away. In his actions Skakun's character is reminiscent of Dostoevsky's Shatov in *Besy* (The Possessed, 1870-71). Disturbed by the changes from the outside, they fail to make sense of the new order or to conform and attempt to establish justice. If Shatov's name resembles a bear roused in the middle of winter – *shatun* – that is either shot by the villagers or dies from starvation, Skakun's names connotes a horse that is not easy to tame. It seems there is no place for either of them. Like Shatov, he is killed (by Tiurin) without hesitation.

In the novel *Zhovtyi Kniaz* (The Yellow Prince, 1962), Vasyl' Barka narrates the story of the Katrannyk family, who endure the famine. In the foreword the author names the perpetrators responsible for the suffering and death: the army, the security services, the police, and workers from Russia. Those who executed the orders on the ground had nothing humane left in them, implies Barka. They were "devilish cast aways" who shoot children "pilfering" in

79 Mykhailo Slaboshpyts'kyi, 'Pys'mennyk bezderzhavnoii natsii ne mih staty Nobelivs'kym laureatom...' *Vydavnuche Zhyttia*, No 3 (2001).
80 Os'machka, *Plan do dvoru*, p. 61.
81 Ibid., 62.
82 Ibid., 64.

the fields and take away the last porridge from a baby. The appearance of the perpetrators is often compared by the victims to such sinister beasts as demons, dragons and snakes. They are also compared to the soldiers even when they come to desacralize the local church. Barka states that Komsomol members felt uneasy before looting the church as they faced the crowd of local people they knew well. The young men tried to avoid direct eye contact and replied to the questions with impatience.

In the novel itself, however, Barka offers the reader a more nuanced presentation. While reiterating the interpretation of the famine as the struggle between evil and good, Myron believes it was enabled by collectivization, when some locals joined the collectives, conformed and followed the new rules, receiving powers and guns. Likewise, the antagonist Party plenipotentiary Otrokhodin is first and foremost a careerist. He walks away from the woman he loves when she faces repressions so that the relationship would not tarnish his membership in the Party. Otrokhodin despises the peasantry but regards deployment in the country as a step to advance his career. He already dreams of the benefits of living in the capital: medals, holidays, money. Otrokhodin believes the Party line can change and prefers to stay loyal to the Party leader rather than to the ideology.

Barka also includes a perpetrator-fanatic in the action of the novel. When the Katrannyks queue for bread in the city, they hear a story of a village perpetrator who died for no apparent reason. Coming from a wealthy farmer family, he was convinced collectivization was needed to transform the peasantry and agriculture. His sudden death, presumably from a heart attack, is interpreted as a poetic justice by Katrannyk. His wife, who had previously supported his Communist beliefs and regarded the starving as guilty, now repents and turns to God.

A glimpse of the perpetrators whose motivation was primarily to follow an order is given in the detailed depiction of a house search. During the search, one of the victims, an old woman, approaches a fellow peasant guarding the finds in the cart. She pleads with him to leave food for the children. At first the man ignores the old woman, recalling to himself the orders of Otrokhodin to take even crumbs. He also remembers the orders coming from the very top, rendering the old woman's pleas irrelevant. When the woman tries to take food from the cart, he immediately knocks her down. Moreover, when collective farm workers try to chew a few grains while working in the field, the guards, who come from the same village, lash out and threaten them with arrests. They search the clothes of farmers for grain, even those who are Communists. Myron Katrannyk thinks that the fellow villagers who voted in favour of the collective farm are no better than the officials procuring grain. These followers are impersonalized by Luk'ian who always raises his arm, preferring to follow orders rather than defy them. But most victims in the novel name only one type of perpetrators – "the possessed ones from the capital city" – when explaining who was involved in the house searches.

Barka develops the character of the perpetrator-conformist further in portraying bureaucrats in the city facing starving peasants on the street. The bureaucrats carry on with their daily routines, enjoy their generous rations and make "speeches on building happiness."[83] The narrator is dismayed:

... not a single being has ever bathed in lies, like the

83 Vasyl' Barka, *Zhovtyi Kniaz'* (Kyiv: Naukova Dumka, 2008), p. 162.

Red Party. … Whoever dared to disagree or appeal to conscience is savaged at once.[84]

When a group of civil servants see Myron overhearing them discussing food, they swiftly finish their conversation as he is not one of "them." They express a disgust at the starving. Indignant at the sights of bread queues in the city, they blame the peasantry for the famine. Eventually, the bureaucrats become immune to the suffering and death. Myron observes newspaper employees ignoring a corpse of a dead woman in a puddle of mud when they come out to smoke outside their office. The corpse has been lying there for many days.

Finally, Barka also alludes to characters who do not follow orders and try to help the victims. A Party official, Zinchenko, allows peasants to mow hay in the park; he is swiftly replaced by a more vigilant Communist. Likewise, the head of the local collective farm advises artisans to flee the village and fears a tragic end for himself. Like Dimarov, Barka mentions a secretary of the RPK who commits suicide after the orders from Moscow, thus vesting agency back in the Kremlin. Myron and a village accountant happen to be nearby at the time and read the note of the deceased, who viewed the orders as the death sentence for the village and refused to execute them. Together with the accountant, Myron concludes that at least this person was honest "in their own way". While he presents various types of perpetrators and their motives, Barka repeatedly underscores throughout the novel that Moscow is the site of a concentration of evil that "takes blood,"[85] with most perpetrators portrayed in yellow and grey as servants of the Yellow Prince.

84 Vasyl' Barka, *Zhovtyi Kniaz'* (Kyiv: Naukova Dumka, 2008), p. 163.
85 Ibid., 106.

Post-Soviet Ukrainian Prose

The number of novels based on the Holodomor in Ukraine has been steadily increasing since 1991. Three novels in particular have received, or were nominated for, prestigious awards in Ukraine: *Chorna Doshka* (The Black Board, 2014) by Natalka Doliak; *Rozkolote Nebo* (The Broken Sky, 2015) by Svitlana Talan[86]; and *Tema dlia Medytatsii* (The Theme for Meditation, 2004) by Leonid Kononovych.[87] Other recent works present readings of the Holodomor perpetrators in line with these three prominent works.[88]

Chorna Doshka is a story of a perpetrator-turned-victim Oles' Ternovyi in a village of Veselivka. His diary is re-discovered by his great-grandson Sashko whose name stresses the trans-generational connection between the famine and today (both names derive from Oleksandr). Sashko also has nightmares about the starving peasants whom his great-grandfather had seen in real life. In the end of the novel it is revealed that Sashko is also the offspring of another perpetrator in Veselivka. The name of the novel highlights the experience of the village on the so called "black board," when a number of repressive measures were applied until the fulfilment of the grain procurement quota. These measures included the withdrawal of all vital supplies like matches, salt and gas as well as preventing the inhabitants from leaving the village. At the end of 1933 Veselivka ceased to exist.

Doliak starts with ideological perpetrators:

86 Both novels received special awards 'Publisher's Choice' at the competition *Koronatsiia Slova* in 2014, http://koronatsiya.com/peremozhci-konkursu-koronaciya-slova-2014/
87 This novel was nominated for the prestigious Shevchenko Award in 2006, http://www.umoloda.kiev.ua/number/611/164/22116/
88 H. Marchuk, *Try Doli* (Kyiv, 2012); Loboda, *Vidlunnia* (Lviv, Kal'variia, 2010).

a reporter from the district newspaper Oles' and a head of the local village council Palamarchuk. They both become disillusioned with the state policies, though at first they justify the violence of collectivization. Oles' listens to the instructors from Russia, thinks in Russian, yet persuades his parents to join the collective farm for rather banal reasons: "you have to do what you are asked to do...The times are such …"[89] Doliak briefly mentions that Oles' and Palamarchuk are members of the search brigades and dekulakized the peasants, Oles' also keeps the belongings he confiscates on behalf of the state. Deployment to procure grain in his own village becomes a turning point. He stays with his parents, loses his ration as a reporter, confronts local officials and eventually finds himself in a mass grave. At the same time, Palamarchuk writes a letter to the top authorities about the policies leading to the famine for which he is arrested and shot dead. While the narrator refers to them as the initial true believers, they also display the qualities of conformists and profiteers.

The second type of perpetrator – the sadists and criminals – is represented by the chekist Kaliuzhnyi. He hates peasants, tortures them and rapes a reporter. In his activities he is joined by two DPU servicemen: Mark Mil'man and his Russian colleague Vesna. They are assisted by many locals: the chairman of the collective farm Hil'ko, the head of the local KNS Zabolotnyi and a Russian Party plenipotentiary Vladimir. Doliak also mentions a power thirsty sociopath and drunkard Hrishka. She stresses the Russian ethnicity of some perpetrators, poor command of the Ukrainian language, previous criminal past and alcohol addiction. In fact, it is only Kaliuzhnyi who speaks Ukrainian fluently. Thus the language becomes a marker for the perpetrator. Most of them wear black leather jackets and thus are referred to as *chornoshkuri* (black-skins) by the victims. Shkandrij regards perpetrators wearing black leather jackets as an additional tool to make the violence "psychologically palatable to perpetrators and observers alike."[90]

The figure of the ethnically alien Other is further developed with the character of Mark Mil'man who had worked in other districts in Kharkiv oblast' before coming to Veselivka. While in the Soviet prose on collectivization Jews are in the background and a similar character could be found only in *Chotyry Brody* (Stupach with his "Byzantine eyes," beautiful looks and unflinching ways), post-Soviet prose is abundant with Jews as chief perpetrators on the ground. Doliak's Mark Mil'man is also "a man with Asian cheek bones"[91] who murders children in front of their parents as a form of torture and enjoys the benefits his position offers. Mil'man is extremely sadistic: on one occasion he accuses a peasant of anti-semitism for which that person is later tortured to death; on another occasion he throws two women into an enclosure with a bull for entertainment. This reading of the Chekist is not new. In 1923 Vynnychenko described a typical Chekist as a Jew coming from a traditional milieu of a small town. Jewish petty bourgeoisie and intelligentsia joined the Party ranks or the army in their struggle to survive during the post-revolutionary period. He traced the fury of the unflinching Jewish Chekist to his experience of desperate unemployment and pogroms when his family was likely to be brutally murdered and their property stolen. Thus the Chekist took part in grain requisition

89 Doliak, *Chorna doshka*, p. 53.

90 M. Shkandrij, *Jews in Ukrainian Literature…*, p. 149.

91 Doliak, *Chorna doshka,* p. 289.

of the early 1920s which contributed to establishing the link between Jews and Communists in popular perception in the village.[92] While the presence of Jews within the Party and the Cheka and its successors was indeed large between in the 1920s,[93] making their participation disproportionate to their part in the general population, the number of Ukrainians in the Soviet administration began to increase consistently from late 1920s.[94] Making up about a third of the Communist Party (Bolshevik) of Ukraine and their involvement in less than popular enforcement policies might explain the impression that the Jews were behind the collectivization and the famine that followed. Shkandrij also traces identification of the Bolshevik literary figure with the Jewish commissar to the redeployment of the rhetoric of militant Bolshevism in the late 1920s, when these popular perceptions of the Jewish-Bolshevism connection were reinforced.[95]

Additionally, there is a group of compromised perpetrators – the local youth: Oktiabryn, Lavryn, Sirozhunia and Maladyk girls who disown their parents; pioneers from a local school who take part in public harassment of individual farmers. As a vulnerable perpetrator Oktiabryn has an emotional breakdown after attacking a former friend. The victims express ambiguity in judging their participation:

[…] *scooped children up and stuffed their brains with tales* […] *When you take each of them separately, there is nothing wrong with them, boys like boys.*[96]

The rest of the perpetrators are mentioned briefly or collectively like *groups of chanting pioneers* that verbally abused dekulakized peasants. While the narrator explains that from 1932 expropriations were carried out by people sent to the village from all parts of the USSR, the victims in the novel comment on them being local: "People are ours [local], yet something changed them in such a way."[97] None of the perpetrators benefit from their participation. Moreover, all of them, except Oles', are punished: become insane, repressed by higher authorities, commit suicide or are killed like Kaliuzhnyi.

Lastly, Doliak mentions another group of perpetrators, albeit obliquely. This group includes perpetrators who do not display pleasure in participation, nor receive substantial benefits. They follow orders. This group includes a local teacher, Anna Serhiivna, who humiliates children of individual farmers at school and a local doctor, Lanovs'kyi, who does not state starvation in the death certificates. They are joined by a local perpetrator, Kyrylo Perekotypole, who at some point questions the local perpetrators' own safety in the forthcoming events. The surname of Perekotypole translates as "tumbleweed" which could be interpreted as his lack of commitment to the village. According to other characters, Kyrylo travelled the country searching for an easy fortune and returned home with nothing. He is not directly involved in violence during the searches, but still contributes to the famine by assisting the logistics of the famine.

Another novel in the post-Soviet prose on the

92 Shkandrij, *Jews in Ukrainian Literature...*, pp. 143-144.
93 Leonard Schapiro, *Russian Studies* (New York: Viking, 1988), p. 286.
94 Shkandrij, *Jews in Ukrainian Literature...*, p. 141.
95 Ibid., pp. 140-142.
96 Doliak, *Chorna doshka*, p. 145.
97 Ibid., p. 136.

Holodomor is *Rozkolote Nebo* by Svitlana Talan, which follows a young woman, Varvara, and her family through collectivization and the famine. *Rozkolote Nebo* is a chronicle of industrious farmers losing their fortunes and lives. Talan draws a striking distinction between antagonists and protagonists, which makes a panoply of perpetrators similar to the one in *Chorna Doshka.* The first type of the perpetrator is that of a repentant ideological perpetrator – Kuz'ma Shcherbak. He is the head of the local Party cell. Having worked in the city, he is sent to his native village of Pidkopaivka as a plenipotentiary to set up a collective farm and help with grain procurement. Though Kuz'ma is a staunch Communist, he believes in voluntary, non-violent collectivization and questions the orders from above. During the dekulakization of Varvara's father he calmly explains that resistance leads to further repressions. Kuz'ma shows pain at seeing peasants suffering and dying; he condemns the abuse of power by some officials. Unable to change anything, he distributes food to the peasants which leads to his arrest and death.

The officials working alongside Kuz'ma are two former poor peasants: a Red Army veteran and collective farm chairman, Semen Stupak, and the head of the village council, Maksym Zhab'iak. At first the author characterizes them as honest and respectable people based on their reputation in the village. Soon their motives for holding key positions become questionable when they accept a bribe from Varvara's father and profit from dekulakizing their neighbours. For example, Stupak takes a cow from his neighbour Odarka, a widow with six young children whose foodstuffs have been confiscated already. Only one child in that family survived. Though Stupak and Zhab'iak seem to be profiteers, they gain little, Stupak is murdered whereas the new chairman of the collective farm secures food for the farm canteen in order to organise a sowing campaign in early 1933.

The main perpetrators – the DPU servicemen Ivan Lupikov and Hryhorii Bykov – represent several groups: conformists, sadists, profiteers and the savage, the savage, ethnically alien Other. Lupikov believes the ends justify the means and quotes Stalin: "You cannot make an omelette without breaking the eggs."[98] Though he is often confused by information disseminated from the top, he never fails to follow orders. In November 1932 Ivan is joined by Bykov. A self-described fanatic, he explains that only tough young people should take part in house searches as local Komsomol organise into search brigades. He also uses metal rods to reveal the grain hidden underground and leverages the orders to confiscate all food. He tortures peasants and is abusive to the activists. Bykov is a link between the district and the village level in the vertical chain of perpetration. He uses extreme violence and benefits personally. Together with Lupikov he represents the Other.

Seemingly there are no ordinary people among the local perpetrators. They are the idle, drunks and local criminals, most of whom are known for their deviant behaviour prior to collectivization. One of the search brigade members is Hanna, who used to work for Varvara's family. Now a Komsomol, she resents her previous social inferiority and seeks retribution. Hanna wears a red scarf and a black leather jacket given to her by Bykov. Her attire is the literary vogue for violence and in defiance of gender expectations of the conservative village society. Hanna becomes promiscuous and sexually abusive and even

98 Talan, *Rozkolote nebo*, p. 62.

urinates in front of the victims into the food that she cannot confiscate. Once all supplies in the village are exhausted, Bykov takes her jacket back as he leaves the village while Hanna dies from malnutrition.

A special role among the village perpetrators, however, is reserved for a quisling son. In the same way as Maksym in *Maria*, Varvara's brother Mykhailo disowns and evicts his parents. During the eviction his mother commits suicide. Like in *Maria,* his parents question themselves why their son rebels against traditions and does not want to till the land. Mykhailo benefits from participation and hopes his children will move to the city. Like Maksym, Mykhailo is murdered. Clearly a profiteering type of local perpetrator, this character is nevertheless described as alien to the village community and its rules and, therefore, is removed from the village. Nevertheless Mykhailo is just one of the locals that confiscates food and reports their neighbours.

Finally, Talan uses poetic justice for all perpetrators in the novel. Firstly, the travelling musician Danylo claims that those "without God" will be punished. A similar prophecy was expressed by the local priest shortly before the church is closed down. Some of the antagonists are murdered while others die from illness. Like Doliak, Talan describes the famine in its entirety: dekulakization and deportation of individual peasants, closure of a local church, violent requisition of grain and foodstuffs, various survival strategies, mental breakdown, rape, child abandonment, necrophagy, cannibalism, suicide and murder. So many aspects to factor in by post-memory writers requires consulting secondary works, archival documents and oral history, thus producing an example of cultural memory par excellence. This example, however, avoids representation of the largest group of perpetrators – ordinary people.

The novel *Tema dlia medytatsii* by Leonid Kononovych offers a new take on the Holodomor perpetrator – their life after the famine.[99] As the survivors and the perpetrators continue to live in the same village, Kononovych suggests, the past events shape their lives. In particular, the murder of Iur's grandfather during the Holodomor has long-term implications for his family. Orphaned at a young age and raised by his widowed grandmother Chakunka, Iur constantly reminds the local officials of the murder they committed. At university he gets involved with the dissidents, is interrogated by the KGB, loses his love and lives in exile. Upon returning from the Serb-Croat war he is convinced that his family's incompatibility with the local establishment lies in the past. He tracks the surviving and now dying activists only to realize that the problem primarily is the regime rather than the individual perpetrators.

The novel is written in a form of meditation by the protagonist during which he tries to make sense of his life. The absence of a chronological sequence and the narrator's shift from one episode to another without any warning reveals a trauma in post-memory of the Holodomor. Moreover, gaps in the sentences are the main pointers in such narratives of traumatic past.[100] This new format of the Holodomor novel also resembles that of the French existentialists, which Kononovych has been translating into Ukrainian. In particular, like the protagonist in Sartre's story, *The Wall,* set amidst the Spanish Civil War, Iur deals

99 Leonid Kononovych, *Tema dlia medytatsii* (Lviv: Kalvaria, 2004).

100 Michael Pickering and Emily Keightley, 'Trauma, discourse and communicative limits,' *Critical Discourse Studies,* no 6 (2009).

with the traumatic experience from temporal and spatial distance. In both cases the main characters rise above the fear of violence and local perpetrators, and the feeling of loss but are unable to resume their previous lives. Before reaching that stage, however, Iur tries to trace the perpetrators – an exercise that becomes a jigsaw puzzle in the 1990s: Iur remembers his family mentioning various names as the victims always spoke of them, albeit in passing. Iur learns about them as a child from Chakunka who constructs his post-memory. She calls them Bolsheviks and "bad people." In the 1960s, when Iur randomly asks her who are the "most important" people while thinking about the lyrics from a famous song, Chakunka names the activists and calls them "not good people" and "parasites" who destroyed their family.

First, there are profiteers. It is a local family of Stoians that played a central role in the village during the famine and in Iur's life. The eldest Stoian was a friend of Iur's grandfather; together they joined Petliura's forces during the Civil War. Consequently Stoian switched sides, took part in collectivization and facilitated the murder of Iur senior. His son became the head of the village council and his grandson reported on the dissidents (and Iur) to the KGB in the 1970s. Stoian the grandson argues that Soviet rule is, in effect, the rule of ordinary people and he urges Iur to conform. The Stoians kept key positions locally long after the Holodomor and the collapse of the USSR.

Secondly, there is a large group of sadists. In the novel these activists are four attractive women – Dziakunka, Bovkunykha, Chykyldykh and Stepa Ivashchenko. They enjoy conducting house searches, humiliating their victims as well as torturing and murdering them. For instance, Stepa burned heels, gauged the eyes out and stabbed the peasants who did not meet the grain quotas. While trying to understand their motives, Iur recalls that Dziakunka is mentally unstable, Bovkunykha was promiscuous and Stepa's sexual frustration developed into psychosis. Based on his observations, Iur concludes that between 30% to 40% of the activists were mentally ill, even before the famine and their aberrant behaviour became the new norm. Iur also posits that young, beautiful women were the cruelest of all because they "refused to fulfil traditional female roles of housekeeping and childbirth and became the activists instead."[101] Having compared the female activists of the 1930s with female Komsomol members of the 1970s, Iur adds that it was their sexual frustration that eventually made them participate and resulted in their mental breakdown.

This explanation of female perpetrators is not new. Violent women are often portrayed in the media and literature as abnormal, insane maniacs who are often more cruel than their male counterparts. Sjoberg and Gentry argue that the portrayal of female perpetrators in the media and literature is reduced to "mothers, monsters or whores."[102] They either deny their womanhood or abuse their sexuality. As the traditional rural community celebrated nurturing, virtuous and restrained women, female participation in mass violence during the Holodomor did not fit in that worldview. While ordinary women too can commit horrendous crimes and physically or sexually abuse and kill for the same reasons as men,[103] Iur sees them as mentally or sexually disturbed women.

Finally, Iur reveals the largesors – seemingly

101 Kononovych, *Tema dlia medytatsii*, p. 220.
102 Laura Sjoberg and Caron E. Gentry, *Mothers, monsters, whores – women's violence in global politics* (London: Zed Books, 2007), p. 98.
103 Smeulers, 'Female perpetrators,' p. 207.

ordinary people. One of them, Bahrii, was a former plenipotentiary who was in charge of the search brigades and after the famine became the headmaster in the village school. He has an ordinary house, suffers from age-related illnesses and sees no sense in establishing a higher moral ground for either side. Bahrii explains his participation by the circumstances. While we know that he killed at least three people on his own initiative in 1933, he interprets the past as a necessary evil. In fact, his narrative is similar to Iur's: only the perpetrators are the victims. That is, he recalls Iur's grandfather killing many Communists who had large families. He stresses that Iur's grandfather was not popular in the village and over 40 people were involved in rounding him up. Thus he implies a large number of locals among perpetrators. Bahrii quotes other people in the village accusing Iur of causing trouble by looking into the past. Iur understands that with perpetrators entrenched in the state machine and with a silent acceptance of the masses, his country still remains the hostage of its gruesome past.

To compensate for the absence of justice, the author turns to poetic justice as well as the cases of brutal revenge done to the local perpetrators after the famine. While Stoian senior dies of alcoholism, all but one female perpetrator become mentally ill. Bovkunykha is torn apart by the Soviet partisans when fleeing with the retreating Germans during the the Second World War. One of the partisans was Pavlo, whom she threw out in the snow with his three siblings in 1933. As all his brothers died from hypothermia, Pavlo thanked God for the chance to exact revenge. Poetic justice extends to the children of the perpetrators too – Dziakunka's son became a thief and died from drug addiction while Stoian's grandson dies in a car crash. Other perpetrators are killed or commit suicide like Hordii who buried many starving peasants alive. The author also places the guilt of perpetrators escaping the justice with the survivors. Eventually Iur argues the village perpetrators do have agency as they were all born in the same small thatched village huts as the victims.

Conclusion

This article has demonstrated that most Ukrainian novels operate with a narrow understanding of perpetrators of the Holodomor on the ground, characterizing agency as either embraced (as fanatics) or displaced (as foreign Others). The militant Bolshevik writing from 1928 to 1933 focuses on a war in the countryside that demands action and a suspension of compassion and critical thinking. In accordance with the official position on collectivization, the rank-and-file perpetrators are fanatics, eager to transform the countryside at all costs. War is the dominant metaphor; the village is backward; traditionalist ways need to be upturned like the soil in the boundaries between the fields of individual farmers. They are the village Komsomol, KNS members, emancipated village women and Party plenipotentiaries who sometimes come from outside Ukraine but mostly come from within the republic. As we have seen, many characters are based on the actual perpetrators.

At the same time, writers in the Ukrainian diaspora and in independent Ukraine stress the Otherness of the perpetrators. They tend to be Russians or Jews. Even if the perpetrators of the Holodomor are locals, they do not truly belong to the village. They are quisling sons, profiteers or people known for their deviant behaviour who later face poetic justice. While oral memory sources describe brigades being

drawn mainly from local residents, in these novels, they speak Russian, have Asian facial features or come from the city. *Samvydav* and *tamvydav* novels, however, offer a more nuanced picture of the men and women on the ground. Grossman, Dimarov and Hutsalo avoid totalising narratives. All three writers explore various groups of perpetrators within a wider context, examining their motivation and actions and considering the ways that they make sense of their experience. The number of Russian-speaking characters in their novels reflect the number of Russian-speaking Communists among district officials at the time. By and large the rank-and-file perpetrators of the Holodomor in the novels of Dimarov, Hutsalo and Grossman are ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances. In post-Soviet prose, meanwhile, Ukrainian writers continue to grapple with the sensitive issue of local perpetration, offering a prosopographical reading of the perpetrators as the savage Other or village outcasts while mentioning other groups of perpetrators obliquely.

About the author

Daria Mattingly is a lecturer in Soviet History at the University of Cambridge where she has recently submitted her doctoral thesis. This interdisciplinary examination of the identities, activities and memorial traces of the rank-and-file perpetrators of the 1932-33 famine in Ukraine won Daria the Best Doctoral Paper Award at the ASN World Convention, at Columbia University, in 2015. Mattingly is also a convener of a research group, Places of Amnesia, at University of Cambridge. Her interests include European history since 1890, cultural history and perpetrator studies.