

Mastering the Siege. Ideology and the Plot of the Leningrad Blockade and the Warsaw Uprising in Adamovich and Granin, and Białoszewski

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Master narratives of the relief of major cities can find their counterparts in particular individual accounts of the same events. Whereas the former tend to be 'monologic' and are characterized by an 'epic' plot, the latter may display features of 'polyphony' and plotlessness. Works by Adamovich and Granin, and by Białoszewski, serve as illustrations.

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Introduction

Some of the most salient narratives of suffering in Slavic cultures were born out of the traumatic experiences of the Second World War. A particular 'subgenre' is created by accounts of the relief of major cities that were besieged or captured by the Nazis. What these narrative representations of the Leningrad Blockade, the Battle of Stalingrad, and the Warsaw Uprising seem to share is that they sustain a single, ideologically hegemonic 'master narrative' ('metanarrative'), and its dominant discourse of collective suffering.

By putting the heroic resistance, the enormous number of innocent casualties, and other 'proofs of the enemy's badness' into a story plot, one can rather easily stress the heroism of the besieged on the one hand and the wickedness of their Nazi opponents on the other. The propagandistic material that such a (master narrative) plot intervention produces appears

in almost every war context, irrespective of place or time. What gets lost in this process, then, is the expression of the rather 'anti-ideological' feelings of loss and pain which have been experienced by so many victims. These concrete personal losses often do not fit in easily with the existing master narratives, and 'plotlessness' seems to be a logical consequence of doing justice, giving voice to such de-ideologized, traumatic feelings.

In the present article, we address this issue from a Bakhtinian point of view. More specifically, we claim that these Slavic master narratives of the relief of major cities, originating in the strongly ideologized Second World War and displaying a 'mission plot,' may find their counterparts in particular individual accounts of the same atrocities. Whereas the former are predominantly 'monologic' and characterized by an 'epic' plot, the latter may display features of 'polyphony' and plotlessness. In order to illustrate our hypothesis, we have selected two examples of texts from the communist period that both purport to challenge the monologic and epic master narrative, and are at the same time remarkably different: *The Blockade Book* (*Blokadnaia kniga*, 1977–1981), a journalistic tour de force by Ales Adamovich and Daniil Granin, and Miron Białoszewski's intimate literary sketch *A Memoir of the Warsaw Uprising* (*Pamiętnik z powstania warszawskiego*, 1970).

Mastering the Siege: Monologic Plot *versus* Polyphonic Plotlessness

The Warsaw Uprising was started by the Polish Home Army (*Armia Krajowa*) on 1 August 1944 at 5:00 p.m. under rather ambiguous historical circumstances: the Germans had begun to retreat from Poland, the Red Army was approaching from the East, and it seemed to be just a matter of time until the besieged Polish capital would be liberated. Apparently intended to last only a few days in order to legitimize the Polish government-in-exile or at least restore its waning influence, the Warsaw Uprising would continue for sixty-three days due to the unexpected passivity of the Soviets and the belated support by the Allies. Approximately 20,000 insurgents and up to 200,000 civilians were killed whereas some 700,000 inhabitants were expelled from the city, which was later systematically destroyed by the Nazis until it practically ceased to exist. The Leningrad Blockade, for its part, though it took place under radically different circumstances, led to an even bigger tragedy: approximately 1 million residents were killed or starved out during the 872 days of the siege, 1.4 million civilians were evacuated, not to mention the hundreds of thousands of military casualties. Between 8 September 1941 and 27 January 1944 Leningrad almost

constantly had to endure bombings and fires, which caused serious damage to the city's infrastructure.

Together with the Battle of Stalingrad, the Leningrad Blockade and the Warsaw Uprising are known as the most lethal urban combats of the Second World War. Moreover, these battles took place in some of the most emblematic cities of the twentieth century, and after the communist take-over in Poland, each of them was located behind the Iron Curtain. Not surprisingly, all three traumatic events gave birth to all sorts of narrative representations even before fighting had stopped. This process was, of course, seriously influenced by the changing political context, as a result of which all major 'voices' or 'characters' (the Soviets, the Nazis, the partisans, the communists, the military leaders, the common soldiers, the civilians, etc.) took on an extremely 'ideologized' guise in the respective narrative accounts. With the passage of time and the increase of the number of narrative accounts, the representation of each of these battles gave birth to a particular 'master narrative' in which a reliable account of the traumatic experiences of loss and pain tended to be subordinate to the official discourse of heroism and martyrdom. As a result, a 'mythology of suffering' came into being, which not only facilitated the shaping of national and/or ideological identities but also seriously influenced the process of individual memory and its representation.

Of course, postwar circumstances in Poland were quite different from those in the Soviet Union. Although accounts of the Leningrad Blockade were initially suppressed by Stalin, they could easily be incorporated into the 'master narrative' of the 'Great Fatherland War' by his successors, who used the "cult of the war" (cf. *infra*) to legitimize their power. The 'narrativization' of the Warsaw Uprising, on the other hand, was perpetually halted or at least seriously distorted by the communist authorities. As the insurrection was raised by the Home Army and supported by the London-based government-in-exile, it was unimaginable that its tragic heroism would play any role in the evolving 'master narrative' of the People's Republic and its 'colonial' image of the Soviets as liberators of the nation. As soon as the communists had seized power, Polish authorities either remained silent about the Uprising or they accused the insurgents of having started a hopeless undertaking and even of having collaborated with the Nazi enemies. From the 1960s onwards, the leaders of the insurrection and their political allies in London were still to be treated as traitors, but mentioning the brave soldiers of the Home Army and their heroic resistance was no longer forbidden. Until 1989, however, the honor of official commemorative activities (such as monuments, celebrations, etc.) was exclusively done for the soldiers of the Red Army and

the Soviet-backed People's Army (*Armia Ludowa*). This notwithstanding, narrative representations of the Warsaw Uprising did emerge, and even if it was not always easy to mention the role of the Home Army, and even impossible to question the passivity of the Red Army, a kind of stealthy mythologization took place.¹ Together with the 1939 courageous defense of the city against the invading Nazis and the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943, the 1944 insurrection contributed to the Myth of Warsaw, that is, the glorification of Warsaw's heroic resistance to and rapid reconstruction after the (almost successful) German attempts to completely annihilate the city. Having become an important point of reference for the supporters of Solidarność in the early 1980's (a *GegenErinnerung* in their fight with communism, cf. Altrichter),² the Warsaw Uprising had to wait until 1989 in order to freely grow into a powerful master narrative, a process which reached its peak in 2004, when the sixtieth anniversary of the insurrection was celebrated with the inauguration of the Warsaw Uprising Museum.

With regard to the remembrance of the Leningrad Blockade, the omnipresence of the myth of the 'Hero City' gave birth to another quite remarkable phenomenon. Lisa Kirschenbaum urges caution about "the complicated interweaving of the political and the personal in stories of the blockade" (5). More specifically, she stresses the persistence of the myth, both in official and individual accounts, to such an extent that even "long after the Soviet collapse, the images, tropes, and stories of the state-sanctioned cult of the war continued to show up in the oral and written testimonies of blockade survivors – *even survivors who were generally unsparing in their attacks on the Soviet state*" (4; our italics). In other words, whereas the 'master narrative' of the Warsaw Uprising has developed in spite of (and maybe even thanks to) communist attempts at distorting it, the myth of the Leningrad Blockade has continually strengthened under Soviet control, notwithstanding the many accusations of unsuitable Soviet tactics during the siege. In both cases, however, each subsequent propagator of the 'master narrative' either consciously or unconsciously reinforces its role in the shaping of a collective discourse of national and/or ideological identity, to the detriment of the individual expression of more personal, 'anti-ideological' feelings of loss and pain.

In describing the 'narrativization' of the relief of major cities during the Second World War as an ideological process, Mikhail Bakhtin's corresponding terms 'monologic' and 'dialogic' appear to be extremely fruitful. A text is monologic when it represents merely one 'voice,' thus serving as a useful medium for a dominant group (voice) in society. In his essay 'Discourse in the novel' (1935), Bakhtin relates the unitary perception of truth, typical of monologic texts, with the centripetal force in language.

Evidently, the highly ideologized texts that serve as the mouthpiece for the master narratives, with their concentrated, unified meaning, make use of this centripetal force.³ Since dialogically interacting ideas are out of the question in monologically fixed texts, that which is done, said, or thought by the ‘good guys’ is considered good from the point of view of the reigning ideology, while that which the ‘bad guys’ do, say, or think shows unambiguously how things must *not* be.

Within European literary history, monologic texts are usually associated with the products of ‘premodern’ literature. Here the recent work of the Bakhtin-inspired scholar, Bart Keunen, may be of special interest. Classifying the vast corpus of (Western) European monologic literature, Keunen departs from what he calls ‘plot-spaces.’⁴ Monologic narratives share a static tension arc, that is, a tension arc in which states of equilibrium alternate with states of conflict. The first of Keunen’s three possible teleological plot types is the *mission* plot-space;⁵ here the plot starts from the condition of equilibrium (balance, rest, order), shifts to the state of conflict (turmoil, disorder, chaos), and at the end again returns to balance. This plot type is particularly epic because the condition at which the plot is aiming immediately after the conflict comes into play is nothing but the state of (‘monologic’) equilibrium. In Mikhail Kheraskov’s *Rossiad* (1779), for example, a Russian classicistic epic about the campaign under Ivan IV to seize the Tatar stronghold of Kazan in 1552, this mission plot is clearly displayed. The fall of Kazan, with which Ivan’s expedition ends, is the state of rest at which the plot is aiming.⁶

The master narratives which have their origin in the troubled days of World War II indeed evoke more recent sieges, but with regard to their plot type, they do not substantially differ from an epic ‘predecessor’ like Kheraskov’s *Rossiad*. The ‘epic’ missions to be fulfilled – keeping Leningrad (Soviet) Russian and keeping Warsaw Polish – perfectly match the presupposed states of ideologized equilibrium on which such master narratives need to live. Due to their ‘monologized’ line-up, it is unimaginable, at least in theory, that those who are responsible for the pain of the ‘good guys’ (caused during the state of conflict) can vary from the antagonistic group of ‘bad guys’. Voices trying to question the allocation of turmoil and pain to the latter simply cannot be heard within these monologic epic plots.⁷

In dialogic narratives, on the other hand, *different* voices and contexts can be traced because in these kind of texts *various* ideological positions truly get a chance and sometimes even come into conflict with each other, thus generating what Bakhtin calls ‘polyphony.’⁸ As a result, polyphonic texts serve as a far less ‘ideologizable’ instrument for conveying master narratives. Whereas the determination of a univocal ideological basic idea

is facilitated by the centripetal force of language, it is impeded by its centrifugal tendency.⁹

With regard to the plot, dialogic tension arcs cease to be static as it becomes unclear if (some of the) events should be considered as representing/ causing equilibrium/ conflict. What we come across in more polyphonic narratives is a more or less unsolvable confrontation, frequently a clash, between (moral) judgments. The less such a confrontation ends in a solution, a state of (inner) equilibrium, the less such narratives display a (clear) plot. In this case, no matter how many ideological voices might be represented in the narrative, it will be impossible to point out a dominant one. Following Franco Moretti (7–8), when dealing with polyphonic (or dialogic) plots, we may distinguish between (*Hegelian*) *classification plots* and (*Darwinian*) *transformation plots*. While the former designate plots which *in the end* show a more or less harmonious merging or putting into perspective of the ideologies and moral norms at work, transformation plots leave the protagonist(s) as well as the reader with skepticism about the tenability of particular norms and ideologies.¹⁰

To conclude, since dialogism does not serve single, unified ‘master’ designs, but rather allows different ideological positions, attitudes and thoughts to be at odds with each other, dialogic plots are less strongly directed, whether they are of the classification or of the transformation type. As a result, polyphonic texts often display features of plotlessness, all the more since their crucial ‘events’ operate on an interiorized (psychological) plane rather than on the action level. All of this does not mean, however, that master narratives are an unsuitable medium for representing individual pain, since personal afflictions and misery *are* indeed mitigated when given a place among the (ideologically functional) pain of one’s fellow-sufferers. This notwithstanding, we claim that accounts or depictions of personal trauma that do not merely want to go along with the monologized conceptions of ‘good versus bad’ and/or ‘the one-idea mission’ will be more convincing if they pursue, or simply allow, polyphony and plotlessness.

Ales Adamovich and Daniil Granin’s *A Book of the Blockade* (1977–1981)

As early as 22 June 1941, when Leningraders heard for the first time in a radio broadcast about the upcoming German invasion, a parallel to Napoleon’s 1812 campaign was drawn (Bidlack 97). In Keunen’s terms, Napoleon’s defeat, preceded by his unproductive siege of Moscow, was from a Russian viewpoint nothing but the return to equilibrium at the

end of an epic mission plot. This ‘master narrative’ of the Fatherland War (‘Otechestvennaia voina’), which was so successfully romanticized in Tolstoi’s *epic* novel par excellence, *War and Peace* (1868–1869), was now to be applied to the situation of the early 1940s. The communist state decided to label the war against the Germans the ‘Great Fatherland War’ (‘Velikaia otechestvennaia voina’), thus recognizing “that the original Fatherland War fought in 1812 against Napoleon offered useful lessons in appropriate and patriotic behavior” (Kirschenbaum 29) and, more implicitly, that comparable bravery and loyal feelings would now lead to a similar return to equilibrium as had been the case in 1812.

As a result, the Soviet-German war, which was declared sacred from the first week,¹¹ was hoped, supposed, and even designed to develop along an epic plot in which the Leningraders were invited to play a historic role. Encouraged by the media, the inhabitants were incited to consider themselves as playing a role in the epic of their Hero City (cf. Kirschenbaum 78). It is not surprising, therefore, that the literary works which were produced during the first period of the war contributed to the construction of this simplified but heartening national mythology:

The aim of such works¹² was to present the strongest possible contrast between the bestially cruel and destructive Fascist enemy and, on the other hand, the valiant, humane, and noble Russians, whose conduct was, in the literal sense of the word, exemplary: it was not, for instance, unknown for inspiring texts to be read to Soviet troops before they went into battle. Such inspirational war literature, often crudely melodramatic, is now of historical interest only. (McMillin 20)

Shortly after the Battle of Stalingrad (which ended on 2 February 1943), when the fortunes of war turned, there was an increased focus on the vicissitudes of individuals during the war, mostly soldiers (cf. McMillin 20). In a realistic work like Viktor Nekrasov’s *In the Trenches of Stalingrad* (1945), there is space to write about individual pain, although we have the impression that Nekrasov does not make the most of this opportunity.

More specifically with respect to the Leningrad Blockade, scholars have observed a tendency by Moscow-based Stalin and the Party toward trivializing the magnificent myth of Leningrad, the blockaded Hero City. In the somewhat more open climate after the leader’s death, however, a revival of the myth went hand-in-hand with Soviet propaganda.¹³ The martyrdom of the hundreds of thousands of citizens that died of starvation or by German artillery in the Hero City as well as the courage and perseverance of the survivors all found their place in a narrative that sublimated so much useless pain. In the Brezhnev period, the mere – and at times shameless – propagation of the ideologically correct master narra-

tive, more than under Khrushchev, became the norm. A case in point of this period of stagnation is Aleksandr Chakovskii's *The Blockade* (1973), in which Stalin is openly rehabilitated. The same Brezhnev era, however, also welcomed a work without precedent: *A Book of the Blockade* by the Byelorussian writer and critic Ales Adamovich (1927–1994) and the Russian writer who later became the first chairman of the Russian PEN, Daniil Granin (born 1919). The effort that both Soviet publicists made by collecting, editing, and commenting on hundreds of testimonies and interviews of survivors of the blockade was unprecedented and met with general approval in the West.¹⁴

The work consists of two clearly distinguished parts, both containing more than two hundred pages and illustrated with numerous photographs. Adamovich and Granin describe the genesis of their work as follows: “For the first part of *A Book of the Blockade* we made tape-recordings and collected stories told today [i.e. in the 1970s] by people who had come through the siege, while for the second part we mainly used diaries of the time” (*A Book* 225). The difference, however, not only lies in the textual material that has been used in the respective parts, but also has repercussions on the level of the (absence of a) plot. Testimonies that are told *after* the blockade, that is, knowing that the Soviets have won the war, can quite easily emplot the experienced starvation and pain as if it were a state of conflict on the road to victory (ideological equilibrium). We observe this in the personal story of one Liapin, who, after the siege, began to assign a role of importance to his and his fellow citizens’ pain within the ‘epic’ narrative of the Leningrad Blockade:¹⁵ “None of the blockade survivors think to themselves: we accomplished a great feat, displayed heroism. No. But over the decades those painful years have become a kind of justification of a life, a sign of civilian valour, a measure of participation in Victory. It is a feeling akin to that of a soldier of the Great Patriotic [i.e. Fatherland] War” (*A Book* 61).

In theory, a collection of oral testimonies and diaries cannot be monologic, and the intention of *A Book of the Blockade* is indeed polyphonic:¹⁶ individual struggles are central in this plotless (patch)work of diverse voices. Elaborating on their approach in the first part of the book, the editors compare themselves to the evangelists, which may be a bit far-fetched but nonetheless hints at the sphere of martyrdom in which they want to present the experienced events. Furthermore, it effectively illustrates their polyphonic intentions:

From the many first-hand accounts we have selected not only those that are similar, but *differing, diverging, even contradictory* accounts. We did not want to extract an average from them. The average is not the same as the truth.

All the four Gospels gave accounts of the same thing. Four authors describe one

and the same life, one and the same events, but each does it in his own way.
(*A Book* 213; our italics)

It is true that Adamovich and Granin could not avoid that the interviewees, like Liapin, more than thirty years after the physical and emotional afflictions deliberately connected their feelings of pain with the more heroic discourse of the master narrative. In this way, these people wanted to put a meaning on their suffering, by seeing it as a prerequisite for a subsequent state of order, equilibrium. As a result, many of the testimonies and interviews display a ‘microplot’ on their own, which in fact turns them into a series of ‘micromyths’ that together constitute the great myth of the master narrative. As Kirschenbaum states, the term ‘myth’ indeed “is meant to suggest the shared narratives that give form and meaning to the recall of past experience” (7).¹⁷

On several occasions, however, Adamovich and Granin manipulate the polyphonically conceived and presented text, and thus add clear monologic overtones to it. To begin with, they consciously avoid the extremely cruel phenomenon of cannibalism, which in such exceedingly harsh circumstances did not come as a real surprise.¹⁸ Apart from the obscuring of exceedingly painful facts, *A Book of the Blockade’s* polyphonic outlook and method are also affected by the authorial position, which, in spite of everything, endorses the master narrative, albeit not in a plain, unmistakably monologic way. A case in point can be found in the third chapter, with the intriguing (almost Bakhtinian) title ‘Wrangling voices.’¹⁹ Notice the striking dissonant voice of the son-in-law in the following extract. This man, obviously not a Petersburger, happened to be present when Adamovich and Granin were recording a blockade story as it was told by his mother-in-law, who clearly had never talked with him about this horrible subject:

“Why,” he demanded, “why did there have to be such suffering? They should have surrendered the city. To avoid all this. Why did people have to be destroyed?” The remark burst from him so simply, so naturally, with sadness for the stupidity and strangeness of what had happened in the past.

At first we did not quite understand what he had in mind. A bearded man of about 35, a worthy-looking citizen, we thought he must know the answer to his own question. Then we realised that he did not...

This theme, this argument is expressed in an open or concealed manner in various works, books and articles by a number of Western writers. How cynical and ignoble! ... it is surely true that the reason mankind today enjoys the beauties of the architectural and historical treasures of Paris, Prague, Athens and Budapest, and many other repositories of culture, that there exists today our European civilisation ... is that some people spared themselves less than others, because some defended their cities, their capitals, and their non-capitals to the last, in deadly bat-

tle, saving the future for all people. And Paris was saved for the French and for all mankind right here, in burning Stalingrad, in Leningrad... (*A Book* 26–28)

It is clear that the authorial voice dominates that of the son-in-law, who nonetheless represents a substantial part of the citizens of Leningrad.²⁰ We believe that Adamovich's military past – in 1942 he fought near Leningrad, in Pushkin (cf. *Blokadnaia* 4), today's Tsarskoe Selo – must have made him so sensitive to this aspect of the heroic master narrative.

One would expect that Adamovich and Granin would have processed the material of the second part of their book in a more neutral way. They indeed seem to hint at this when explaining their approach at the beginning of part 2:

We were interested in *sources*... We had to seek out the actual process, not a version corrected in the knowledge of victory won. The only way to find out, to discover what took place in people's hearts, was to turn to the documents of that time. The best of these were people's diaries, which made it possible to see the inner life of the diarist without the corrections that stem from hindsight. Our diarists knew nothing of the forthcoming victory. (*A Book* 224; translator's italics)

The diaries in part 2 mainly display three voices: those of the historian Georgii Kniازهev, the fifteen-year-old boy Iura Riabinkin, and the young mother Lidia Okhapkina. The effect of the authenticity of their reports²¹ would have been greater, however, if they had been represented one after the other and without any interjections by the two authors/editors. The diaries as we can read them now have been split up into fragments which are grouped chronologically or thematically (with fragments of one diarist next to those of another) and linked together by numerous authorial interpolations. Given the ideological connotation of the lines that continue the aforementioned quotation, one may have a clue as to what kind of diaries Adamovich and Granin were looking for when composing the second part of their *Book*: "They did not know whether they would survive, or what would happen to Leningrad, or to the country. They were beset by doubts, even despair, but *even at the time*, if one reads the diaries carefully, it is clear that there lived within them a faith in the *triumph of justice*" (*A Book* 224; our italics).

It would be unfair, however, to blame the authors for having deliberately looked for mission plots within the witness reports of the blockade. Georgii Kniازهev, for example, from the beginning of his account onwards, sincerely believes in a future communist society that will condemn war and be victorious at the end (*Blokadnaia* 20). Yet it is not very probable that there were no diarists who disapproved of the decisions and the ideologi-

cal directions that were chosen by the state's military and political leaders. Of course, starving people('s voices) *have* their doubts about the war events – and its outcome – and these *can* be read throughout the jumbled diary fragments; therefore, if we manage to look beyond the general ideological monologism of *A Book of the Blockade's* 'plotless' succession of microplots (cf. supra), the type of dialogic plot to look for must certainly be Moretti's Hegelian classification plot (cf. supra). In the end, voices like those of the son-in-law from the quoted fragment as well as those from the doubting diarists may and indeed do resound for their own sake. However, in the way in which Adamovich and Granin present them, they lead to a quite harmonious, ideologized, hence *pseudo*-polyphonic perspective on (or, as it were, a Hegelian synthesis of) suffering during sieges.

To summarize, Adamovich and Granin certainly reveal the darker, more painful sides of the blockade. They undeniably make readers hear different voices and thus try to cope with this national trauma instead of overtly glorifying the sufferings and purely supporting the monologic master narrative. Yet when we take into account the frequent emplotment of testimonies (from 'now' as well as from 'then') into ideological 'micro-myths,' Simmons is right when she states that "[d]espite its breadth and its disclosures, *A Book of the Blockade* falls within the valorous 'canon' of Siege history, a work of the 'thaw' variety, but restricted by the political considerations of its day and by the (perhaps resultant) editorial decisions of Adamovich and Granin" (48). In any case, the lack of *one* overall plot – partly due to this same breadth – allows to a certain degree that diverse voices are indeed given a chance, voices that reveal such disclosures and constitute an inextricable part of the *whole* story of the blockade.

That is why we would conclude here that Adamovich and Granin's (at first glance) polyphonic and (on the overall level) plotless approach *theoretically* is a right method to treat the pain of the blockade.²² In interviews that are given (so long) after the event, the master narrative simply cannot be erased because these testimonies are affected by and constructed after the monologic tendency toward myth-making that, in the case of the blockade, was present in Leningrad as early as 22 June 1941, as contemporary diary fragments demonstrate. Besides, for personal reasons, Adamovich and Granin themselves were not insensitive to the 'centripetal' force of the Hero City's epic narrative, and what is more, for political reasons they were not allowed to deviate from it too much.

Miron Białoszewski's *A Memoir of the Warsaw Uprising* (1970)

It should not be a surprise that the Warsaw Uprising, because it took place under different historical and ideological circumstances, also evoked different literary reactions than the Leningrad Blockade. In general, in all East-Central European countries with a strong resistance movement, literature has served two purposes successively: a 'performative' role during the war, in order to encourage and revive the nation, and a 'representational' one after the war, in order to legitimize those who came into power:

The communist governments ... were eager to gain popularity by promoting nationalistic poems and stories about the resistance against the Nazis. This encouragement led to a plethora of cliché-ridden works, which, nevertheless, had difficult ideological tasks to master. It was quite acceptable, for instance, to exaggerate the scope and intensity of the resistance, but ... this was not permitted to diminish the heroism and primary role of the Red Army. Furthermore, communists were to be given the leading role in the national underground and partisan movements. [T]his became a particularly sensitive issue in representations of the Warsaw Uprising, which was inspired and supported from the West. (Neubauer et al. 152)

As Neubauer et al. have demonstrated, the performative role of literature during the Uprising gave birth to all kinds of lyric poems which demanded heroic resistance and loyalty to the besieged capital from soldiers and citizens alike (155–158). After the war, then, and especially in the wake of the Polish October in 1956, "narrative reconstructions replaced lyric-poetic expressions" (158). In general, writers of narrative fiction, unlike those producing all sorts of eyewitness accounts (diaries, memoirs, etc.), rarely set out to offer factographic descriptions of the combat, probably because a traditional epic rendering of the insurgents' fierce battle against the Nazis would unnecessarily turn the highly esteemed "insurgent deed" into a bell-tristic parody (Jarosiński 202–203). At the same time, because of the complicated ideological situation in Poland near the end of and immediately after the Second World War, it proved rather difficult to deal directly with such central issues of the Uprising as the true reasons of the entire undertaking and the proportion of its heroism to its wasted sacrifice (Jarosiński 204).²³ As the authorities did everything to obscure what really happened during the last months of the Polish Underground State, the literary works that did discuss certain sensitive aspects of the Warsaw Uprising seriously influenced the way in which the insurgence (and the heroic Myth of Warsaw of which it was made part) found its place in postwar collective memory. A few authors did indeed succeed to somehow give voice to such ethical issues as the deeper sense of the Uprising or the painful postwar destiny of

the Home Army soldiers.²⁴ It remains to be seen, however, to what extent these writers did succeed in adding less ideological overtones to the evolving master narrative of Warsaw's lonely fight against the Nazi intruders. Due to their giant public success, two early literary accounts seem to be of particular interest here: Roman Bratny's *Columbuses Born in 1920* (1957) and Miron Białoszewski's *A Memoir of the Warsaw Uprising*. Whereas Bratny still more or less affirms the heroic Myth of Warsaw by stressing the patriotism of the insurgents and focusing particularly on their postwar fate, Białoszewski can be said to be the first to seriously distort the emerging master narrative of the Uprising.

Much of the critical work on the ways in which *A Memoir of the Warsaw Uprising* breaks with the norms and conventions of postwar narrative representations of the war has already been done. In her introduction to the English translation of *A Memoir*, Madeline Levine accurately summarizes existing criticism by stating that Białoszewski's work is "revisionist both in its presentation of the Warsaw Uprising and in its approach to the memoir genre" (9). On the one hand, *A Memoir* is indeed not a typical memoir because it elaborates on the devastation of the Polish capital rather than on the inner life of the writing subject. On the other hand, it is not a typical historical account of the major developments during the Warsaw Uprising either, since the writer almost exclusively focuses on the vicissitudes of the civilians, who, against the background of the decaying capital, try to survive under ever deteriorating circumstances.

Białoszewski (1922–1983) was twenty-two years old when the Uprising broke out. Like many civilians, he did partake in the defense of the city against the Germans. In his memoir, however, which he only started writing after more than twenty years, he does not seem to want to simply recall his extraordinary fate as a survivor of the city massacre. What he is struggling with is not so much what exactly happened during the sixty-three days of the siege but with the difficulty that he experiences while putting these traumatic events into shape. Throughout the entire work, all the attention of the narrator seems to be fixed on two related issues: the struggle with individual memory and the ineffability of war traumas. In an oft-quoted passage from *A Memoir*, the narrator self-reflexively discusses the fundamental problem of linguistic form:

For twenty years I could not write about this. Although I wanted to very much. I would talk. About the uprising. To so many people. All sorts of people. So many times. And all along I was thinking that I must describe the uprising, somehow or other *describe* it. And I didn't even know that those twenty years of talking (I have been talking about it for twenty years, because it is the greatest experience of my life – a closed experience), precisely that talking, is the only proper way to describe the uprising. (*A Memoir* 52)²⁵

Like many other examples of literary reflexivity, this excerpt not only describes the narrative device which is being used throughout the work in which it appears, but it is also an excellent example of such a technique because it is itself a piece of such “talking” (“gadanie”; 34). Yet, however unequivocal this metapoetic utterance may be, it should not be merely regarded as a description of the work’s style. More precisely, what is behind this reflexive comment by the narrator is an ironic attitude toward any attempt at presenting an authoritative version of what happened during the insurrection. Against the structured *langue* of the abstract master narrative, the narrator of *A Memoir* places his allegedly “only completely natural” (52), but in fact overtly artificial literary *parole*, which by its very nature can be nothing more than a reconstruction of the oral tradition of uninterrupted talking on the Uprising.²⁶ In other words, this reflexive comment is merely a part of an overall narrative strategy of opposing the centripetal force of the epic Myth of the Uprising. Unlike Adamovich and Granin, however, in this case the deconstruction of the ‘master narrative’ of the besieged city is executed from within the linguistic consciousness of the first-person narrator, and, on a metaphorical level, from within the city under siege.

First of all, the expected goal of the work – to render a reliable account of the Uprising – is permanently thwarted by the dynamics of remembering and forgetting within the narrator’s consciousness. More specifically, almost every increase of memory, which is textually represented by the Polish expression *pamiętam*, ‘I remember,’ is immediately countered by the adverb *chyba*, ‘I guess.’ As a consequence, the narrator incessantly exposes his fallibility. As Levine has correctly remarked, the first-person narrator in *A Memoir* is a “naïve observer-victim” who “does not actually reject such abstract concepts as ‘heroism,’ ‘military strategy,’ ‘international posture’; instead, they are simply outside his normal categories of thought” (15). In other words, the protagonist through whom the story is mediated is a typical anti-hero by means of which Białoszewski seeks to challenge the centripetal force of the monologic ‘master narrative.’ As his linguistic consciousness is ideologically empty, he appears to be an excellent reservoir for all kinds of ‘voices’ in which the traumatic events of 1944 are represented.

Not surprisingly, these ‘voices’ are not those of the insurgents and their Nazi enemies, whose dominant heroic discourse is most often reduced to the sound of bullets and explosions. Against the background of these monotonous noises of war, then, a whole range of suppressed ‘voices,’ both linguistic and non-linguistic, are allowed to come to the fore. Indeed, what we can see and hear through the filter of the narrator’s consciousness, as Levine (15) has suggested, are the streets of Warsaw and their decay-

ing buildings (through the repetitive and meticulous reconstruction of the city topography),²⁷ the noises of everyday life in a city under fire (through the use of onomatopoeic devices), the ‘collective’ voice of the civilians (through the interpolation of “[h]ymns, litanies, snatches of popular songs and sayings”),²⁸ the chattering that comes out of the huge shelters which are filled with people who are hiding from the bombings, all of which is blended by the narrator “with information ... gathered from newspapers, his friends, his father, and other sources” but also with occasional scraps of personal insight into the mechanism of war.

Another strategy of breaking with the heroic myth of the Uprising is by opposing its more or less straightforward ‘mission plot.’²⁹ A striking characteristic of *A Memoir* is indeed the absence of a real story plot. The story starts *in medias res* on 1 August 1944, just before ‘Godzina W’ (the ‘Outbreak’ (*wybuch*) or ‘Freedom’ (*wolność*) ‘Hour’), and ends on 11 November 1944, more than a month after the capitulation of Warsaw and the deportation of the survivors to the Reich, with the protagonist’s escape from Opole to Częstochowa and his seemingly casual (but, in fact, highly significant) closing words: “I set eyes on Warsaw again in February 1945” (232). From the beginning of his account, the narrator does everything to stop the emergence of a static tension arc. The outbreak of the Uprising is not represented as the critical stage in the shift from the state of conflict to a situation of equilibrium. On the very opening page, the narrator at once splits the story into several temporal layers: “It is twenty-three years later; I am forty-five years old now; I am lying here on my couch uninjured, alive, free, in good health and spirits; it is October, nighttime, 1967; Warsaw once again has 1,300,000 inhabitants” (19). Apart from foreboding the upcoming insurgence and its subsequent death toll, this sentence most of all suggests a particular bond between the narrator’s and the city’s existence. Indeed, what will be at stake in the story that follows is precisely the problem of doing justice to both the narrator’s traumatic memories and the tragic history of the voiceless Polish capital. The suggested state of rest of the protagonist, who is “lying ... on [his] couch uninjured, alive, free, in good health and spirits,” is in fact deeply ironic, not only because citizens of Warsaw were not particularly free in 1967 but also because the protagonist will immediately be drawn into a situation of constantly racking his memory in order to retrieve information about what happened to him, his relatives, and the city infrastructure during the sixty-three days of the Uprising.

As his focus is exclusively on the collective fate of ordinary civilians (i.e. friends and relatives as well as anonymous passers-by) against the background of the ongoing destruction of Warsaw, the narrator is constantly struggling in order to give voice to this ‘silent majority’ and their

more particular, 'anti-ideological' feelings of loss and pain. These civilians, just like the city infrastructure, have been suddenly caught by the chaos of war and as such seem to be unable to connect their immediate experiences with the evolving master narrative and its 'mission plot.' At the same time, as systematic military action is directing the insurgents toward the expected relief of the capital, ordinary inhabitants are drawn into the circular structure of night and day, cold and warmth, searching for food and hiding from fire, gathering one's belongings and moving to yet another temporary shelter. Whereas the major developments are heading toward some epic 'closure', the narrator keeps collecting "small facts" ("fakciki"; 3) around which directionless stories and random asides are emerging. Although he wants his memoir to take shape as a diary in which the events are recounted day by day, he must almost immediately admit that such temporal order is impossible. As he enters a new shelter at Rybaki Street, the narrator confesses as follows:

What else? A new, hideously long story of communal life against the background of the possibility of death began at that moment, from that entrance. What do I remember? Both a lot and a little, and not always in order or day by day. I may confuse the order of some things, the dates (even of events which were rather important, although I have several dates fixed in my mind), the positions of the fronts – ours, and the larger one. (42)

Whether it is used unconsciously or not, the metaphorical use of the verb 'to fix' – literally *murować* 'to wall' (24) – suggests a certain connection between the process of memory and the erection of buildings. Certainly, throughout *A Memoir*, the problem of narrating the Uprising is posed as an epistemological problem of mapping the process of Warsaw's destruction.³⁰ While meticulously reconstructing the city topography and its material construction (mostly through the continual enumeration of street names and building materials), the narrator is, in fact, trying to produce some order out of the chaos of the immediate experience of the decaying city. In other words, the difficulty remembering what exactly happened and when during the sixty-three days of the Uprising is paralleled by the disorderly deterioration of the city's anatomy.

In Białoszewski's novel, the work of individual memory and the living body of Warsaw indeed have a lot in common. As we have seen, the identification between the protagonist and the Polish capital (or should we say the identification between both protagonists?) is almost complete on the first page of the book. On many occasions throughout the work, what the narrator is experiencing when watching the city collapse is almost physical excitement rather than panic or grief:³¹

About the Bank under the Eagles... Well, every now and then we would go out of the barracks on Zgoda Street. Halina and I, for example. We go outside. We look at the bank and dream out loud, that if it has to burn (and it definitely has to) then may it happen before our eyes. Because, after all, it will be a sight to see. (158)

Warsaw was betraying all her secrets. Since it was she who betrayed them there is no reason to hide the fact. She was already disintegrating. Sinking. She had been sinking for one hundred years. Two hundred. Three hundred. And more. Everything showed. From top to bottom. (107)

On the last page of the book, then, the protagonist is struggling his way back to the annihilated city, as if he was a lover who is attempting to return to his beloved (cf. the closing sentence “I set eyes on Warsaw again in February 1945”). And finally, this close connection even found its way to the title of the work, in which both protagonists, Warsaw and individual memory, brilliantly merge.

As we have demonstrated, the meticulously described disintegration of the Polish capital is doubled by the decomposition of its master narrative into a fragmented, truly polyphonic, and to a large extent plotless narrative mixture of centrifugal ‘voices.’ Although the text’s polyphony appears to be deliberately constructed, the narrator is probably right when he states that this is “the only completely [or at least the most] natural device” (52) for describing the Uprising. Białoszewski represents the Uprising from the polyphonic perspective of a world which has been liberated from all absolute values which the master narrative can only reproduce. The relativism and skepticism which permeate this world bring into mind Moretti’s (Darwinian) transformation plot (cf. *supra*). This transformation of human existence and its ideological foundations in *A Memoir* has been accurately described by Andrzej Zieniewicz:

In the world after the destruction of the City, unity of personality is reached to a significantly lesser degree through the confessional gesture, and to a significantly greater degree through the opposition against all kinds of ‘processes’ and the aggressive ideologies by which they are accompanied. Instead of the ‘crowning’ composition, which is always the attribute of some – moral, religious, humanistic – equilibrium of the world, the open composition becomes predominant. (79)

To sum up, it may be said that in Białoszewski’s case, the master narrative is not so much directly put into question and replaced by “a series of ‘micromyths’” (cf. *supra*), as it is cautiously pulled down brick by brick and scattered around as a multitude of signifiers, from which competing visions of the Uprising may still emanate, none of which, however, is able to become authoritative.

Conclusion

The present article departed from the hypothesis that the Slavic master narratives of the relief of emblematic cities, which originate in the strongly ideologized Second World War and display a 'mission plot,' may find their counterparts in particular individual accounts of the same atrocities. Our aim was to demonstrate that whereas the former as a rule are 'monologic' and characterized by an 'epic' plot, the latter may still display features of 'polyphony' and plotlessness. As we have pointed out, both categories – the 'master narrative' and the individual account – should be treated together as two determining factors in the process of 'narrativizing' such traumatic experiences as these terrible city combats. More specifically, it is often unclear whether the 'master narrative' influences individual (fictional or non-fictional) testimonies or vice versa. Similar reservations should be taken into consideration when applying such Bakhtinian categories as 'monologic' and 'dialogic'/'polyphony'/'heteroglossia' to these 'texts.'

With these theoretical considerations and objections in mind, we analyzed two different examples of such presumably polyphonic texts. In *The Blockade Book*, Adamovich and Granin deconstruct the master narrative of the Leningrad Blockade into a patchwork of numerous individual testimonies. As has been demonstrated, however, a well-considered choice of represented 'voices' and the authorial comments on them still provide the individual accounts with overtones of ideology, turning them into 'micro-myths' with 'microplots.' In Białoszewski's poetic description of the destruction of the Polish capital, on the other hand, the narrator's struggle with individual memory and the ineffability of war traumas are given priority to the detriment of a real story plot. At the same time, Białoszewski focuses exclusively on the collective fate of ordinary civilians and the heteroglossic reality of their decaying capital whereas the combatants and their ideologized world are most often represented as dehumanized objects (bullets, explosions, etc.)

To conclude, when comparing both radically different attempts at opposing the evolution of a highly ideologized master narrative, it is clear that Adamovich and Granin, no matter what their objectives may have been, do not succeed in subverting the master narrative of the Leningrad Blockade, which in all its monologic simplicity appears to be very difficult to undermine. In contrast to Adamovich and Granin, Białoszewski appropriately reaches for more radical, purely artistic forms of expression; as a result, the decomposition of the master narrative is executed from within the linguistic consciousness of the first-person narrator and on a metaphorical level, from within the city under siege. In fact, what both the

examples prove is that the appearance of a dominant, highly ideologized discourse of collective suffering in Slavic cultures is not a matter of a specific Slavic and/or communist influence (as has too often been suggested), than an immediate result of the centripetal force of post-traumatic language.

NOTES

¹ Andrzej Wajda's 1957 film *Sewer (Kanał)* may serve as an interesting example here. As Norman Davies has pointed out in his exhaustive study *Rising '44 – The Battle for Warsaw* (2003), Wajda's masterpiece was most likely acceptable for the authorities due to its tragic plot, which perfectly reflected the sheer hopelessness of the insurrection. This notwithstanding, Davies continues, many viewers particularly remembered one of the crucial scenes in the film, in which some of the protagonists, in their attempt to find a way out of the Warsaw sewer system, finally reach the banks of the Vistula (Wisła), from which they are separated by a fence. Their resigned gaze at the other side of the river, he concludes, can only be interpreted as a covert critique of the passivity of the Red Army, which by then had already reached the right bank of the Vistula (523–524).

² Cf. Janion (22–25) for a discussion of the typically Polish, martyrological-messianistic 'mythology of suffering' which the Rising has revived.

³ Bakhtin commentator Pam Morris clarifies that in a monologic artistic work "ideas are either those of the authorial consciousness in which case they are affirmed or, if they do not accord with the authorial world view, they are repudiated" (qtd. in Bakhtin, Medvedev and Voloshinov 97)

⁴ Or even 'plot-space chronotopes' (Keunen, *Verhaal* 8), (here) to be equated with 'plot types.' An English translation of his Dutch study is forthcoming.

⁵ His monologic plot-spaces/plot types are: (1) the mission plot: equilibrium → conflict → equilibrium (recurrence plot); (2) the regeneration plot: conflict → equilibrium (emergence plot); and (3) the degradation plot: equilibrium → conflict (tragic plot) (Keunen, *Tijd* 22–33, *Verhaal* 51–142).

⁶ Although the epic does not literally start with Kazan being under Russian protection, such a beginning condition of order is implicit throughout the text. In the twelfth and last canto of the *Rossiad*, this implied state of equilibrium (re-)occurs: as Kazan is taken, the monologic – and thus: the ideological – order is restored.

⁷ In textual reality, though, things tend to be more complex. Even in the Middle Ages, as Ralf Schlechtweg-Jahn has pointed out, the narrative realization of purely monologic texts was in fact "impossible, since language cannot escape the contradiction of society, to which it is subordinated" (226; our translation).

⁸ It is commonly known that, for Bakhtin (see his *Problems of Dostoevskii's Poetics*, 1963), Dostoevskii's novels are highly emblematic of dialogic literature. In these novels, the consciousness of the author does not direct the voices or inner worlds of the characters, but as a matter of fact comes in a dialogic interplay with them, thus creating the polyphonic novel (see also Vice 112–114). Besides, Qian Zhongwen with good reason discusses why a character's voice, even in Dostoevskii, ultimately *cannot* clash with that of the author (787–788). This logical observation implies that purely polyphonic texts do not exist in much the same way as purely monologic narratives also do not exist (cf. Schlechtweg-Jahn, note 7). Therefore, it may be better to merely talk about *more/less* monologic/polyphonic

instead of using both adjectives in an absolute way. One could visualize this spectrum by means of a continuum between two unattainable poles: purely monologic *versus* purely polyphonic.

⁹ In his essay 'Discourse in the Novel' (1935), Bakhtin named this opposite force 'heteroglossia,' which indicates the diversity of (social) languages whereas 'polyphony' emphasizes the different characters' voices (as in the study of prose writers like Dostoevskii). With regard to the confusion between these terms, see Morris's commentary in Bakhtin, Medvedev and Voloshinov (113) and Vice (145, n. 1), where we read how both terms have been used interchangeably.

¹⁰ Because of this sceptical, sometimes even cynical view on norms and ideology, the transformation plot has been called 'tragic' (not to be confused with Keunen's *monologic* tragic, i.e. degradation plot, cf. note 5), while the classification plot, with its eventual positive perception of moral norms has been circumscribed as 'comic.' In addition, Keunen – who fruitfully applies Moretti's dialogic plots – speaks of 'tragicomic' plots with regard to narratives in which the reader is unable to figure out which of both aforementioned 'views' the narrative seems to propagate because there are no characters to identify with who allow for such a conclusion (cf. *Verhaal* 142–147).

¹¹ On 26 June 1941 Leningrad's Metropolitan of the Russian Orthodox Church, Aleksei, called the war 'sviashchennaia' ('sacred', 'holy'), curiously enough making no mention of the Soviet state and / or its leaders (Stalin in particular), cf. Bidlack (97).

¹² Examples from this first period include Mikhail Sholokhov's *The Science of Hate* and Vasilii Grossman's *The People are Immortal* (cf. McMillin 19–20).

¹³ Cf. Kirschenbaum (141–144, 186–228); witness the many national and local monuments of the Soviet war cult from Destalinization onwards, especially the gigantic Monument to the Heroic Defenders of Leningrad (1975), which is still on Victory Square in today's St. Petersburg.

¹⁴ Two years after the first English translation (1983), *A Book of the Blockade* was openly praised by Arnold McMillin as "a recent imaginative and *honest* documentary by two gifted Soviet writers [that] gives the *fullest and most realistic* account of this appalling period yet published" (21; our italics).

¹⁵ In the lines preceding the quotation, Liapin (in the English translation wrongly transliterated as "Lapin") piercingly describes the horrifying sight of some students' emaciated, yellow faces.

¹⁶ Zhongwen rightly notes that the term 'polyphony' is primarily concerned with (heroes in) fiction (779). Of course, it can be applied to nonfiction and may well suit the voices of the plethora of true-life (*journalistic*) heroes in the *Book*.

¹⁷ On the same page she rightly underlines the link between myth and plot without, however, referring to Aristotle's *Poetics* (c. 330 BC), in which the concept that modern scholars (often) call 'plot,' is nothing but the Greek word 'mythos.'

¹⁸ Two comments should be given on this absence, this 'silencing' of the 'voice' of cannibalism. First, the censors of the Brezhnev period understandingly rejected it together with the passages that mentioned crimes of the communist regime; during communism, tricky topics such as cannibalism could only be read in émigré and *tamizdat* writing (McMillin 27–28). After the collapse of the system, however, when the authors no longer needed to expect any problems with the disclosure of these crimes, they preferred to disguise the soul-crippling truth about man-eating in the blockaded Hero City. On cannibalism during the blockade, as well as on (the publication afterwards in *Zvezda*, 1992 of) the censored passages in Adamovich and Granin, cf. Kirschenbaum (231–242).

¹⁹ In Perham's translation of this title, the polyphonic connotation of 'wrangling' has actually disappeared: "Doubting Voices" (*A Book* 23).

²⁰ Especially in the first months of the blockade, a considerable number of Leningraders wanted their city to surrender, cf. Bidlack (101). The voice of the son-in-law is thus not truly autonomous; therefore, *The Book of the Blockade* cannot be called polyphonic, since “equality of utterance” (Vice 112) is not central.

²¹ Adamovich and Granin underscore the authenticity of the diaries, reassuring the reader that the only liberty that they have taken was to cut repetitions or other irrelevant information (*Blokadnaia* 20).

²² In his positively received documentary film, *The Blockade* (2006), Sergei Loznitsa uses a similar approach. Contrary to Adamovich and Granin, Loznitsa added no comment to his compilation of fragmentary segments into a plotless “anti-narrative” (cf. Youngblood 694) and thus achieved a much more ‘naturalistic’ result than that of the consciously intervening authors/editors of *A Book of the Blockade*.

²³ An extensive discussion of such issues did in fact take place in the first years after the war (i.e., between 1945 and the Stalinist turn in 1948) – be it under the guise of the more general debate on the ‘Conradian ethic’. In this discussion, the fruitless heroism of the insurgents was given a deeper sense by interrelating it with Joseph Conrad’s idea of ‘faithfulness to oneself; this idea was sharply attacked by Marxist critics such as Jan Kott (cf. Jaroński 196–197).

²⁴ Cf. Jaroński for the most complete critical overview of literary works that deal with the Warsaw Uprising, and Rakowska for an unannotated bibliography.

²⁵ All English quotations from *A Memoir* are taken from this version; all quotations from the original text are taken from the 1987 Polish edition.

²⁶ Quite remarkably, in his introduction to the first edition of *A Memoir*, Janusz Wilhelm explicitly warns the readers of the work’s peculiar literary style, which “operates with sentences that are almost exclusively elliptic: artificially broken off, artificially defective, artificially fabricated in their intended colloquiality” (5).

²⁷ Cf. Czerwińska (“Zawal’ miasta” 454–456) for an interesting parallel between topography and anatomy in Białoszewski’s poetics. In *A Memoir*, indeed, Warsaw apparently undergoes a process of anthropomorphization through the almost anatomic dissection of its topography (cf. infra).

²⁸ Throughout Adamovich and Granin’s *A Book of the Blockade*, (fragments of) poems play a comparable ‘performative’ role. Now and then, the pain and despair of the civilians are indeed mediated (by a poet’s consoling ‘voice’, esp. by poetess Olga Berggolts (*Blokadnaia* 2, 3, 25, 38), the “beloved voice of Leningrad radio” (Kirschenbaum 29) during the blockade, but also poems by Anna Akhmatova and even by Georgii Kniazev and Lidia Okhapkina, two of the diarists in part 2 (cf. supra), play an alleviating role (*Blokadnaia* 15, 27, 37 resp.).

²⁹ Although the Warsaw Uprising did not end with the relief of the Polish capital and the resultant return to balance, the master narrative story plot is clearly directed toward such an outcome, and in a more metaphorical way many Poles even seem to believe that the courageous defense of Warsaw by the Polish partisans has at least resulted in some kind of symbolic relief of the city.

³⁰ We are greatly indebted here to Nancy Ries for having suggested this idea when discussing an earlier version of our paper at the conference “The Pain of Words: Narratives of Suffering in Slavic Cultures” (Princeton University, 9–11 May 2008).

³¹ Cf. Czerwińska (“Opowiedzieć” 275) for some similar thoughts on the feelings of love or obsession by which the narrator seems to be affected when reconstructing the sixty-three days and the city topography.

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Obvladovanje obleganja. Ideologija in zgodba o obleganju Leningrada in varšavski vstaji v delih Adamoviča in Granina ter Białoszewskega

Ključne besede: literatura in ideologija / slovanske književnosti / 2. svetovna vojna / velika pripoved / Bahtin, Mihail

Nekatere najznamenitejše pripovedi slovanskih kultur o trpljenju so se rodile iz travmatičnih izkušenj druge svetovne vojne. S poročili o življenju mest, ki so jih oblegali ali zajeli nacisti, je nastal poseben 'pod-žanr'. Skupna značilnost pripovednih predstavitev blokade Leningrada, bitke za Stalingrad in varšavske vstaje se zdi to, da ohranjajo eno samo, ideološko vodilno 'veliko pripoved' ('metapripoved') ter njen prevladujoč diskurz o kolektivnem trpljenju.

Z vključitvijo junaškega odpora, velikega števila nedolžnih žrtev ter drugih 'dokazov o hudobnosti sovražnika' v zgodbo je po eni strani precej lahko poudariti junaštvo obleganih, po drugi strani pa podlost njihovih nacističnih nasprotnikov. Propagandna vsebina, ki jo oblikuje takšen poseg (velike pripovedi) v zgodbo, se pojavlja v skoraj vseh vojnih kontekstih, ne glede na kraj in čas. V tem procesu izgine izražanje 'proti-ideoloških' občutkov izgube in bolečine, ki so jih doživljale številne žrtve. Konkretno osebne izgube je pogosto težko vključiti v obstoječe velike pripovedi in zdi se, da je odsotnost zgodbe logična posledica izražanja neideologiziranih, travmatičnih občutkov.

V razpravi se tega vprašanja lotevamo s stališča Bahtina. Natančneje, trdimo, da lahko slovanske velike pripovedi o osvoboditvi pomembnih mest, ki izhajajo iz močno ideologizirane druge svetovne vojne in razodevajo 'zgodbo o poslanstvu', najdejo svoje vzporednice v posameznih osebnih poročilih o istih krutostih. Medtem ko so prve predvsem 'monološke' in jih opredeljuje 'epska' zgodba, se v drugih kažejo značilnosti 'polifonije' in odsotnost zgodbe. Da bi ponazorili svojo hipotezo, smo razčlenili dve zelo različni besedili iz komunističnega obdobja, ki se obe trudita izpodbijati monološko in epsko veliko pripoved: novinarsko mojstrovino Aleša Adamoviča in Daniila Granina *Blokadnaia kniga* (1977–1981), ter intimno literarno črtico *Pamiętnik z powstania warszawskiego* (1970) Mirona Białoszewskega. Medtem ko se prva ne more izogniti ideološkemu prizvoku, je druga radikalnejša v svoji razgradnji velike zgodbe o varšavski vstaji.

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