

Ideology Without Plot? **Adamovič & Granin, Białoszewski, and the Master Narratives** **of the Relief of Besieged Cities During WW II**

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 made up by accounts of the relief of symbolic cities that were besieged or captured by the Nazis, such as the Leningrad Blockade, the Battle of Stalingrad or the Warsaw Uprising. What all these narratives seem to share, is that they have evolved – whether or not under specific Slavic and/or communist influence – to a dominant discourse of collective suffering. As a consequence, these 'master narratives' play an important role in the shaping of (national) ideological identities.

By putting the heroic resistance, the enormous number of innocent casualties and other 'proofs of the enemy's badness' into a story plot, the heroism of the Slavs on the one hand, and the wickedness of their Nazi opponents on the other, can be stressed rather easily. The propagandist material that such (master narrative) plot intervention produces, appears in almost every war context, irrespective of place or time. What gets lost in this process of plot intervention, then, is the expression of the actual feelings of loss and pain which have been experienced by every single victim. These concrete personal losses usually 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 paper, this issue will be addressed from a Bakhtinian point of view. More specifically, we will argue that these Slavic master narratives of symbolic city reliefs, originating in the strongly ideologized Second World War and displaying a so-called 'mission plot' (Bart Keunen's term), find their counterparts in certain individual writers' accounts of the same atrocities. Whereas the former are predominantly 'monologic' and characterized by an 'epic' plot, the latter clearly display features of 'polyphony' and plotlessness. In order to illustrate our hypothesis, we will introduce two particular examples of such polyphonic texts: Miron Białoszewski's *A Memoir of the Warsaw Uprising* (1970) and *The Blockade Book* (1981) by Ales Adamovič & Daniil Granin. In Białoszewski's poetic description of the complete destruction of the Polish capital, the narrator's struggle with individual memory and the ineffability of suffering 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 their heteroglossic reality, whereas the combatants and their ideologized world are merely represented as dehumanized objects (bullets, explosions, etc.) Adamovič & Granin, for their part, deconstruct the master narrative of the Leningrad Blockade into a patchwork of numerous individual testimonies. As will be demonstrated, though, a well-considered choice of and authorial comments on the represented 'voices' may still provide the individual accounts with overtones of ideology.