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Features of the image of the psychological trauma in modern textual constructions

Abstract: The aim of this article is to research the psychological trauma of a person who has experienced extreme events and gained psychotraumatic experience. Modern humanities understand the problem of injury in several aspects. One of the topical issues is the representation of psychotraumatic events through the involvement of aesthetic experience. The relevance of this paper is due to the fact that an important component of safe human life is to solve problems related to experiencing mental trauma and healing a person from it. The leading research method was the method of analysis of research sources. Also, in the research, the authors used the method of synthesis, observation, modeling. To describe the narrative of psychological trauma, the authors set out the theoretical foundations of the toolkit. The authors' view on the negative consequences of the traumas of war in their further psychological, physiological, and social development was presented. The main ways of reflecting individual and collective traumas were also analyzed, and artistic strategies of detraumatization were pointed out. As a result of the study, generalized conclusions were formed about the role of narrative practices in the formation of the historical and individual experiences of overcoming psychological trauma.

Keywords: *Psychological disorders, Emergency situation, Psychotraumatic experience, Individual experiences*

INTRODUCTION

The problem of psychological trauma in Eastern European societies continues to be an urgent challenge for modern national strategies of self-identification. The tragic experience of World War II, the mass genocides of various ethnic groups, and the political repression of totalitarian regimes are deeply rooted in the national memory of the affected peoples (Bryan et al., 2018). Note that in the context of the analysis of issues it is necessary to distinguish between individual trauma, which involves finding destabilizing semantic configurations in the psyche of the subject, and collective trauma, the analysis of which requires consideration of sociocultural contexts in the reconstruction of the common past. In the scientific environment of the early XXI century the problem of trauma is most often considered in psychoanalytic and culturological dimensions.

The first strategy concerns the work of S. Freud and his followers (Freud, 1998; Richards, 2001; TARRIER et al., 2000; Tucker et al., 2004; Somasundaram, 2014). The Austrian

scientist focuses on trauma as the cause of the formation of neuroses in the human mind, because it leads the patient to focus on the “moment of the traumatic event” (fixation on the trauma). In general, S. Freud (1998) understands traumatic experience as events that have a strong potential to influence “irritating stimuli” on human mental life, and which “can no longer be assimilated or processed in normal ways, and the result is a long-term dysfunction of mental energy”. In considering military neuroses, S. Freud investigated the reason that complicates the role of the super-ego in traumatic neuroses. He argued that military conditions could create a “military super-ego” that not only allowed motivations prohibited in other circumstances but even seduced the ego by pushing it to actions that were in principle unacceptable to a true super-ego. According to S. Freud (1998), in many military neuroses, it turns out that the “peaceful ego” is protected from the “military super-ego”. The traumatic effect of unexpected stimulation depends on the individual who survived the incident. Both the actual situation at the moment and the whole anamnesis of the individual are important.

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At the same time, critics of the psychoanalytic approach emphasize that “trauma” has turned “from the concept of everyday language into an intellectual concept”, which loses the understanding of the traumatic experience as a category of collective level (Alexander, 2012; Walker et al., 2003; Zatzick et al., 2000; Olick, 2018).

Among the scientists who have dealt with the problems of collective psychological trauma, it is worth noting (Tahan et al., 2021; Isobel et al., 2019; Agorastos et al., 2019; Rusen, 2010). Their work lays the conceptual foundations for understanding this phenomenon in the context of the cultural memory of an entire nation or a particular society. R. Ayerman interprets the concept of “cultural trauma” as a tragic result of the transformation of collective identity under the influence of past events (Ayerman, 2016). In this process, it is important to focus on a particularly dramatic event that “has become a symbolic cause, and its traumatic meaning must be affirmed and accepted”. At the same time, such a practice “takes a long time and needs mediation and representation”. In turn, J. Alexander (2012) argues that when constructing cultural trauma, representatives of certain social or national communities try to understand the reasons for such a psychotraumatic experience. The researcher believes that a traumatic event acquires the status of psychological trauma only if “there is a sharp shift in the usual meanings of society”. These shifted meanings “provide a sense of shock and fear” (Alexander, 2012).

A particularly powerful layer of representations of the dramatic events of World War II is present in the texts of Ukrainian writers who use modern textual constructions to present in the culture of modern Ukraine the problem of national trauma caused by the repressive policies of Nazi and Soviet totalitarian regimes. The manuscript is scientifically important, as this research stimulates the new generation to critically analyze past events. That is why the purpose of this scientific investigation was to study the question of the peculiarities of the human experience of mental trauma due to a certain emergency situation.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Inclusion criteria

This study is based on a comparison of different texts of Ukrainian writers (M. Mathios, Yu. Vynnychuk), who use modern textual constructions to present the problem of national trauma. The main focus was on the content of the narratives (“Beech land”, “Tango of death”). Also, it was considered a number of studies that address the factors of mental trauma as a component of post-traumatic stress disorder, as well as the conditions of their coexistence (Freud, 1998; Richards, 2001; Ayerman, 2016; Alexander, 2012). Similar statements by different scientists were combined into integral units of analysis.

Exclusion criteria

The texts of foreign writers who raise the issue of the national trauma of other nations have not been compared.

Research setting and techniques

During the study, the authors used the method of analysis, synthesis, observation (Thompson, 2018). All methods were chosen to take into account the purpose and objectives of the study. The leading method of research was the method of analysis of research sources, which allowed to state that the formation of human behavior with psychotraumatic disorder occurs under the influence of various factors at the following levels: individual, family, immediate environment, and social, which determine behavior and shape its specificity.

The method of observation was aimed at diagnosing a mental condition. The phenomenon of psychological trauma was studied with the help of modeling. The method of modeling the psyche was to build models of mental phenomena, to study the functioning of these models, and use the results to predict and explain empirical facts. Thanks to the conducted logical-historical analysis, we can speak about the cyclical revival of the interest of the medical and psychological community in the content of the phenomenon of “mental trauma”, which later led to its slow differentiation and etiology. In addition, the mechanisms of memory and how a psychotraumatic event is recorded in the brain have been studied using the mental modelling method. The authors found that the memory of traumatic events could not be properly organized and integrated. Accordingly, parts of memory can be dissociated, and then there is what we call amnesia, and other parts of memory are uncontrolled. They can be reminded, intrusively experienced by the child again and again.

When assessing the state of separation of the phenomenon of “psychotrauma” into a separate psychological phenomenon, there are two mutually exclusive tendencies: medical and psychological. According to the theoretical analysis of the literature, the concept of “mental trauma” was mainly studied in medicine, medical psychology, psychiatry, psychotherapy, in applied psychophysiological research, so it is in this context most revealed the meaning of “mental trauma”. The method of content analysis was used for data processing. After generalization and systematization of scientific data, narrative practices (strategies of mastering traumatic experience) on overcoming psychological traumas were formed.

RESULTS

Specifics of the psychological mechanism of trauma

The formation of representation in a certain culture of the traumatic experience of the past is associated with the activities of intellectuals capable of constructing artistic reality, which allows delving into the dramatic pages of history and re-actualize national or social memory, filling new historical narratives ethical horizons. After the World War I, the understanding of the concept of “trauma” became relevant. The main dialectical contradiction of psychological trauma is the conflict between the desire to throw out of consciousness a terrible

event and the desire to tell about it aloud. People who have experienced horrific events have predictable psychological problems.

We propose to consider mental trauma in several aspects:

- regarding the peculiarities of the actions of the factors that determine the dynamics of its course (emotional properties, its personal qualities, age, etc.);
- regarding the type of traumatic situations that cause it (trial situations, death);
- on the peculiarities of overcoming a traumatic situation (religion, creativity, self-escape or self-search, etc.);
- regarding the probability of seeing oneself in certain traumatic situations and, accordingly, the peculiarities of readiness for these situations.

Considering the mechanisms of mental trauma, we return to the consideration of psychological trauma as a process of experiencing a traumatic event, where the experience is seen as a psychobiosocial system that includes various elements and subsystems (Figure 2). As a result of trauma, painful partial memories can remain, which do not merge into a complete history. Such undigested, non-integrated into a person's life history fragments can haunt him in the form of intrusive symptoms.

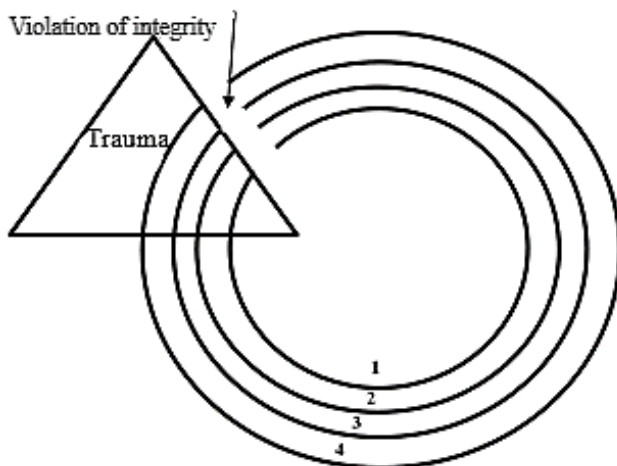


Figure 2. Psychological mechanism of trauma: 1 – physical; 2 – emotional; 3 – cognitive; 4 – spiritual dimension

Any traumatic disorder may violate the most complex forms of the socially determined and relatively stable stereotype of human response to the environment, distortion of self-control, self-esteem, and, as a result, mental deviation (Figure 3).

Features of the post-traumatic syndrome

In the disclosure of the state of human consciousness in war, bodily emphasis is significant. There is always an emphasis on being on the verge of physical capabilities, constant pain, dysfunction of the body caused by a situation of danger and fear. A symbolic symptom of psychotrauma is the gray hair of a soldier during combat. Thus, there is a situation of psychological inability to withstand the destructive effects of trauma: “In war, everyone becomes

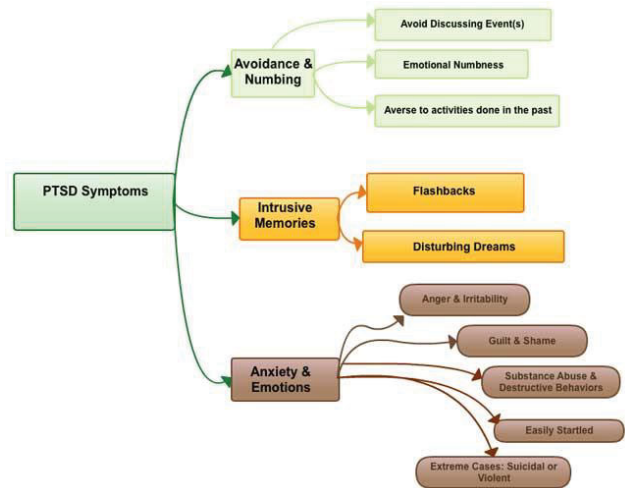


Figure 3. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms

gray. Or the dead” (Mathios, 2019). The reality of the front is so different from everyday experience that the perception of life's values changes, and for the first time, there are doubts about the correctness of one's action. That is, the established moral paradigm under which life is not an absolute value is undermined.

In the novel by the modern Ukrainian writer M. Mathios (2019) “Beech land”, the military narrative is projected through several interpretive models, which include both private and collective dimensions. The story of Hutsul Darius Brahivchuk illustrates the paradigm of individual frontline experience, which with the development of the plot acquires a generalizing sound. For the hero, the beginning of the war becomes a chance to resolve a traumatic family situation. Thus, a global event of civilizational scale removes man from the traditional world. In a patriarchal culture, honor is an absolute criterion of personality. Darius kills his daughter at the wedding and, although he does not doubt the correctness of his action to avoid criminal prosecution and ambiguous assessment of society, goes to the front as a volunteer. This act is designed to perform the compensatory function of acquittal and indicates a conscious attempt to ignore the crime. There is a kind of escape from the psychological trauma provoked by the change of personality, as we are dealing with the damaged identity of his father: “Maybe Darius would not have been in a hurry to go to war, but Kalina's blood was dripping from his hands. He wanted to wash away her blood with someone else's blood” (Mathios, 2019). However, regardless of the time or geographical distance, he obsessively returns to this event, and eventually, the tragedy becomes a marker of his inner world. Similarly, S. Freud (1998), studying the psycho-traumatic effect, found that healing makes it impossible that the traumatized person cannot get rid of memories, as if he is tied to psychological trauma.

The expected psychological victory over the past by immersion in another reality turned into a depressing realization of the fallacy of the fatal decision to kill a daughter who violated the laws of the patriarchal world.

The war changed not only the way of life of people, their financial situation but also disrupted the customary system and transformed the behavioral matrix. The hero returns to a world destroyed by militarism. Darius sees that society tolerates phenomena that were previously severely punished, in particular during his absence in the village were born the children of enemies. The aggressive attraction of the conquerors is directed at a woman who, as a result of rape and, as a consequence, pregnancy, becomes a carrier of a foreign gene pool, which becomes the cause of collective trauma. Violence in the occupied territories became systemic, forcing Hutsuls to accept the situation of humiliation and tolerate illegitimate children, and this attitude is contrary to tradition. Thus, the war leads to the transformation of cultural ideas and norms of masculinity and femininity.

Dominant values and norms of social life in the postwar conditions do not work, i.e., lost the usual markers of stability, which even in a situation of uncertainty are the determining factors of the ontological system. The paradigm of war undermines the structure of real experience and the standards of normalcy. Therefore, to live on, you need to find new landmarks, but a man is not able to learn a different attitude to the world, and this is a manifestation of post-traumatic stress disorder. Darius, returning home from the front, feels disoriented in a familiar space that has become hostile to him. The wounds caused by the trauma of infanticide only deepened, emotional catharsis did not occur, and, consequently, even the mental attachment to the land, which was traditionally the ideological basis of the peasant, was lost. The imposition of two catastrophic events as a mechanism to overcome the injury does not work, but on the contrary – increases the psychological pressure, making it impossible to rehabilitate. The probability of stating a traumatic experience is also questionable, the situation of silence becomes dominant: “I thought he would return from the war – his mouth would not be closed for three days in conversations. And he looked around – as if he was dumb” (Mathios, 2019). Darius avoids communication with fellow villagers and is unable to return to the usual peasant labor, which until recently was the meaning of his life. He chooses passivity as a way for an individual to adapt to sudden changes, but such behavior does not correspond to an adequate psychological state of a person and is evidence of post-traumatic syndrome.

The military narrative shows a tendency between individual and national traumas. Darius, joining the imperial army as a volunteer, first of all, seeks to avoid criminal liability and get rid of the brand of the murderer. Eventually, he achieves his goal and the change of external presentation takes place: “Darius became a murderer for people. And in war, you see, he is a hero” (Mathios, 2019). The work traces the connection between psychological trauma and identity, and war is used by the Hutsuls as a chance to get rid of the murderer’s brand and rehabilitate as a warrior hero. Therefore, at the front, Brahivchuk initially feels like a full-fledged citizen needed by the state. However, with the change in the political situation, there

are clear signs of discrimination associated with the leveling of Hutsul soldiers as a “second class”. He is going through a psychological crisis related to the meaninglessness of everything that is happening. The feeling of spatial emptiness reflects internal disorientation, mental disorder: Darius experiences humiliation and violence, the former hero found himself in the status of a marginal.

Psychotraumatic experience of war

The psychotraumatic experience of war in Yu. Vynnychuk’s (2012) representation inspires a crisis of identity in both the regional and national dimensions. Yu. Vynnychuk in “Tango of death” represents the cultural trauma inflicted by Nazi and Soviet totalitarianism through the prism of the individual psychotraumatic experience of the protagonist of the novel *Orc Barbaryka*. The story of the hero, as well as his three comrades (a Pole, a Jew, and a German), represent the experience of peaceful coexistence of national communities in the Eastern European environment of the border of different cultural narratives. The images of Lviv are the cornerstone of the formation of projects of Ukrainian and Polish national memory, as they “give both societies powerful symbols of national self-determination in the form of narratives of collective struggle, victory, and defeat” (Kellerman, 2001).

In Yu. Vynnychuk’s novel, the story of the protagonist and his comrades also begins with memories of a tragic event – the Battle of the Bazaar. In which Ukrainian troops were defeated and the Bolsheviks shot soldiers. It is the memory of the collective tragedy of Ukrainians that is transformed at the individual level of the psychological trauma of the heroes of the novel “Tango of death”, as the parents of all four comrades became victims of the Soviet regime. Yu. Vynnychuk’s representation of the past allows us to accumulate the potential of collective and individual psychotraumatic experience, and thus to outline the dimension of creating a new cultural identity and acquiring a new meaning.

Yu. Vynnychuk in the novel “Tango of death” constructs the environment of pre-war Lviv, in which the cultural features of different ethnic groups are intertwined, creating an atmosphere of multiculturalism and tolerant coexistence of Poles, Ukrainians, Jews, Germans, Armenians, and others. The writer consciously idealizes such a socio-cultural Lviv space, in some places deliberately glorifying this time and downplaying interethnic confrontations. However, such a picture in the artistic strategy of Yu. Vynnychuk emphasizes the prospect of the possibility of peaceful coexistence in one space of different, especially at the household level, national communities. The history of the families of *Orc Barbaryka* and his comrades illustrates the atmosphere of a large family, united by spiritual closeness, and cultural differences not only do not provoke conflicts but expand and complement their personal space: “We had three Christmases and three Easters – Catholic, Greek Catholic and Jewish – we gladly visited each other...” (Vynnychuk, 2012). Thus, to convince such a representation, the writer goes into detail

about the daily life of Lviv society in the 1930s, revealing the special multicultural atmosphere of the Eastern European urban environment, which is outside the sphere of influence of European totalitarianism.

At the same time, the beginning of the World War II, according to Yu. Vynnychuk destroys such a cultural web of different ethnic communities. Invasions of the Soviet and later Nazi totalitarian regimes upset the balance and begin the process of not only cultural but also physical extermination of the ethnic groups that formed the basis of Lviv's socio-cultural environment (Vynnychuk, 2012). In "Tango of death" author emphasizes the destructive nature of the Soviet totalitarian regime, which, occupying the Polish state with the Nazis in 1939, not only tries to establish political control over the occupied territory but also seeks to replace the multicultural atmosphere. The writer deliberately resorted to accepting insinuations in the representation of Soviet figures as persons wishing to appropriate the material gains of a non-socialist society. Yu. Vynnychuk creates clear imaginary images of representatives of the Soviet regime as foreigners, a kind of semi-barbarians, incapable of cultural communication, but only seeking to seize the property of enslaved citizens.

Yu. Vynnychuk in his novel "Tango of death" emphasizes that it is from the activities of the Soviet and Nazi totalitarian regimes that the process of destruction of various ethnic groups begins, and this provokes interethnic enmity between peoples. One of the key episodes in the novel is the description of Lviv prisons in late June 1941, when Soviet punitive authorities destroyed political prisoners before evacuating them. Such a crime provokes popular anger, the victim of which is the Jewish population: "Whole gangs of street noise rushed to beat the Jews, beat everyone – both Ukrainians and Poles – because they had to beat. Because they had to pour out their anger on the Bolsheviks, to repay someone for their suffering, for their suffering, for the death of their loved ones" (Vynnychuk, 2012). However, the Jewish pogroms in late June 1941 testify to the loss of communication resources between the nations that created the common socio-cultural space of interwar Lviv.

The depiction of the events of the Holocaust in Lviv plays an important role in the representation of cultural psychological trauma. Yu. Vynnychuk tries to reflect in detail the Nazi policy of genocide of Jews in Eastern Europe: discriminatory social measures, the creation, and liquidation of ghettos, mass shootings. The writer deliberately details the tragic pages of the Nazi occupation regime, seeking to expand the horizons of perception for the modern reader about the Holocaust in Ukraine. The very title of the novel appears as an expansive allegory of "return" to the psychotraumatic experience of the past, it's modern rethinking, the passage of the "process of trauma".

An important aspect of the text is the representation of the "forgetting" of the genocide of Jews and other nations during the World War II in the space of Lviv in the Soviet period. M. Pollack (2015) emphasizes that the European topography is full of "poisoned landscapes" – places of "mass killings that have remained hidden from

the world". The main motive for such "transformations" is the desire of the leaders of totalitarianism to hide the traces of crimes, to mislead the ordinary observer. However, in some cases, this is a practice of deliberately ousting from public memory information about victims who do not fit into its ideological matrix of the world. Yu. Vynnychuk, through the prism of the fate of characters who, regardless of nationality, fall into the crucible of Nazi genocidal policy, emphasizes the collective psychotraumatic experience of not only one ethnic group, but all its victims. Thus, he creates a new perspective of rethinking these dramatic pages through the prism of humanistic values.

DISCUSSION

Modern researchers define the discourse of war as schizophrenic, which is manifested in apathy and inaction as indicators of a general decline in vital activity (Ayerman, 2016; Podporin, 2015). Such an emotional disorder is the result of a situation man is unable to comprehend. Analysis of traumatic facts is inseparable from the story of them, so when an individual does not find a way to manifest the disorder, the event does not go into the past but remains a reality to which he always returns. R. Ayerman (2016) emphasizes that "cultural trauma is experienced over time and through memories, and the key role in this process belongs to representation". Yu. Vynnychuk's text, which adsorbs textual and material samples of the pre-war experience, tries to create a modern model of the cultural memory, which from time can accumulate resources for "remembering" and thus idealizing the period before the tragic events of the war. It was researched, that in the novel of the Ukrainian writer, the formation of a modern vision of the past is based on the strategy of returning to the "golden age", in which there was a place for the existence of several national narratives (Vynnychuk, 2012).

A. Asman (2012) writes that trauma is the impossibility of narration, because in an emergency the body plays the role of an immediate surface for minting, as a result of which the experience is not subject to linguistic or interpretive processing. In "New ways of historical thinking", the German researcher J. Rusen (2010) interprets psychological trauma as a kind of crisis, a certain mental deviation that builds a new framework for the formation of historical content and prevents the restoration of old ones. As a result, the new frameworks can perform the same function that the destroyed ones performed. J. Rusen (2010) suggests ways to overcome historical trauma: anonymization, categorization, normalization, moralization, aestheticization, theorizing, which aim to replace the traumatic nature of past events with a history filled with established meaning and significance.

The state of emergency that expresses the emotions of anxiety and fear is symbolically conveyed through the topos of emptiness: "War did not fill the hole in the chest. During the war, another blood came to his hands – the enemy's" (Mathios, 2019). It was revealed, that M. Mathios addresses the theme of a single nation, which due to

statelessness is forced to defend the interests of different empires. Because its previous history is marked by a process of separation, and radical political changes provide a perspective that would free them from the passive role of victim in the global confrontation of superpowers. Thus, a narrative representation of the historical trauma of the World War I is carried out, which finds its continuation in the cultural reception of the World War II.

E. Thompson considering the problem of creating projects of national identity, pays special attention to the cultural interpretation of the memory of wars in the life of a nation (Thompson, 2018). The researchers emphasize that the military experience (either positive or negative) has become a cornerstone of constructing national self-representation, because “the memory of wars was ennobled when it was described by ethnic elites” (Sushiy, 2019; Shtompka, 2001). Researchers emphasize that the construction of cultural psychotrauma is based on the attempts of representatives of a certain society to appeal in the form of a symbolic representation of certain events of the past: “These group perceptions can be seen as “claims” about the form of social reality, its causes, and responsibility for actions arising from these causes” (Benjet et al., 2016; Ered et al., 2017; Bryan et al., 2018).

Effective strategies for mastering traumatic experience are narrative practices, including autobiography, narratization of traumatic events, trauma-focused narrative reconstruction. Given the specific characteristics of traumatic memory (fragmentation, non-integration), an effective way of psychological recovery in a post-traumatic situation can be considered to optimize the time perspective of the individual, restore the “timeline”, reconstruction of life history, construction and modification of trauma. One of the productive methods of working with multiple psychotrauma is narrative exposure therapy.

CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, the main ways of reflecting individual and collective traumas were analyzed. The mental trauma was considered in four main aspects. It was indicated, that the narrative practices are effective strategies for mastering traumatic experience. Also, an effective way of psychological recovery in a post-traumatic situation were specified. This research makes it impossible to use the past in the perspective of ideological influence on the present, protects against the involvement of manipulative technologies in working with history. In general, collective history acquires the quality of trauma, and therefore individual trauma is closely related to a national trauma.

The results of research on the problem of trauma at the present stage show that when traumatic reactions are excessive, uncontrolled, and expressed through extreme psychological arousal, they can consolidate the relationship between fear and the reproduction of a traumatic event, cause avoidance behavior, constant reproduction of events in memory, and, as a consequence, post-traumatic stress disorder. The results of the analysis can be used

in the process of further interdisciplinary research related to the issue of trauma, so the work is designed for anyone interested in history, literature, psychology, and culturology.

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