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ARTISTIC MEANS OF REPRESENTING LOSS EXPERIENCE: M. MATIOS' "MOMS" IN TRAUMA STUDIES CONTEXT

Статтю присвячено дослідженню найновішого твору сучасної української письменниці Марії Матіос – «Мами». *Meta* дослідження – визначити специфіку скерованості ідейно-образних та жанрово-композиційних рівнів поетики твору на розкриття теми травми втрати, текстуалізації травми як пам'яті не тільки про злочини сьогодення, але й про за давні рани, реалізації ідеї пережиття «катастрофічного досвіду».

Предмет дослідження – специфіка реалізації теми травми втрати в романі Марії Матіос «Мами». Завдання дослідження полягають у дослідженні особливостей жанру й композиції твору, ролі художніх засобів у моделюванні психічного стану героїнь, текстуалізації травми, розкритті ідейного скерування твору.

Для досягнення поставленої мети використано *методологію* студії травми («trauma studies»), також залучено різні інтерпретаційні методики: психоаналіз, герменевтику, рецептивну естетику, інтерпретативний та структурний підходи.

Проведене дослідження дозволило з'ясувати, що обраний твір письменниці вирізняється особливою композицією, специфічною наративною структурою завдяки включенню в художню тканину особистого травматичного досвіду самої авторки, що підкреслюється авторською жанровою дефініцією («драма на шість дій»).

Особливість композиції твору полягає у тому, що кожна його частина має власну побудову цілком самостійного, завершеного художнього тексту, водночас архітектоніка усього роману вирізняється скерованістю на підсилення емоційно-образної, ліризованої складової, поєднаної із фабульністю. Цій функції підпорядковане й кільцеве обрамлення, утворене першим текстом, – реквіємом і останнім – «Пієтою».

Основним композиційним прийомом в романі є контраст, що виявляється в композиційних елементах, наративній стратегії та лексичному забарвленні діалогів. Якщо наративна організація першої новели формується як внутрішній монолог, то в чотирьох інших новелах, що становлять власне фабульну частину твору, переважають діалогічні партії, поєднані із внутрішнім монологом, що часто трансформуються в потік свідомості.

Аналіз психологічного моделювання образної системи твору виявляє розкриття травми шляхом використання елементів поетики експресіонізму, оніризму, акцентування стану зміненої свідомості, удушся, контрасту крику й шепоту. Художній світ роману Марії Матіос сповнений знаків-символів, що промовляють. Глибина травмованості передається також через психологічно насичені метафори і порівняння. Символізм таких образів-знаків виразно наповнює текстуальну модель світу в романі пам'яттю тіла, вони розкривають спонтанну тілесну експресію травмованого, розгортають смислову тканину вчинку.

Піднявши у творі низку актуальних проблем (трагедію борців УПА, ставлення держави і суспільства до добровольців, до матерів та рідних полеглих і зниклих безвісти в АТО, до бійців із

ПТРС), авторка проводить ідею необхідності осмислення історичних і сьогоденних «катастрофічних досвідів», долання травмованості як окремо взятої людини, так і всієї нації шляхом пізнання правди і служінням ідеї Добра.

Ключові слова: Марія Матіос, роман-драма «Мами», сучасна українська література, травма материнської втрати, наратив, художньо-образна система, архітектоніка, метафора, студія травми, травма втрати.

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Research on the nature of trauma originates from Freudian teaching on “repressed memory” investigating sorrow and melancholy in such works as “Studies on Hysteria” (1895) and “Beyond the Pleasure Principle” (1920). The concepts covered in the works prevail among the current approaches of literary critics of trauma. Freudian theory, augmented with Jacques Derrida’s hermeneutics of deconstruction, formed the basis for “trauma science”. Michelle Balaev refers to “[p]sychological trauma, its representation in language, and the role of memory in shaping individual and cultural identities as the central concerns that define the field of trauma studies” [Balaev, 2018, p. 360].

The end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century see trauma becoming a central object of study and methodology in humanities. The works of Cathy Caruth [1996, 2009, 2013], Dori Laub and Shoshana Felman [1992], and Dominic LaCapra [2016] extend to cultural and historical trauma studies. These scholars’ conceptual ideas of trauma influence the next research stages associated with the first “trauma critique” development stage. Caruth’s idea about the “non-representation of trauma” (i.e. trauma resists direct representation in language) spurs searches of the “new mode of reading and listening that both the language of trauma, and the silence of its mute repetition of suffering, profoundly and imperatively demand” [Caruth, 1996, p. 9], and finds its development in the concept of literary piece as a “special type of testimony” according to Shoshana Felman.

Caruth’s “Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History” views trauma as an incident that sticks to the victim’s mind but defies words. Thus, witness plays a significant role in expressing traumatic experiences. Because “history, like trauma, is never simply one’s own” and “history is precisely the way we are implicated in each other’s traumas” [Caruth, 1996, p. 24].

The idea of witness, replacing the “voice of the Other” with the author, was realised in Shoshana Felman’s works. The concept of the leading strategy for witnessing literature proposed by her emerged when working with testimonies of Holocaust victims for “Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature Psychoanalysis and History” co-authored with Dori Laub. The scholar identifies testimony as a leading discursive model of the post-traumatic 20th century: “Literature becomes a witness (probably the only one) of this historical crisis not articulated within history” [Felman, Laub, 1992, p. 92]. Continuing to develop her statement about literature as a “specific mode of testimony” excluded from the law as such and masked as fiction, Felman’s “Forms of Judicial Blindness, or the Evidence of What Cannot Be Seen” articulates a fundamental idea for contemporary trauma studies that literature “can be defined (accounted for, and understood) as a specific mode of testimony” [Felman, 1997]. Reflecting upon the figure of the piece’s author in “The Juridical Unconscious: Trials and Traumas in the Twentieth Century”, the scholar sees the possibilities of replacing the author as a biased witness with herself, her own body, the body and voice of the Other inherent in the literary text: “the witness testifies through his unconscious body” [Felman, 2002, p. 163].

Cathy Caruth’s “Literature in the Ashes of History” [2013] and “Trauma, Time, and History” [2009] marked the milestone of trauma studies development. Her “Trauma, Time, and History” begins with the word: “Trauma is not only pathology but a mode and way of expressing the truth” [Caruth, 2009, p. 561]. “Literature in the Ashes of History” covers ideas of literature being a testimony, particularly receptive capacities incorporated in the narratives of works of art, “speaking” trauma in the expressive language of such a work: “The writing of Honoré de Balzac, Hannah Arendt, Johannes

Vilhelm Jensen, Sigmund Freud, and Jacques Derrida involve such narratives which do not limit the history of trauma with a mere indication of a disaster but speak language that will remain alive on the other side of the trauma" [Caruth, 2013, p. 92].

Caruth's idea on "non-representation of trauma" (i.e. trauma resists direct representation in language) remains, as Michelle Balaev points out, conceptual for successors "who have expanded the theoretical frameworks of trauma studies to include postcolonial, racial, and feminist theories" [Balaev, 2018, p. 365]. They are Suzette Henke [1998], Deborah Horwitz [2000], Brooks Buson [2000], and Laurie Vickroy [2002].

Vickroy's "Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction" [2002], Whitehead's "Trauma Fiction" [2004], and Rothberg's "Traumatic Realism" [2000] are landmark works that are organically bound with literary discourse.

"Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction" treats texts about trauma as testimonies, representing the history and restoring forgotten memories, discussing narrative strategies to convey trauma in fiction [Vickroy, 2002, p. 29]. Rothberg's "Traumatic Realism" [2000] is notable for the author supplementing his analysis with culture studies; his approach to narrative strategy in fiction is clearly in line with Freud's reasonings on different stages of healing involving mourning as well as with Eric Santner's work on two types of trauma representation: "A traumatic realist project is an attempt not to reflect the event mimetically, but to create it as an object of knowledge and transform it for readers so that they are forced to recognise their connection to post-traumatic culture" [Santner, 1992, p. 143].

Sonia Baelo-Allué [2012], Dolores Herrero and Sonia Baelo-Allué [2011] Bárbara Arizti [2011], López Sánchez [2010], and Stef Craps [2010] also consider techniques and means of traumatic experience representation.

Thus, Sonia Baelo-Allué outlines that literary devices that tend to repeat themselves in stories about traumas, represent their outcomes at the formal level, and incorporate intertextuality, repetition, and fragmentation [Baelo-Allué, 2012, p. 69]. Meanwhile, Bárbara Arizti points out that repetitions of language, imagery, or plot are among the most prevalent strategies for transforming trauma into narrative [Arizti, 2011, p. 177]. Since trauma representation and narrating about it are connected with what can and cannot be said, i.e. what is repressed, López Sánchez outlines that concealment and gaps are critical for the structure of trauma narratives: "The word that is omitted can be more powerful than that which is not. When a sentence contains a gap that must be filled by a reader, the omitted word or gap is present even if absent" [López Sánchez, 2010, p. 47].

Michelle Balaev characterises the second stage of critique development as "new trauma model formation that is pluralistic" [Balaev, 2018, p. 356]. This phase of trauma studies is exemplified by works such as Geoffrey H. Hartman's "On Traumatic Knowledge and Literary Studies" [1995], Deborah Horwitz's "Literary Trauma: Sadism, Memory, and Sexual Violence in American Women's Fiction" [2000], Ann Cvetkovich's "An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures" [2003], Naomi Mandel's "Against the Unspeakable: Complicity, the Holocaust, and Slavery in America" [2006], and Greg Forter's "Gender, Race, and Mourning in American Modernism" [2011] and "Colonial Trauma, Utopian Carnality, Modernist Form: Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*" [2014]. The model assumes that traumatic experience opens up new relationships between experience, language, and knowledge that detail the social significance of trauma [Balaev, 2018, p. 365]. Balaev underscores the importance of studying the cultural context of experience connected with shifting scholars' attention toward literature and art (researching the trauma concept and its role in literature and society).

Greg Forter discusses political and historical dimensions of extreme experiences in modernist and post-colonial fiction literature involving trauma research and its social conditions in the discourse. The scholar establishes a view of traumatic experience beyond pathology and researches the specifics of trauma and its variations in butch-femme discourse and social culture arising around trauma. The 'Freud-Caruth trauma model' adapts to underscore the difference between punctual trauma, or a once-catastrophic event, and non-punctual, or ongoing trauma [Forter, 2011, p. 98].

Trauma studies continue to develop and adapt the fundamental post-structural approach and incorporate new perspectives of post-colonialism, feminist theory, ethnic studies, and ecocriticism that study the place of trauma in literature and society [Balaev, 2012, p. 10]. Researchers, whose attention is on the cultural context of trauma and strategies oriented at narrating trauma in fiction,

include Irene Visser's "Trauma Theory and Postcolonial Literary Studies" [2011] and Eric Santner's "History Beyond the Pleasure Principle" [1992]. Santner's narrative of mourning resonates with the phenomenon of grief developed in British analyst Alexander Etkind's "Warped Mourning: Stories of the Undead in the Land of the Unburied" [2013]. In turn, Santner's concepts formed the basis for the methodology in Anna Stepanova's "Visual Aesthetics as a Reflection of the Traumatic Experience of the History: *La Reine Margot* by Alexandre Dumas and Patrice Chereau" [Stepanova, 2022].

In recent years, post-colonial studies have actively incorporated the methodology of trauma studies. Sam Durrant argues that a post-colonial narrative, structured by the tension between the memory of the past and the promise of future liberation, inevitably performs the function of grief [Durrant, 2004, p. 1].

The modern stage of trauma studies is represented by interdisciplinary research. Ege Islekel's methodology is actively applied in feminist philosophy. Her "Traveling the Soil of Worlds: Haunted Forgetting and Opaque Memories is a case in point" [2020], in Religious studies – Juliana Claassens' "Surfing with Jonah" [2021], in Arabic studies – Hout's "Multilingualism, Trauma, and Liminality in The Bullet Collection: Contact Zones, Checkpoints, and Liminal Points" [2021], in the literature on trauma in postcolonial criticism – Shittu's "Migration, memory and trauma in Olu Oguibe's poetry of exile" [2019].

A vivid example of the practical application of trauma studies as a methodology, combined with an interdisciplinary approach, in contemporary literature studies is Mamona Yasmin Khan and Fariha Chaudhary's "Trauma, Identity, and Narrative in fiction: A Critique of The Blind Man's Garden as Trauma Fiction" [2021], 'Half Widows and Half Mothers': Traumatic Voices of Women From the Literary Narratives of Jammu and Kashmir by S. Hanif and M. Ahmed [2020].

Our study uses an interdisciplinary approach where trauma criticism is combined with post-colonial criticism, which implies the connection of the analysed literary text with specific historical events that were traumatic for the whole nation. The theoretical foundation for our study is the study of trauma in literary studies, in particular Cathy Caruth's trauma theory, her reasonings on collective trauma in her "Trauma, Narrative, and History" ("history, like trauma, is never simply one's own", "history is precisely the way we are implicated in each other's traumas" [Caruth, 1996, p. 24]), and reasonings on literature as "such narratives which do not limit the history of trauma with a mere indication of a disaster but speak the language that will remain alive on the other side of the trauma" [Caruth, 2013, p. 92] as well as the idea of witness, replacing the "voice of the Other" with the author, which is unfolded in such Shoshana Felman's works [1997; 2002]. The analysis of Maria Matios's text is conducted on the methodological foundation laid out in Whitehead's "Trauma Fiction" [2004] discussing the modes of trauma representation in literature, particularly by using certain narrative techniques, i.e. repetition, places of memory, a floating voice in the story, and fragmentation. Whitehead understands repetitions as certain images connected with the trauma in the form of memories. Such repetitive images are reflected in the plot, language, images, and places of memory. The scholar identified intertextuality (not only external references from other texts or writers but references from the past in the form of memories and recollections) as an additional technique. The analysed Maria Matios's novel sees this technique of intertextuality on each level of poetics, i.e. thematic, plot, compositional, and image levels.

Apart from that, our research takes advantage of Eric Santner's theory on two types of trauma representation, in particular the narrative of moaning. Unfolding Freud's reasonings on different stages of healing a traumatised person one of which is mourning, Eric Santner differentiates narrative as a fetish (it distracts from the trauma and aims to erase the traces of the trauma or loss that gave rise to this narrative) and creates a "symbolic space for anxiety relief" [Santner, 1992].

In his article, Eric Santner [1992] reflects on the contemporary treatment of the experience of the Night of Broken Glass in Germany in historical and fictional narratives, focusing on two diametrically opposed positions in the debate over the interpretation of the Holocaust (known as the "battle for history"): "In this battle, the one side is the justification of the Nazi camps and the extermination of the Jews by presenting the Holocaust as a reaction to the class extermination carried out by the Stalinist regime in the Gulag, the other side is the condemnation of the silence of this tragedy and its reduction to the level of a technological innovation" (Jürgen Habermas). Both positions arise from reliving the traumatic experience of history, but in different forms [Stepanova, 2022, p. 80]. To define a narrative that consciously or subconsciously aims to erase the traces of the trauma or loss that

gave rise to this narrative, Santner takes advantage of the “narrative fetishism” concept. This type of narrative liberates a person from the necessity to reconsider one’s own identity in post-traumatic conditions. The scholar contrasts it with a “narrative of grief” that is the process Santner defines as the process of processing and getting used to the reality of loss through recollection and repetition, it is a process of translation, metaphorisation of loss, behind which is the need to redefine one’s own identity [Santner, 1992, pp. 144–145].

Regarding Ukrainian literature studies, trauma studies is introduced by the works of Tamara Hundorova [2018], Vadym Vasylenko’s “Modification of Trauma in Ukrainian Emigration Prose of the Second Half of the Twentieth Century” [Vasylenko, 2018], Oksana Pukhonska [2022], and Nataliia Maftyn [2022]. These researchers examine the representation of trauma within fictional narratives and argue that the trauma of the Holodomor has had the most profound impact on the collective consciousness of the nation.

Literary studies on the prose of Maria Matios primarily concentrate on its compositional poetics, psychological themes, stylistic features, and use of mythological symbols. However, her work has not yet been examined through the lens of trauma studies, despite many of her narratives addressing both individual and collective trauma. This is particularly relevant to the writer’s latest work, “Moms”, selected here as the focus of our study. In this text, the author extends her exploration of female trauma — specifically maternal trauma related to loss — a theme that has thus far received limited attention from literary critics.

The study *aims* to define the specifics of the orientation of the idea and image and genre and compositional levels of the poetics of the work to reveal the problem of the trauma of loss, the textualisation of trauma as a memory not only of the crimes of the present but also of the neglected wounds, the realisation of the idea of reliving the “catastrophic experience” of the genocide of Ukrainians as a nation.

The *objectives* of the study are to examine the peculiarities of the genre and composition of the work, analyse the role of artistic means in modeling the mental state of the protagonists, explore textualising trauma, and elucidate the thematic direction of the text.

To achieve this goal, the *methodology* of trauma studies and post-colonial studies was used, as well as various interpretive methods such as psychoanalysis, hermeneutics, receptive aesthetics, interpretive, and structural approaches.

The work of the writer chosen for the study is distinguished by a special composition and a specific narrative structure due to the inclusion of the author’s personal traumatic experience in the artistic fabric. “*Moms* is a real “way out of silence” and a narrative practice aimed at overcoming the repressive effects of trauma, this work is distinguished by the intensity of its emotional and figurative elements, as well as its unique genre (defined by the author as a “drama in six acts”) and complex architectonics. The common theme here unites six separate parts, two of which form a circular frame and unfold according to the musical principle of the composition of lyricised prose. The central plot is represented as the stories of five mothers who are different not only in social status, time of trauma-loss, and openness of their inner world to the reader but also united by the trauma of losing their dearest sons. An important aspect of the composition of the work, which intertwines the lives of several characters across different temporal planes and expands the chronotope of the novel-drama to the dimensions of eternity, is the author’s dedication. The microcomposition of this dedication is structured around a principle of gradation: “*Пам’яті мого єдиного сина Назарія, пам’яті всіх синів, кого не дочекалися їхні матері, а також бездонній силі материнської любові і страждання*” (“To the memory of my only son Nazarii, to the memory of all the sons whose mothers did not wait for them till they come, and to the bottomless power of maternal love and suffering”) [Matios, 2023, p. 5]. The author’s genre definition (“drama in six acts”) emphasises the tragic as an internal conflict between the feeling of pain, irreversible loss, and indifference of society and the traumatised individual’s struggle to live among those who have not experienced loss and cannot comprehend the depth of trauma. The need to resolve this conflict becomes the unifying principle of various stories (including in terms of plot and scope): from the deeply intimate confession in the first novella, *Mother Maria*, defined as “*Video from Maria Matios’s small homeland with music by her son Nazar*”, to a kind of epilogue, *Pieta*, which sounds like an eternal requiem for a mother’s loss.

This resonance of the framing of the entire book with Michelangelo’s immortal work, accentuated by the composition in the first short story and the last fragment of prose poetry, transforms the

author's experience of traumatic experience into catharsis. The first novella-drama in the novel's architectonics is a peculiar introduction. The plot here unfolds like the composition of a requiem or lament. The narrative organisation of the text is formed as an internal monologue, which sometimes transforms into a stream of consciousness. This monologue, which pulsates with the pain of loss and the undying love of a mother, unfolds in the dimensions of earth and the dimensions of eternity from the gravestone where her son is buried to the high blue of heaven. The locus of the cemetery ("*Сюди я ходила би босою, щоб менше шпортатись. Із потужним ліхтариком серед білого дня – розігнати темін*") / "I would go here barefoot to avoid rummaging. With a powerful flashlight in broad daylight, to dispel the darkness" [Matios, 2023, p. 13]) as well as the chronotope of the road to the cemetery ("*Такої чорної і твердої дороги немає більше ніде, як дорога матері до Сина*") / "There is nowhere else so black and hard as the road of a mother to her Son" [Matios, 2023, p. 15]) is a space of memory, an element of "mnemonics" and "spatiality of memory" (Pierre Nora [2011]). The past "bites" into the mother's life through the performativity of memory, its "mnemonic marks" such as the image of a candle, a White Dove (a symbol of the soul in Christian tradition) that arrives at her son's grave, and with its "passing" gait reminds the mother "just like you did when you started walking." Compositionally, this structuring of the "place of memory" (meaning something more than a cemetery) is presented as bursts of a cardiogram of pain when the dove allows me to touch it, "*я знов перестаю дихати. (...) і знов судинки й капіляри тріскають – чи то в голові, чи в серці – і я вкотре чую їхній скрип*" ("I stop breathing again. (...) and again the blood vessels and capillaries crack — either in my head or within my heart — and I hear them creaking once again") [Matios, 2023, p. 15].

The mother's monologue initiates an imaginary dialog with the Son: his intonations, voice tones, and timbre modulations: sometimes only a few words, sometimes a voice that "*щільно і звідусюди обгортає мене так, ніби намагається обняти і пожалити*" ("wraps me tightly and from everywhere as if trying to hug and pity me") [Matios, 2023].

Even the composition of the opening short story is marked by the performativity of memory: it resembles a cross (body-spirit, grave-heaven) on which a mother's heart is crucified. The mother clings to the blue of the sky with her last strength: there, in the sky, she is looking for at least some sign that her Son has heard her monologue. And a specific culmination is the image of a cloud rushing to the Mother in the blue. Changing figures and images that are "a lamb, or a bird", or the profile of a boy playing a flute lead to a climactic outburst: "*Б'юся головою об стовбур дерева: Боже, помози мені побачити Сина! Ти ж є любов, Боже!!! Не скупися на радість для матері хоч коло Його портрета! У небі – знову та сама хмара з профілем молодої людини із задертим чубом і сопілкою в руках. Син мені грає на сопілці. (...) Мелодія сопілки невловна – так дрижить повітря від повіту вітру. Але вітру немає. Є мелодія, нечутна для інших*" ("I'm hitting my head against a tree trunk: God, help me to see the Son! You inherently are love, oh, God!!! Do not be stingy with mother's joy, even around His portrait! The sky shows the same cloud again with the profile of a young man with an elated forelock and a flute in his hands. My son plays the flute for me. (...) The flute melody is elusive; the air is shaking with the wind. But there is no wind. There is a melody that is inaudible to others") [Matios, 2023, p. 19]. The inconstancy, the elusiveness of the image, and the imitation of sounds bring contrast to the physically accentuated feeling.

The temporary solution in this tragic action is the exit of the mother, traumatised by the loss of her psyche, into the onyric space: in a dream, two souls can still meet for a final farewell.

Trauma makes the body unimportant; it becomes a prison: "*Бо я існую так, ніби з мене то витікає, то назад повільно вливається життя. Ніби коло самого берега мене колише морська хвиля. Чи гойдається під мною земля під час дуже далекого землетрусу*" ("Because I exist as if life is slowly flowing out of me and back in again. As if a sea wave is cradling me near the shore. Or the ground shakes under me during a distant earthquake") [Matios, 2023, p. 15]. The verbal expression of the trauma captures the depth of pain at the physiological level ("*альвеоли, що лопаються*") / "bursting alveoli", "*кульова блискавка інфаркту*") / "the ball lightning of a heart attack", "*серце ненадовго також муміфікується*") / "the heart mummifies for a while", "*я живу з розірваними альвеолами легень, капіляри яких розлітаються на друзки, коли вже стільки часу намагаюся вдихнути і видихнути свій біль*") / "I live with torn lung alveoli, the capillaries of which are shattered when I have been trying to breathe in and out of my pain for so long" [Matios, 2023, p.12]). Although the plot plays a minor role in the opening short story, its driving force is rooted

in the powerful, expressionistic portrayal of peak emotional pain, akin to a cardiogram charting the most intense moments of suffering. The narrative organisation of the piece is subordinated to the fixation of these points: when the heart freezes, falls into the abyss of nothingness, and then rushes back to life. The body's memory emerges in the "textual" model of the world. The novella's world is filled with eloquent signs and symbols. Thus, the mood of hopeless longing that dominates the last fragment is emphasized by the image of the overcast sky: "Хмари обважніли дощовою водою. Вони незрушно нависають над землею, не розсуваючись і не рухаючись" ("The clouds are heavy with rainwater. They loom over the ground without moving or shifting") [Matios, 2023, p. 21]. But a few welcoming images still give hope for healing: a cuckoo calls under the forest, a stray cat "licks at the woman's feet".

The power of love, which helps to break through the hopelessness of pain, transforms individual traumatic experiences into the memory of all mothers who have experienced the trauma of loss, personal suffering grows to the greatness of the suffering of the Virgin Mary. So did once the greatest of Mothers cry under the cross.

By voicing her pain, the author narrates the pain of the Ukrainian mother, so it is natural that her "six-book" is dedicated to the trauma of maternal loss. The second chapter of the piece, *Mother Verontsia*, plays the role of a tie-in in the composition of the entire work, and the action itself unfolds in the next short story, *Mother Mykhailyna*.

Mother Mykhailyna tells about a trauma that has festered for decades. In other words, an individual trauma becomes a collective trauma, moreover, it is pushed out of the collective memory, and repressed. Verontsia is a mother who lost her son in the Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO) in Ukraine. She has been "drowned in howls" in her orphaned yard for a year now. The villagers are growing annoyed with this endless lamentation. So does old Mykhailyna appear in the woman's yard. The words of the 90-year "eccentric" woman, as she was considered in the village, do not comfort Verontsia. The novel is modeled as a dialog between two women, the centre of which is the metaphorical image of the heart: "Вам добре казати, бабо, Ви вже, певно, забули, як то болить серце" ("You are right to say, old woman, you may have forgotten the 'heart-hurting' feeling") [Matios, 2023, p. 27]. In this way, Verontsia shouts at the old woman. However, Mykhailyna's answer makes her stop because, behind the calm tones of her interlocutor's words, something terrible suddenly flashed: "А ти знаєш, Веронцю, скільки вже часу я живу без серця? (...) одного дня серце скоренько забралося з мене, як який злодій після крадіжки. І спорожнило в мені місце. В один день – так, як би вмерло, – і не сказало. Дірку в грудях, як від кулі, зробило. Ніби й не було серця в мені" ("Do you know, Verontsia, how long I have been living without heart? (...) one day, my heart left me like a thief after a robbery. And a place within me was emptied. Overnight, as if it had died, it did not speak. A hole in my chest, like a bullet, was made. As if there were no heart inside") [Matios, 2023, p. 30]. The younger mother's pain serves as the catalyst that shatters the emotional barrier behind which Mykhailyna, the elder mother, had concealed the grief of losing her only son, who was tortured by the NKVD. The tragedy, hopelessness, weight of grief, and its physical echo (time does not heal a mother's grief!) are also expressed in the final chord: Verontsia's state is a state of altered consciousness she experienced when the head of the village council came to the yard to inform her of her son's death.

The chronotope of the *Mother Mykhailyna* novella expands to cover, as the author indicates on the title page, the period "between 1952 and 2015". The fictional world is distinctly polarised, encompassing not only the extremes of life and death but also those of light and darkness, the human and the demonic, as well as the human and the degenerate. The polarity is manifested in the compositional elements, narrative strategy, and lexical choices in the dialogues between the NKVD officer and the tortured boy's mother. Light and darkness are manifested on the lexis level in the contrast of the officer's vulgar language, which "stinks up the place" from the torture he uses on Mykhailyna, and the light of incredibly painful tenderness that keeps the woman's heart alive in this world with the flashes of her subconscious about her late loner. Thus, the novella's main compositional device becomes contrast.

The chronotope of the work is modeled to convey the physical sensation of pain as a road to Calvary, not for the son, but for the mother: to that terrible place where she will see the tortured body of her loner. This road of suffering occupies only two pages in the book, yet the time filled with torture and the fear of witnessing her child's death — a fear so intense it physically suffocates the

woman — along with the presence of her executioner's hands, is rendered with such vividness that it materialises as though heavy grave blocks rest upon her shoulders. A fraction of a minute, when the mother looks at the helpless body of the young man, unfolds into a series of flashes of memories. This flow of memories is already perceived as a stream of the subconscious, with the warmth of love and tenderness in it. It opposes the darkness that seems about to swallow the whole earth. Only a mother who has experienced the incredible trauma of loss herself and whose most precious treasure is her memories could write in this manner: on a physical, tangible level, conveying the smell of a baby, the milky tenderness of a child's body, the touch of a bang of "flaxen hair".

Brutal cursing, physical force, and an officer demanding that the mother recognise her son tear Mykhailina from that saving world. Physical torture, multiplied by moral torture, becomes unbearable—the increase in physical suffering is brought to the limit: *"Якби хто дав їй хоч крапельку водички... хоч одну сльозичку... лиш аби несолену... бо язик перекрив її горло... розпухлий язик став упоперек горла, мов колода..."* ("If someone had given her even a drop of water... even a single tear... just unsalted... because her tongue was blocking her throat... her swollen tongue was stuck across her throat like a log...") [Matios, 2023, p. 44]. It is no accident that the author emphasises strangulation, the inability to speak. This condition would persist within her body for the remainder of her life, with only two notable occurrences — one in the forest and the other in the yard in Verontsia — when a throat spasm overwhelms her. At the moment when the executioner forces the mother close enough to witness the blood spilling from the wound on her son's body, Mykhailyna loses consciousness. But the executioner does not let the mother die because he needs the woman to recognise her son. Then he will destroy the whole village, and take it to Siberia. The narrative strategy of this episode is contrastingly twofold: the terribleness, black world in which the NKVD officer kills the woman, and the world of saving memories-delusions, where the woman's psyche escapes and falters. And only maternal love gives her the strength to shout at the executioner: *"Не мій! Не мі—ііі-й!"* ("Not mine! Not mi-i-ine!"). When the woman was released, some force drove her semi-conscious body into the forest. Her high-pitched cry echoes like a refrain: *"Not mi-i-ine!"*. Both the physical and mental state of the mother, who is going crazy with pain, finds expression in the elements of expressionist poetry: *"Здається, то від її надсадного крику, що розриває голосові зв'язки і гортань, і легені, з верхів'я дерев падають старі пташині гнізда із задавненими яйцями, і розбиті на льоту, сипляться додолю жовтим смердючим дощем"* ("It seems that it is her overwhelming cry, which tears the vocal cords and larynx and lungs, that causes old bird nests with strangled eggs falling from the treetops, and broken on the fly, falling to the ground in a yellow stinking rain") [Matios, 2023, p. 50].

The pain of the trauma is embodied in the woman's scream that fills the forest. Her scream reaches the sky, but the sky has undergone a terrible transformation: *"там, де має сяяти бездонна височинь, відбиваються якісь потворні привиди, (...) і всі — з обличчям її ката"* ("Where the bottomless heights should shine, some ugly ghosts are reflected, (...) all with the face of her executioner") [Matios, 2023, p. 52]. The profound loneliness of an indifferent world, coupled with the distortion of the heroine's consciousness, is underscored by a resonant parallel with Edvard Munch's "The Scream".

The introduction of a plot element — the appearance of "hawks" armed with machine guns — moderately alleviates the narrative tension, even preventing Mykhailyna from descending into madness. However, even this face of death turns away from her, and a neighbour tosses his scroll to the woman to keep her warm. The mental and physical state of the woman is conveyed through her desire to become small enough to hide in the ground — her dry, exhausted body falls like a dried leaf: *"Вона хоче заpastися в землю і шукає в ній шпаринку, куди могла би вміститися разом зі своїм болем"* ("She wants to hide in the ground and is looking for a hole where she can fit in with her pain") [Matios, 2023, p. 55]. However, the "cardiogram" of the narrative again gives a surge: the heart comes back to life with fierce pain. The use of transformed parallelism, serving as a metaphor, accentuates her condition: *"Шепчуть сухі губи.. та де там шепчуть — шелестять у шерхлий буковий листочок"* ("Dry lips whisper... they do not even whisper, but rustle into a rough beech leaf") [Matios, 2023, p. 55]. Contrast also plays an important role in modeling the composition of this fragment: whispering contrasts with shouting in the previous and subsequent fragments. The main principle of constructing the internal monologue, the stream of the heroine's consciousness, which reproduces the depth of her pain, is also the use of gradation. The trauma breaks out, *"comes out of*

silence” — from a quiet whispering — wailing “*ту...ту*” to sobbing-wailing: “*Отак би вме-е-рми... І щоб закопа-а-а-ли коло нього... Щоб укрила його собо-о-о-о-ю... зігрів-а-а-а...*” (“I wish I could di-i-i-ie... I wish I could be bu-u-u-ried near him... I wish I could co-o-o-o-ver him with my body... wa-a-a-a-rm him...”) [Matios, 2023, p. 55]. The details of physical suffering are again conveyed by emphasising suffocation — the trauma is so terrible, so strong that it has taken over the entire body, constricted her breath, and cut off access to vital energy: “*хтось спирає дихання. Отako тримає, мов який убійник, двома руками за горло, трохи відпускає і знов різко затягує дужче, продовжуючи її муки*” (“Someone is holding his breath. Like a murderer, he grips her throat with both hands, releases it slightly, and then suddenly tightens it again, prolonging her torment”) [Matios, 2023, p. 56]. However, Mykhailyna must live and she hopes deep in her heart that her son’s girlfriend may be pregnant. This fragment of the novella is extremely emotionally compressed, the images used here are multidimensional, and often built on the principle of gradation. As the most intense pain diminishes, the woman experiences a sensation as though her heart has frozen within her chest. A memory comes to mind that was a terrible omen—the pendulum of the clock stopped yesterday, just like her heart. Mykhailyna was afraid of that pendulum, its ticking caused a terrible association for the woman: “*гучно цокав годинник, як бувало цокала гадина, гріючись в теплому попелі в печі*” (“The clock ticked so loudly as the vermin used to when warming in the warm ashes in the oven”) [Matios, 2023, p. 57]. It should be noted that the symbolism of images, metaphors, and similes that encode the sense of distress fill the textual model of the world with the memory of the body.

Maria Matios’s novel often conveys the physiological state of deep trauma through metaphors and similes (“*береться лід попід грудьми і різьє під колінами*” / “ice is taken under her breasts and cuts under her knees”, “*аж хустка не витримує болю: падає під ноги*” / “the scarf cannot withstand the pain: It falls under her feet”, “*як устекла вовчиця*” / “like a wolf that went away”, “*вона біжить, розтинаючи горло повітрям, мов шаблюю*” / “she runs, cutting her throat with the air like a saber”, “*безпросвітна чорна пелена затягує очі і тягне донизу*” / “a pitch-black veil tightens her eyes and pulls her down”, a neighbouring hawk “*безжалюбно обтирає словами ніж об її серце*” / “ruthlessly wipes his knife on her heart”, under the hawk’s feet “*так гучно тріщить гілля, як хрускають поламані кістки*” / “the branches crack as loudly as broken bones”, “*її крик розриває ліс, як гранатою*” / “her scream tears the forest like a grenade”). As Snizhana Zhyhun points out, the metaphorisation process constitutes trauma narrative formation [Zhyhun, 2023, p. 58]. These stylistic devices — metaphor and simile — reveal the spontaneous bodily expressions of the traumatised individual and the underlying semantic fabric of the act. “Trauma theory and the role of metaphor in it suggest that when used as an attempt to describe what cannot be described or represented in a literary text, metaphor can function as a literary, poetic metaphor, as well as describe a traumatic experience, the memory of trauma, and the process of recovery” [Anker, 2009, p. 59].

The final fragment of the *Mother Mykhailyna* novella places an important emotional and semantic load on caressing words. This is how tenderness is subtly called out in a mother’s soul, which seems to be burned to ashes by profound grief: in the place where the collective farm cattle graveyard used to be, where her son was buried, “*покладе на землю, як горобчикові, мацюську склянку з водичкою, накриту кусником свіжого хлібчика. Може, заспокоєна в небесах синова душка прилетить на це місце (...) обвіяти своїми крильцями маму, якщо люди і нелюди зробили так, що сирота мама не має де прихилитися до хреста на його могилі... та й хрест не має де звести... хіба що втомлену від ріпаку земельку потайки обтиче дрібними – в мизинний палець – хрестиками з дубового дерева*” (“she will put a minuscule glass of water covered with a piece of fresh bread on the ground, as if for a sparrow. Perhaps the son’s soul, at peace in heaven, will fly to this place (...) to wrap his wings around his mother, if people and friends have made it so that the orphaned mother has no cross to lean against on his grave... and there is no place to erect a cross... unless the earth, tired of rapeseed, is secretly covered with small crosses made of oak wood which size is of a pinky finger”) [Matios, 2023, p. 50].

However, the performativity of memory, and its social structuring during the long era of Soviet darkness were impossible for people like Mykhailyna. After all, even the spatiality of memory was taboo in those conditions — the executioners did not leave mothers’ graves to mourn their sons. Verontsia has her son’s grave to mourn and to place a candle on. Mykhailyna goes to the village cemetery and puts candles only on the graves of young boys: “*дідам же свічок умисне ніколи не світить, (...) серед них (...) є не один такий, що колись давно край лісу слухав виття не одної*

осиротілої мамі-вовчиці” (“The grandfathers never have candles on purpose, (...) among them (...) there is more than one who once upon a time listened to the howls of more than one orphaned mother wolf at the edge of the forest”) [Matios, 2023, p. 60].

The final “chord” of the novel, with the generalised image of “orphaned mothers” used, sounds like an echo of that distant shot that continues to sound in mothers’ hearts: “*She is unforgiving*”. This novella is both a reminder and a caveat. Memory requires purification. Trauma is purification and repentance, the purification our land has not yet undergone. Oksana Pukhonska, a researcher examining the “culture of wound” in contemporary Ukrainian literature, emphasises that “a piece of fiction performs the function of cultural therapy,” which, she argues, is “perhaps the most effective mechanism within the culture of wound” [Pukhonska, 2022, p. 8].

The narrative of the Mom’s suffering and fate continues in contemporary times through the novella *Mother Sydoniia*. The plot of this work is the most eventful of all five works that make up the “drama in six acts”; the plot unfolds clearly in chronological order. The story follows the model of “The Virgin’s Walk Through the Torments”. The epic length of the first parts of the piece includes a story about the life of a village nurse Sidoniia, her difficult everyday life, the struggles she faces raising her son alone, and the tragic love that destroys her son’s soul, leading the gentle and hardworking Vitalik to turn to alcohol. However, Sydoniia’s suffering has only just begun: 2014 sees her son go as a volunteer soldier to Donbas.

Maria Matios raises many issues relevant to our time such as the state’s attitude toward volunteers, the mothers and relatives of the fallen and missing, and the soldiers suffering from PTSD. Her character camps on the doorstep of the military commissar but learns nothing beyond the word “missing”. Only an appeal to the police yields results: the woman receives a large envelope with many pages of calculations and terms that the mother does not understand. However, Mother’s heart already knew what was in that envelope: “Тримала нерозпечатаний конверт, як, мабуть, солдати тримають гранату з витягнутою чекою: боялася не те що зрушити з місця – дихнути” (“I held the envelope unopened like a soldier holds a grenade with a pin pulled out. I was afraid to move or even breathe”) [Matios, 2023, p. 131]. The novella has several climaxes, but this episode becomes the central climax by the force of tension: the woman, “as if in weightlessness”, slides to the floor. The description of Sydoniia’s mental state as “on the verge” of a giant swing, the physical feeling of nausea meaning that her consciousness cannot accept the conclusion of the forensic examination. It states that the “mitotype” of the bones of an “unidentified male” matches her own. The nausea conveys the splitting and destruction of consciousness: “*The letters move like living monsters*”. The desire to get rid of this horror drives her to attempt suicide: “Це був кінець усього і кінець її життя. Тунель, з якого немає виходу і де відсутнє світло” (“It was the end of everything and the end of her life. A tunnel with no exit and no light”) [Matios, 2023, p. 143].

The trauma of loss is closely related to space and “socially structured” memory of the body [Connerton, 2004, p. 33]. The concept of the “spatiality of memory and its social structuring” is the subject of Pierre Nora’s “Realms of Memory” [2011]. Maria Matios’s novel also describes in detail one of the real “realms of memory” which is the cemetery with the largest burial of temporarily unidentified dead ATO participants. A “realm of memory” where non-memory dominates: “Сотнями чорних птахів всілися (...) могили». «І скільки не глянь – невстановлені... невстановлені... лише пронумеровані” (“Hundreds of blackbirds dot (...) the graves. And no matter how much you see of them, they are unidentified... unidentified... only numbered”). Even this cemetery world is built on contrast. On one hand, there is a well-maintained old cemetery with pompous monuments; on the other hand, graves “обкладені дертю чи просто скибами землі” (“covered with tarpaulin or just pieces of earth”) [Matios, 2023, p. 155]. The only memory they have is of an overgrown highbush cranberry with bloody berries. The traditional image and symbol of the highbush cranberry, which symbolised the shed blood of ancient times on our land, acquires new connotations in the piece. Now it burns like a candle of memory. Sydoniia’s decision not to disturb her son’s ashes and leave him among those like him is also a tribute to the memory of the dead, as if he belongs to that community posthumously. A woman from a distant Bukovyna village spends long evenings and nights embroidering towels to come to her son’s grave twice a year instead and honor those who are unidentified and unvisited in this way, at least. The woman thinks that the warmth of her hands spills over into the sewing, and then passes from the towel to the cross, “and from the cross, it goes to the ground”, to her son and

those fighters not sought after. Her embroidery is also a language, a mother expresses her pain and love in the way unspoken feelings become colorful flowers and symbols on the canvas that provide a way out of trauma.

Sydoniia is a Mother who managed to find the strength to live for others. For the necessitous, for example, five psychiatric patients with PTSD who fought near Ilovaisk, Marinka, and Debaltsevo. She becomes their mother, treats their injuries, and thus fills her own heart with love: “Вона відчула себе одночасно їхнім сторожем, і таємним охоронцем, і сестрою-жалібницею, і мамою” (“She felt like their watchman, their secret guardian, their sister, their mourner, and their mother at the same time”) [Matios, 2023, p. 193]. Maria Matios raises an ongoing issue for our society which is providing psychological assistance to veterans. The author speaks through the mouth of her heroine about the indifference that prevails in society and government offices. The five patients of the rehabilitation centre — “five guys with deep cuts in their minds” — are each traumatised in their way (one is constantly cold, another has closed himself off, and the other becomes aggressive when he sees a man in a military uniform), but yesterday’s heroes desperately need help they will not cope without. The author describes the process of treatment as uttering the trauma; the therapist’s voice “draws out the stagnant, rancid, stinking things from the boys,” and “they spill out the silt and scale, stench and anger” during the sessions.

The author states that pain does not pass but trauma is healable. Love is the medicine. Another sprout grows in the ashes.

The protagonist of the novella, *Mamai’s Mother*, is a woman who has never physically become a mother, though she has the brilliance of motherhood in her, which, unrealised in a child, longs to manifest into the world to become the mother of all living things. Nearly the entire short story is a monologue between old Yilenka and her cat Mamai. Such vocative expressions as ‘human’, ‘boy’, and ‘little bugger’ serve as joking reproaches for him not wanting to “eat borshch”, tells him village news.

Pietà is the final “chorus” in the architectonics of a “drama in six acts” (to emphasise the author’s definition of the work), creating, together with the opening *Mother Maria* novella, a “volt arc” thanks to an expressive allusion to Michelangelo Buonarroti’s “The Pietà”. The author’s invocation of the figure of the suffering Mother of God, immortalised in marble, completes the circle of intense emotional tension, transforming it into Love and, consequently, into Eternity. Here is a call and warning to protect the Mother who has suffered the trauma of loss: “Скорбота матері безмежна.../ Вона поза часом і осудом” (“A mother’s grief is boundless.../ It is beyond time and judgment”). This trauma is symbolised by a marker sign called a “mourning shawl.” The *Pietà* narrative sounds like a protection spell: “Ні шурхотом підшов / Ні диханням / Ні словом / Ні поглядом у спину” (“Neither a rustle of soles / Nor a breath / Nor a word / Nor a look in the back”). The trauma tends to “come out of silence” which means that the technique of gradation successfully conveys the tension: “Тоді мені хочеться на всі сторони світу / кричати/ шепотіти / хрипіти” (“Then I want to shout / scream / whisper / wheeze to all sides of the world”) [Matios, 2023, p. 282].

The author, across the abyss of epochs, appeals to the Eternal that is maternal love being able to overcome the strong grip of trauma by its power and devote itself to the service of the ideal of Good.

Hanna Uliura’s “Writing War” notes that trauma is neither about the time nor about the cause of our pain. Trauma is what our consciousness and later our memory will do with the pain we have experienced [Uliura, 2023, p. 13]. Each of the characters in Matios’s work carries her trauma. Everyone lives with it or lives it in their way. Trauma is multifaceted, but the mask of multifacetedness conceals a terrible essence of the wound. For a wound to heal, it needs to be “heard,” “mourned,” and let go.

Our analysis allows us to assert that the idea-figurative and genre-compositional levels of the poetics in Maria Matios’s “Mothers” are geared towards unveiling the problem of trauma caused by loss. This includes the textualisation of trauma as a memory not only of present-day crimes but also of neglected wounds, as well as the realisation of the concept of reliving the “catastrophic experience” shared by both the entire nation and each individual sufferer. The narrative strategy of overcoming the repressive effect of trauma chosen by the author manifested itself in the genre and compositional specificity of the work (the presence of a dramatic component in the construction of dialogues and monologues, so in terms of emotional tension, we consider this work a novel-drama).

The goal of expanding the time and space of trauma from the life of an individual to the times of trauma of entire generations is determined by the fragmentation of the composition of the work. The ring framing is also subordinated to this function: the first short story (a kind of introduction), built on

the principles of lyricised prose composition, combined with the final fragment, i.e. poetry in prose, constitutes a “voltaic arc” of high emotional tension. An important role in the compositional integrity of the novel-drama, as well as in the ideological and thematic unity of its various parts, is played by the author’s dedication, the microcomposition of which is grounded in gradation.

The main compositional technique in the novel used by the author to reveal the theme of maternal loss both during the liberation struggle against the invaders and in the current war against Ukraine is contrast manifested in compositional elements, narrative strategy, lexical coloring of dialogues, and often gradation. Contrast is also the main principle of constructing the internal monologue-stream of consciousness of the protagonists reproducing the depth of pain. The analysis of the psychological modeling of the work’s figurative system discloses the trauma through the use of elements of expressionist poetry (*Mama Mykhailyna*), oneirism (*Mama Maria*), emphasising the state of altered consciousness, suffocation, and the contrast of shouting and whispering. The artistic world of Maria Matios’s novel is also full of symbolic signs. The depth of the trauma is also conveyed through psychologically loaded metaphors and similes that encode the sense of distress. The symbolism of such images and signs expressively fills the textual model of the world in the novel with the memory of the body, they unfold the spontaneous bodily expression of the traumatised person and the semantic fabric of the deed.

The work’s receptive horizons imply an active interaction with the reader meaning that the author always offers the reader a dialog on the last pages, “alienating” himself from the text, in the final image of the world he has built. The final part of Maria Matios’s *Pietà* serves as a protective spell for all mothers who have endured the trauma of loss. It is a magic word that converts cries of pain into lasting memories.

Maria Matios’s novel is a “specific mode of testimony” (Felman) about the crimes committed against Ukrainians in the last century up to now. And the author’s voice as the “voice of the Other,” overcomes the silence of trauma, testifies, and “speaks the language that will remain alive on the other side of the trauma” [Caruth, 2013, p. 92], even “in the ashes of history,” to demand justice. Matios’s novel reveals the concept of a leading strategy for the literature of testimony, where the author replaces the voice of the Other with one’s own: “The witness testifies through his unconscious body” [Felman, 2002, p. 163]. It is the “author’s body”, one’s voice becomes the “body and voice of the Other”. It is the voices and bodies of Mothers who have suffered the terrible trauma of losing their dearest one for Matios’s work. This language of pain and catharsis will “clearly glow” in the reader’s perception of the text, whose generation inherited unexpressed traumas...

Raising numerous topical issues (impunity for crimes against the Ukrainian Insurgent Army fighters, the attitude of the state and society toward volunteers, mothers and relatives of the fallen and missing in the ATO, and soldiers with PTSD), the author suggests the need to comprehend historical and current “catastrophic experiences,” to overcome the trauma of both an individual and the entire nation through the knowledge of the truth and service to the idea of Good.

The prospects of the study include an analysis of the trauma study (including collective trauma) in other Maria Matios’s works, and the development of research in the field of “women’s discourse of trauma”, which constitutes “a new page in the memory study” [Bondareva, 2023].

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ARTISTIC MEANS OF REPRESENTING LOSS EXPERIENCE: M. MATIOS' "MOMS" IN TRAUMA STUDIES CONTEXT

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Key words: Maria Matios, contemporary Ukrainian literature, trauma of maternal loss, narrative, artistic and imagery system, architectonics, metaphor, Drama novel «Moms».

The article explores the latest work of the contemporary Ukrainian writer Maria Matios – "Moms", in which the author continues the study of female trauma, which has remained overlooked by literary scholars until now. Therefore, the purpose of the research is to identify the genre-compositional and artistic-imagery aspects through which the theme of "maternal loss" is developed in Matios's work. The objective of the study is to examine how, through narrative strategy realised in compositional mastery and in the specificity of artistic imagery of the work, the author transforms her own traumatic experience into the discovery of therapeutic possibilities.

To achieve the set purpose, the authors resorted to the methodology of *trauma studies*. Authors also employed various interpretative methods, including psychoanalysis, hermeneutics, receptive aesthetics, interpretative, and structural analysis.

The study of the genre-compositional and artistic-imagery features of Maria Matios's work "Moms" reveals the writer's skill in addressing the "maternal loss" theme.

The work of the writer chosen for the study is distinguished by a special composition, a specific narrative structure due to the inclusion of the author's personal traumatic experience in the artistic fabric.

“Moms” is a real “way out of silence” and a narrative practice of overcoming the repressive effects of trauma; it is notable for its emotional and figurative component, as well as for its genre specificity (the author’s definition of “drama in six acts”) and architectonics. The common theme here unites six separate parts, two of which form a circular frame and unfold according to the musical principle of lyrical prose composition. The plot revolves around the stories of five mothers, not only different in social status, time of trauma-loss, and openness of their inner world to the reader, but also united by the trauma of losing their dearest ones – their sons.

In Maria Matios’s novel, trauma emerges as “the central intra-textual category” (Olivier), and it definitely determines the narrative strategy. While the narrative organisation of the first short story is formed as an internal monologue, the other four short stories, which constitute the actual plot of the work, are dominated by dialogues combined with an internal monologue, which often transforms into a stream of consciousness.

The narrative strategy of overcoming the repressive effect of trauma is determined by the genre and compositional specificity of the work: the author’s definition of “drama in six acts” emphasises the category of the tragic as one of the fundamental factors of human existence in the artistic world of the novel. However, based on the traditional interpretation of literary categories and genres in literary criticism, we classify this work as a novel in short stories, and, in terms of emotional tension, a novel-drama.

The specificity of the composition of the work lies primarily in the fact that each part of it – a separate short story – has its own structure of a completely independent, complete literary text, while the architectonics of the entire work is characterised by an orientation towards enhancing the emotional and figurative, lyricised component combined with the plot. Each of the short stories has its own temporal and spatial framework (while in “Mom Verontsia” it is limited to one day, the chronotope of the short story “Mom Mykhailyna” covers the period “between 1952 to 2015”). Moreover, certain fragments of one novel have their own specific model of chronotope (the climactic episode in “Mom Mykhailyna” clearly resembles the “The Road to Calvary”; “Mom Sidoniia” contains an allusion to the “The Virgin’s Walk Through the Torments”). The time-space framework of the whole novel unfolds in the final section, where the allusion to Michelangelo’s “Pietà” expands the narrative’s scope to the dimensions of eternity. The space of memory in Maria Matios’s work is marked by “mnemonic marks”: the locus of the cemetery, the image of a candle, the White Dove, a viburnum bush, and towels on the crosses of unmarked graves.

The main compositional technique in the novel used by the author is contrast, which is manifested in compositional elements, narrative strategy, and the lexical coloring of the dialogues. Contrast also serves as the main principle of developing the internal monologue-stream of consciousness of the protagonists, reproducing the depth of their pain. The analysis of the psychological modeling of the work’s figurative system reveals the representation of trauma through the use of elements of expressionist poetics (in “Mom Mykhailyna”) and oneirism (in “Mom Maria”), emphasising the state of altered consciousness, suffocation, and the contrast between screaming and whispering. The artistic world of Maria Matios’s novel is also rich in speaking signs and symbols. The depth of the trauma is also conveyed through the use of psychologically charged metaphors and similes that encode a sense of distress. The symbolism of such image-signs expressively fills the textual world in the novel with the memory of the body, they reveal the spontaneous bodily expression of the traumatised individual and unfolding the semantic fabric of the act.