

THE PECULIARITY OF R. GLAZAR'S TESTIMONY IN THE CONTEXT OF LITERARY WORKS ON THE SUBJECT OF THE HOLOCAUST

^aZUZANA VARGOVÁ

Faculty of Central European Studies, Constantine the
Philosopher University, Institute of Languages and Culture of
Central Europe,
Dražovská 4, 949 01 Nitra
email: "zvargova@ukf.sk"

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Abstract: The book *Trap with a Green Fence: Survival in Treblinka* by Richard Glazar is about the testimony of personal experiences of the Jews who survived their own death in the Nazi extermination camps daily. The interpretation of the introduced novels from the point of view of the author's relation to the depicted reality (*genre aspect, literary characters, documentarity, fabulosity*) stands in the centre of the paper.

Keywords: Novel. Holocaust. Author. Narrator. Time. Space.

1 Introduction

Literary works with the theme of the Holocaust and concentration camps are often created against the background of the authors' personal life experiences, reflecting not only individual memories but also the broader context of the time. This interconnectedness of historiography and literature leads the German cultural and literary theorist Aleida Assman to the possibilities of literature "to fill in the gaps in historiography, to show what historians are not interested in and what they cannot deal with for various reasons. A similar attempt in the literature to point out white spaces can be found, for example, in the literary treatment of experience (...) by authors writing about the Holocaust. These authors were convinced that traumatic experiences from the past must not disappear without a trace – their inner need motivated them to tell the story so that the experience would not be forgotten" (Bílá místa kulturní paměti, 2013, p. 66).¹ Although literary works on the subject of the Holocaust are not about the objectification of historical events, they are nonetheless, in a figurative sense, historical documents, thanks to their realistic depiction of the environment, an artistic "testimony" to the morality of society, a particular way of coping with the experienced trauma and brutality². Most of them are "texts that were written after the end of the war – i.e. after the Holocaust period, but they logically stem from it (there is, however, a shift in the time of the events) – they are therefore memories" (Šuša, 2010, p. 197).³ Among such works is R. Glazar's⁴ *Trap with a Green Fence: Survival in Treblinka* (1992), whose aim is "undoubtedly to leave a testimony in the reader's mind – to communicate to them a concrete experience, so that through it they could get to know not only the fates of the witnesses of the event (described in the memoirs), but also the given time, ideology, and philosophy" (Šuša, 2009, p. 58). The

paper will thus attempt to contour the genre specificities of the work but also the peculiarities of Glazar's testimony.

2 The genealogical aspect

As we have already indicated above, in terms of genre, the work belongs to memoir or memoir prose.⁵ Memoirs stand on the borderline between factual and fictional literature (Žilka, 1984, p. 275; Válek, 2013), at the centre of which are events the author himself experienced or witnessed. (Žilka, 2011; Findra et al., 1987, p. 238, Šuša, 2009). Because of this liminal position, the boundaries between memoir and similar genres such as autobiography, historical prose, chronicle, and novel are not always clear. We will thus outline the genre characteristics of memoirs precisely against the background of comparisons. We will rely on dictionaries and encyclopaedic works and the works of I. Pospíšil, I. Šuša, M. Válek and others who have expressed their views on the issue.

Unlike an autobiography, a memoir focuses not only on the author himself, the facts of his life (Jariabka, 2006; Kúchová, 2011) but above all on the surrounding world, experienced events and people they came into contact with (Kúchová, 2011).⁶ Thus, for example, in the first chapter, the personal life of the memorialist is intertwined with the social one; personal experiences are interspersed with brief references to discriminatory legislative measures, degradation and the circumstances of deportation, thus moving from the personality of the narrator-memorialist to the depiction of the environment and time. With his stylised life story, Glazar indirectly creates a self-portrait. (Pospíšil, 1986, p. 28). T. Žilka emphasises the interweaving of personal experiences and social and historical context in this type (Žilka, 1984, p. 318). This circumstance brings these genres closer together and even leads to classifying the analysed work as an autobiographical novel.⁷

Focusing on the past forces us to outline the differences between memoirs and historical prose. We will rely on the views of M. Válek, who derives his considerations from the way reality is depicted in the text, which is understandable since non-fiction and works with a historical theme is primarily based on concrete facts and data (place, precise time, event, famous persons and personalities) (Žilka, 1984, p. 45). On the other hand, R. Bílik perceives the historical genre as a fictional thematisation (authorial fiction) derived from historical fact (Bílik, 2008, p. 41), i.e. the author relies on history but applies his creative invention, verifiable by historical documents. In the case of memoirs, the "generator" of the primary thematic line is likewise "historical fact as part of cultural memory", but it is an effort to portray reality – the experienced – as faithfully as possible.⁸ The author's subjective choice of facts can also lead to gaps in the narrative⁹, but the author deliberately does not fill them in (unlike in historical prose). In general, it is unnecessary to talk about the aspect of truth value in memoirs.¹⁰ The subjective and objective relation can replace the relationship between factual and fictional. The basis of the thematic line is the overcoming of a – commonly known – "life problem situation" and related

¹ Beyond this testimonial value, however, A. Assman identifies greater possibilities for literary creation, since it is she who is „less dependent on the social framework conditions and perceives news that remains outside the current social and political framework, i. e. unnoticed topics or unexplored aspects of historical memory“ (Bílá místa kulturní paměti, 2013, p. 66). It is possible to discuss this opinion even in view of the significant determination of the artistic creation of previous decades by other than aesthetic criteria.

² See, for example: Antoňová, 2022. Also in this context, Ján Gallik, in his study entitled *Motiv smrti v tvorbe autorov slovenskej, českej a maďarskej katolíckej literatúry* [The Motif of Death in the Work of Authors of Slovak, Czech and Hungarian Catholic Literature] (2019), mentions the poetic work about the Holocaust by the Hungarian poet János Pilinszky. The collection *Harmadnapon* (On the Third Day), published in 1959, contains a number of poems that bear a specific indication in their title, i.e. a place and a date, reflecting the essence of the event experienced. In them, the author depicts desolation, loneliness, suffering and transience mainly through the lens of his personal experience of what he calls the "irreparable scandal" of the horrors of the Second World War and especially the Holocaust itself.

³ In literary terminology, we encounter the definition of memoir as a genre of memoir prose. See Válek, 2006, p. 255.

⁴ Richard Glazar (1920 - 1997), real name Richard Richard Goldschmied, was born in Prague. After his high school studies, he worked as a farmer in Povltavi until he was deported to Terezín and later to Treblinka (1940-1942). The work was published in German *Die Falle mit dem grünen Zaun* [The trap with the green fence] (1993).

⁵ Memories and memoirs are often considered synonymous.

⁶ M. Valček considers autobiography a type of memoir literature, an autobiographical novel as a "novelistic transposition of biographical material" (Valček, 2006, p. 30-31), in M. Potemra's typology it is the other way around, a memoir is one of the most famous forms of autobiography (Potemra, 1971, p. 176). P. Liba classifies memoirs and autobiographies as autochthonous biographical genres of literary creation (Liba, 1995).

⁷ We also encounter such a genre classification when evaluating Glazar's work.

⁸ According to D. Mocná and J. Peterka, it is the relationship to reality that is an aspect of distinguishing individual types of memoirs (authentic and fictitious), but on the basis of other features one can speak of monographic (creator-life-work), panoramic (historical connections), fictionalized and mosaic-like (memories) memoirs (see Mocná - Peterka, p. 437).

⁹ The choice of facts is subordinate to the author's intention.

¹⁰ This can be done not only by comparing memoirs with each other on the same subject, but also by comparing them with other sources that in one way or another intertwine with the narrated events. Thus, for example, one can compare the history sketched by R. Glazar (2012, p. 34-35) and the history of Treblinka given by Krákorová and Krákor (2003, p. 115).

personal experiences, the author's attitude to the world and events. The author's statement's authenticity and attitude can be perceived as a subjective fact "oriented towards an open and honest presentation of feelings. It shows that no conventions have value but original perception, personal feeling and understanding. It strives for persuasiveness, (...) it emphasises content, information; it carries its ethos" (Plesník, 2011, p. 54). The uniqueness (authenticity) of the "narrative action formula" in biographical genres (also referring to Glazar's novel) – according to M. Jurčo – can also be evaluated as a particular variant of documentarism (Jurčo, 1999).

The chronological narrative is a common feature of memoirs and chronicles. A chronological sequence of historical events also characterises the chronicle as a medieval epic genre, but unlike memoirs, without deeper contexts (Žilka, 2011, p. 202; Valček, 2006, p. 203; Findra – Gombala – Plintovič, p. 185). The chronicle lacks the author's evaluative aspect. Recording historical facts and events with the application of narrative, fictionalisation of history and entertainment function (which was characteristic, especially in the Renaissance and Humanism)¹¹ leads to bringing the chronicle closer to the genre of memoirs, using the chronicler's method of narration.

Narrativity links memoirs to the so-called narrative (storytelling) chronicle and the novel as the most widespread genre of contemporary prose. Based on the nature of the plot (inclination towards fiction or reality), one of the genre forms of the novel is the novel-in-fact (see Hodrová, 1989, p. 10), whose initial genres are – in addition to chronicle, autobiography, and diary – also memoir (Žilka, 2011, p. 302). In addition to the novel, the memoir is characterised by some of the features of other epic genres: as in the short story, it employs the simplicity of the plot and the linearity of the narrative, the contouring of the characters as in the novella, and the literary treatment of documentary elements characteristic of the feature (Šuša, 2010, p. 202).

The suggested genre overlaps and genre syncretism lead us to the conclusion, also concerning the analysed work, about the appropriateness of Pospíšil's term memoir novel, which he uses to refer to "a huge conglomerate of several types of the novel (biographical, novel chronicle, social, political, philosophical novel)" (Pospíšil, 1986, p. 26).

In addition to hybridity and genre syncretism, which I. Šuša explains by the primacy of the informational function over the aesthetic one, the intention to report, testimony with an emotional effect on the recipient, memoir prose is also characterised by other characteristics such as reflexivity, narrative, alternation of individual and collective (Šuša, 2009, p. 62).

3 The uniqueness of the author's testimony

The title of Richard Glazar's work already indicates the focus of his narrative on a specific period and space. However, in addition to the narrative, going beyond the camp literature and the author's involvement, the problem of the title, of intertextual extra-textual continuity, will form the starting point of our interpretive penetration.

3.1 Addressness and semantics of the work's title

At first glance, the semantic space of the work's title encodes the thematic focus of the narration itself. The name (Treblinka) is thrust to the fore, which despite its euphemistic colouring, evoking something friendly and positive on the outside, is nevertheless easy to decipher. It was one of the extermination camps during the Second World War. In the archive of immediate experiences and memories, Treblinka emerges as "the abyss of history", a "mysterious workshop of death", a "realm of the dead" with a strict camp regime populated by "living corpses" that make it "a place with memory", a place that

contains "the memories of all the beings who found themselves there (their stories often form an important part of the plot)" (Hodrová, 1989, p. 10). However, in the author's literary fiction, the primary meaning is connotatively expanded, activating the idea of Treblinka as a space of death or non-existence. "Once the gates of Treblinka close behind someone, there is no return to life" (Glazar, 2012, p. 23).¹² Explicitly and implicitly, it thus becomes "part of an ingeniously asserted authorial intention" (Plesník, 2011, p. 138). The specific development of the title can indicate other connotations that are revealed only after the reception of the work. The title evokes the idea of something unforgettable, such as, for example, a simple, easy-to-remember text of children's folklore; it can also represent a part of collective memory or manifest the interconnection of individual memories and the cultural memory of a given community or ethnic group. The present documentary testimony demonstrates that the foregrounding of the subject of representation happens through such stylistic qualities as explicitness and implicitness. Although the use of both techniques characterises the work, it is characterised by a degree of increased expressive explicitness, i.e. a tendency towards direct, unambiguous expression or representation (Plesník, 2011, p. 137). Its functionality lies, as suggested by the penetration made, in humanisation and education, and not only about one of the greatest "tragedies of humanity" of the 20th century. Glazar's work is equally directed against all ideologies that dehumanise human dignity.

3.2 From literary fiction to non-literary allusion

Glazar's personal experience translated into a work of art represents, based on H. Markiewicz's "fictional reality", which "depicts the essential features of the structure or laws of the relevant area of the real world" (Markiewicz, 1979, p. 182). R. Glazar thus depicts the period from the signing and aftermath of the Munich Agreement to the period of normalisation. It uses an allusion that directly refers to historical and social events in Czechoslovakia before and after the Second World War. The opening chapter includes the events that precede the novel's plot, and the final part adds further context to the author's life and ends with the author's voluntary exile and the year 1970. "March 1969 – I am leaving occupied Czechoslovakia. We commend ourselves that we must not look back at our family home and garden. 1970 – I leave my Swiss exile and political asylum for Düsseldorf, West Germany, to testify in the ongoing trial" (Glazar, 2012, p. 371). At the same time, the author chooses the diary form as a compositional means to increase the credibility of the epic dominant of his life story. Subjectivity manifests itself not only in the choice of facts but also in the precise dating of those events that foreshadow the problematic situation. "September 1938 – The school year begins normally. At home, my parents listen to Hitler's speech on the radio (...)... March 1939. September 1939. October 1939" (Glazar, 2012, p. 7-9). "The beginning of August 1968. March 1969" (Glazar, 2012, p. 370-371). Although Glazar directly talks about the Second World War and the Nazi regime's devastating consequences, his work is also an indictment of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia. "You live in a large concentration camp, it is an enjoyable concentration camp compared to Treblinka, but still, it is a concentration camp. Moreover, you have a dual role in it. You are locked up in it, and since you are not allowed to torture much, you are a prisoner-tortmentor. In the latter role, you are the boarder, and the food is presented to you if you at least quietly walk or ride along. This dual role is all the crueller for you, the more you remember how at that time you condemned for your fate even those who did nothing but turned their eyes away from the scenes" (Glazar, 2012, p. 362). The author thus draws a parallel between the transports and the separation of Czechoslovakia: "Not a living passenger soul anywhere – I am alone on a train from the warlock realm. Nevertheless, I am no stranger to the sorcerer's realm – I recognise it now. A depopulated area, ploughed front fields, barbed wire,

¹¹ I. Pospíšil speaks of the so-called narrative chronicle, which touches on history only "superficially", the emphasis is on narrativity (see Pospíšil, 1986, p. 23-33).

¹² Indeed, Treblinka as an extermination camp has the first place in the number of victims in the short period of its existence (estimated at 730 to 900 thousand in 1942-1943) (Survived the horrors of Treblinka - memories passed on, but tears cannot be unseen, 2012).

watchtowers on the borders. Everything in me rages, sues and curses" (Glazar, 2012, p. 362).

Even considering the author's assessment of the seventies and the creation of a parallel between the Nazi concentration camps and communist Czechoslovakia (Fafejta, 2004, p. 51), his memories are the "perpetuation" of two traumas, the roots of which are precisely related to anti-Semitism and its exacerbated form¹³. "September 1938 – The school year begins normally. At home, my parents listen to Hitler's speech on the radio. This suddenly startled me. Every time I get scared (...) I feel something like gunpowder at first.... Mobilisation – that is great – something strange is always going on, there are many people everywhere, and yet they all like each other (...). The professor at school – now deceased – lectures us, he says everything very seriously, and when I have some remarks and aphorisms to my classmates in the classroom, he says to me: »There will be a specific type of people whose pants will be particularly full at this time, and you are one of them« (Glazar, 2012, p. 7). The opening chapter reveals the widening gap between Jews and others, reporting anti-Jewish attitudes and ways of humiliating them. Exhibiting such psychological violence is not expressing fear but is accompanied by expressing nothingness and insecurity due to a lack of information. "8 September 1942 – Here I feel like a money changer, vain and useless; I walk and look around, sit, lie down, wait for food, night and the next day... 12 September – On the evening of the previous day, we learned that we would leave early in the morning. I never really know how or from where, but it always gets to me in time" (Glazar, 2012, p. 12-13).

A significant instance is, at the same time, the contemplating components. Their intention reflects the author's subjective attitude, but these reflections also represent the "narrative" starting point. "I meet some people down there in the town who also have yellow stars. Why do the older ones keep saying that they are actually proud of it and wear the star with pride? They are just saying that! I know it; I can feel it. As I walk down in the town, reins in hands according to the wagon, I sometimes realise that I'm still covering up the yellow star a bit" (Glazar, 2012, p. 11). Rendering of persecution, the hierarchisation in the social ladder and the discriminatory marking on clothing all raise the problem of ethnic identification. "I look at the inconspicuous people around me, picking out the ugly, squinting, nose-twisting, foot-invading ones, wondering whom I'd swap with and whom I wouldn't – it's a good game" (Glazar, 2012, p. 11). Using an allusion to Hitler's concept of selecting the Aryan race, the author also anchors the problem of human identity. However, he shifts it to an intuitive position. So we can only assume that he does not perceive identity against the background of physiological characteristics but as a phenomenon determined by the experience of the Self and the self-identification of the "I", which is embedded in broader social relations. Based on the above, personal identity emerges as self-awareness and self-knowledge, but social identity, compared to the previous active principle, represents a passive type of constructing identity as an innate or acquired characteristic. Glazar's identity is reflected in his knowledge of Jewish traditions (prayers) and his reflection of the basic principles of the Jewish religion, anchored in Deuteronomy (protection of life, the principle of retaliation). As is widely known, ethnicity and religion have become the source of nationalism and discrimination. This negative impact of social identification resonates in Glazar's reference to the legalisation of anti-Jewish measures, such as the limited admission of Jewish students to universities, in the adoption of a law establishing the wearing of a Jewish label. However, the exclusion of Jews from life – according to the goals of Nazi ideology – was done not only by anti-Jewish legislation but also by stirring up anti-Jewish sentiment in people who were previously unaware of this distinction of "otherness": "The year 1940 begins. There's still no plaque on the rink. In the wide oval of skates, I hear the girl in front of me say to the young man she's hooked into: »I'm looking forward to kicking those Jews out of here for good.« Did

she say that by accident, or did she know I was right behind them? I know them both a little from before when I was still dancing. I went for her a few times too. Hergot, so why did she even dance with me then?" (Glazar, 2012, p. 9). The author verbalises not only the persuasiveness of the Nazi theory of the "depravity" of the Jews but also the use of social mechanisms in their isolation. In this context, we can draw attention to the position of the Polish-British sociologist Z. Bauman, who, referring to the British historian I. Kerschawm finds a connection between hostility or indifference and both deportations and mass liquidations. "The more the Jews were pushed out of social life, the more they fit into the propaganda stereotype. Depersonalisation increased the already existing general indifference (...) and represented a necessary transitional stage between archaic violence and the rationalised 'assembly line' of extermination in the death camps. "The final solution would not have been possible without the gradual steps taken to exclude Jews from German society, which took place in full view of the public, in their legal form met with general approval and resulted in the dehumanisation and degradation of the figure of the Jew" (Bauman, 2003, p. 258-259). The thematisation of deportation thus provides a starting point for developing an epic narrative by setting up a situation that thematises the brutality and violence experienced.

3.3 The thematisation of brutality

Brutality and drastic expression are defined as "the focus of the utterance (...) on the depiction of raw, harsh, violent, rude expressions" (Plesník, 2011, p. 245). Glazar also uses the depiction of physical and psychological aggression in the concentration camp, which escalated into the mass extermination of Jews. The ethical dimension of the work is thus intensified by the images of violent practices used by the Nazis, which evoke horror, dismay, and compassion for the victims of violence.

Boundless cruelty and callousness were an immanent part of the camp's daily regime. After arriving at the concentration camp, Glazar was saved from death by chance. "The report rushes along the line, and an SS man passes me with his cap-boat perched from his forehead. Something slows him down as he almost passes me just runs his eyes over me. He stops, looks over his shoulder at me, and then turns to me: »You come too... You'll be working here«" (Glazar, 2012, p. 16). The following dialogue with a guard illustrates Treblinka's harsh reality: "»You« I try with the Vorarbeiter in German, »what is going on here? Where are the others – the naked ones?« »Tojt, ale tojt – Dead, all dead. If not now, then in a few minutes, for sure. This is a death camp, they're killing Jews here, and we've been chosen to help«" (Glazar, 2012, p. 17). Thus, from his arrival moment, Glazar is confronted with the machinery of systematic extermination created as part of Operation Reinhard. His survival strategy is to work and find a solution to escape the hopeless situation. Passive acceptance of fate replaces efforts to break free from it because "they beat the Jew because he allows himself to be beaten and therefore must start beating himself" (Glazar, 2012, p. 218). A witness to Nazi acts fights for bare existence and participates in drawing up an escape plan, which also means his rescue. "2 August, nineteen forty-three. »Revolution – the end of the war!« – the second part of the password is intended to confuse watchmen. »Hurray! « – at first individually, timidly – I can't get it out of my chest alone, it rumbles in my throat, now it finally breaks through – hooray! it joins, it grows stronger, a choral hurrah – and through Treblinka sounds a cry that has never come from it before – the cry of a man" (Glazar, 2012, p. 236). It reflects not only the Stoic aspect of ethics, the rejection of passivity but also Guardini's conception of man based on the unity of opposites – fate (determination by nature and society) and freedom (a feature of human nature) (Dancák, 2011, p. 88). However, as in Nietzsche (Gerbery, 2011, p. 111), this contradiction leads to "evolution", that is, to the struggle for one's own nature – freedom. The voice of conscience and altruistic motives in this fight for one's existence are characterised only as a manifestation of weakness. "And this is the transport from Terezín as I approach the platform; it is full of luggage, and among them, a few people

¹³ Prejudices against Jews as well as regulations governing their status in society have been known since the Middle Ages (see Vargová, 2011).

here and there, the remaining old people. I take her under the arm »Please, where are you taking me?« – Only at the end of the sentence is a sense of defenceless anxiety and concern. »To the lazaret...« So now it has come to me, too – I'll have to lead her all the way inside – (...). Well, you see, you've made up your mind, it's fallen on you, and now you have no choice but to do what you keep thinking about. (...) You'll go in; you won't look at the older woman much; you'll have to bring her close enough to him; you'll kick him between the legs; you'll take the revolver out of its holster – the Flobert rifle with which he shoots so cleanly and quietly now, no, don't take that one. Yeah, it's just that he's too good at keeping his distance, you can't get that close to him, and the watchmen guarding the embankment will shoot at you first anyway. (...) The alley is quite narrow for two side-by-side. In the second bend, I indicate for her to go forward, and when she bends, I suddenly turn around and look back. At the same time, another shot is fired inside.. (...) That's how you got out of that; you ran away from it, from that old one and what he wanted to do. Now enjoy Treblinka for it – the food, the whip, the lazaret. You animal. What are you going to do if you get your own grandmother thrust into your hands?» (Glazar, 2012, p. 55). Glazar's thinking is contradictory, in Bakhtinian terminology "dialectical or antinomic" (Bachtin, 1971, p. 202). The choice between life and death puts the instinct for self-preservation, in contrast to morality and conscience, to the test: to die or to let others die (Bauman, 2003, p. 205). Self-interest to survive even in a given situation overrides moral obligations. The author uses raising doubts about proper conduct to raise some problems (freedom of will and its determination by circumstances), the solution of which he leaves to the reader. What Bakhtin identifies concerning Dostoevsky's novels is also characteristic of Glazar: "It does not arise as a whole reflecting one consciousness which has objectively taken into itself other consciousnesses, but as a whole growing out of the interaction of several consciousnesses, neither of which has become the object of the other wholly; this interaction does not allow the perceiver to objectify the whole plot in the usual monologic way (...) and thus actually makes the receiver a participant" (Bachtin, 1971, p. 216-217).

Escaping from Treblinka to Manheim, Germany, which was heavily damaged by Allied air raids during World War II, meant freedom and a new experience. Glazar does not idealise the presence of the liberation troops in the occupied territory of Germany, but on the contrary, depicts the brutality and cruelty inflicted on women. "Two of the guys who are probably patrolling here happen to come up to us (...); they are said to be both from New York; we pat them on the back, and they also slap Annemarie, well. Then, as if on command, they point machine guns at us, which no longer look like children's toys at that moment. They don't put helmets on their heads; they beat us to the bed with them. One of them stabs Annemarie in the chest with a machine gun until she screams and buckles, then grab her by the hair and drag her to the stairs. The other guy flips a switch, turns it off, and lets a streak of light from a flashlight fall onto the bed, pointing it at us. From the staircase, you can hear moaning and heckling. I barely notice when they take turns. Then the streak of light disappears, boots stamp on the stairs, it is dark, and Annemarie is dragged up into it in silence" (Glazar, 2012, p. 344). The author's literary narrative thus illustrates the destructive power of war, which, in addition to material loss, also brings enormous loss of life, unspeakable violence, suffering and misery to the defenceless civilian population. The post-war years in the author's life have a complementary effect; in the end, they are an expression of satisfaction for the suffering but also an illustration of the character, the cowardice of the criminals, which contrasts with their courage to criminality. "In all the interrogations, I anticipated one outcome with excitement and apprehension. To my great pleasure and satisfaction, it did not happen. None of them stood up, kicked off his heels in a military fashion, cast his eyes straight ahead and declared, »Yes, I did it out of conviction, and I still stand by it today!«" (Glazar, 2012, p. 7).

3.4 Presentation of the author and characters in the work

Based on N. Kraus's typological systematics of the narrator, raising the moral aspect belongs to the peculiarity of the self-portrait of the character-narrator. Glazar's memoir is a personal narrative with a direct narrator who is also the hero of the work. The three categories of author-narrator-hero merge here into one character, which N. Krausová characterises as "a multidimensional character" whose primary concern is to "capture and portray themselves, a certain period of their life, a certain important event for themselves authentically, faithfully, accurately, without any fictitious pretence" (Krausová, 1999, p. 54). In the case of minor characters, the author concentrates on portraying their appearance, looks, and speech or commenting on their actions. To clarify the above, we present the following example: "The head of the orderlies is Captain Kurland, the oldest gravedigger by age and, it is said, by his stay at Treblinka. Behind the round glasses with wire springs, eyes that have seen and understood everything, a small, slightly bumble nose and deep hollows in the round-toothed cheeks that would blend in with the colour of charred dark sand mixed with ash. The whip is always in his way, awkwardly tangled around the wares and the rough pants stuffed into them, and a piece of it is still dragging on the ground. He puts the cap away, and the stubble of remaining greying hair is firm and does not frizz. Captain Kurland lives among the ordinary enslaved people in our barracks at night and in a small booth in the infirmary during the day. When the transports are not running, the SS men are said to go there for a chat. I have never seen them lay a hand on him. None of the bullies in the food "queue" outside the kitchen ever inadvertently bump into him - rather, they make room for him. The greatest gravedigger at Treblinka enjoys the respect of a man and philosopher of ending lives" (Glazar, 2012, p. 90). Such an indirect representation of a character based on external characteristics "directly separates the character from other entities in their environment, thereby helping their identification across the narrative" (Fört, 2008, p. 66). In these static narrative segments, not only the external description but also the role is essential for the "singling out" of characters. This reflects Propp's preferred functional aspect of the character, which is layered the semantics of the proper name. For example, the role of Captain Kurland is imbued with existential elements: he is a symbol of impermanence and death. The aforementioned meaning-forming framework (premonition of death) can also be derived from the character's proper name. The German word "Kurland" as a space of purification, of shedding the cross, could be the ontological status of the "angel of transformation". Death becomes part of everyday life in the camp. From the beginning, the characters of Glazar's prose are confronted with the motifs of human finitude: death as a conscious severing of social ties, death as a violent termination of life, death as a liberation from earthly things, and death as a direction to God. It is the different variations of the death motif that are present in the context of each chapter. Moreover, Glazar is a silent witness to the suffering of his comrades and entire transports. In addition to a detailed description of their cruelty, the author uses the character's nicknames Franz – the Doll, and Mieté – the Angel of Death, to present the opposing characters.

3.5 "Picture atlas" as a source of inspiration

Bible, or "pictorial atlas", as M. Chagal called it, is often an inspirational source of literature for expressing basic ethical questions and Christian principles. This aspect of the moral condemnation of wars also applies to Glazar's work. Through intertextual references to the Old Testament and the transformation of water into blood¹⁴, it emphasises the destructive power of war. "He died of pneumonia; he had suffered a lot during the World War and was prone to it. I remember him telling me that when they were wading through a river in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it was like blood instead of

¹⁴ And Moses and Aaron did so, as the Lord commanded; and he lifted up the rod, and smote the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh, and in the sight of his servants; and all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood" (Holy Bible, 2002, Ex, 7: 20).

water. They say, Moses, who turned all the water into blood in Egypt in front of the Pharaoh, would have been looking" (Glazar, 2012, p. 10). The relationship between water and blood is remarkably outlined in the above passage. Although there are multiple understandings of the above symbols¹⁵, the mentioned terms in the context used can be interpreted in a bipolar relationship as a necessary condition of life versus a sign of the impending apocalypse. The author uses the biblical theme only as a context to outline his attitude towards the fatal consequences of the First World War – enormous loss of life, "nationalism" and finally, the Second World War. With this segment, he establishes a collective memory and anticipates the hostility and injustice perpetrated according to the biblical perspective on the "chosen people". In addition to the above symbol, other biblical symbols – sacrifice, sand, fire – are also involved in the novel's text.

4 Conclusion

The uniqueness of Glazar's work, as our interpretive penetration points out, lies not only in the mediation of what has been experienced, in the personal coping with the trauma endured, but above all in the exposure of the inhumane conditions of a regime that dehumanises the human personality, through the author as both a witness and a commemorator of history. As R. Glazar emphasises: "When there is no one left to answer, at least there will be this reading" (Glazar, 2012, p. 6). Although this is a unique experience, it is nevertheless, in several moments, analogous to the encounter of several million other Jews. Similarly, Liashchynskaya-Jakubovská's article emphasizes "the urgency and importance of cultural-historical memory as an ontological phenomenon in the conditions of current global risks" (Liashchynskaya-Jakubovská, 2017, p. 193).

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Primary Paper Section: A

Secondary Paper Section: AB, AL, AJ

¹⁵ Egyptian mythology, ancient Greek philosophy (Thales) and the Old Testament can be used to explain these images. In the above contexts we encounter the image of water as a symbol of life, the origin of everything, an image of misfortune, but also a symbol of purification and a source of salvation, the image of blood as a proxy symbol of power, a "divine element" in humanity, but it can also denote the basis of the covenant between God and mankind (note: the blood of sacrificial animals) (see Holy Bible, 2002, 3Lv, 1:4).