

CULTURAL AND SOCIO-EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES OF PROCESSING COLLECTIVE TRAUMA: FROM MEMORY FORMATION TO STRENGTHENING SOCIAL RESILIENCE

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INTRODUCTION

The full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation on February 24, 2022, caused a deep collective trauma within Ukrainian society. Large-scale destruction, numerous human casualties, the forced displacement of millions, and a constant state of uncertainty create conditions for long-term consequences that require scientific study and the development of effective psychological support strategies. From this perspective, the role of cultural, social, and educational practices in restoring collective resilience is a highly relevant issue.

In Ukrainian literature, the term «resilience» is translated as «stresostiikist» (stress resistance), «zhyttiistiikist» (vitality/hardiness), «psykholohichna pruzhnist» (psychological elasticity), or «psykholohichna stiikist» (psychological stability)¹. Society has developed various mechanisms for healing from collective traumas. These include the ritualization of traumatic experiences, transforming them into historical symbols, myths, and epic works, where the process of grieving becomes an object of aesthetic perception².

Ukrainian researcher Pavlo Hornostai identifies several key strategies for a society to overcome collective trauma: progressive (active and peaceful), active-aggressive, passive-aggressive, and regressive (passive-non-aggressive or depressive). The implementation of these strategies can have both constructive and destructive dimensions. In the former case, historical collective trauma is transformed into a historical narrative; in the latter, it becomes the foundation for the formation of an aggressive ideology³.

1. Library and Museum Spaces as Tools for Overcoming Collective Trauma and Honoring Heroes

The process of «culturizing» collective trauma is of significant importance. Culturization practices encompass the creation of literary and artistic works, involving all genres, including musical compositions, folklore, anecdotes, and

¹ Кокун О., Мельничук Т. Резилієнс-довідник: практичний посібник. Київ : Інститут психології імені Г.С. Костюка НАПН України. 2023. С. 5.

² Горностай П. Колективна травма як проблема соціальної та політичної психології. *Проблеми політичної психології*. 2018. Вип. 7. С. 55.

³ Ibid. С. 60.

political cartoons. Today, in addition to these traditional cultural genres, cinematography and media play a major role⁴.

All cultural achievements can currently be utilized in modern practice. From our perspective, bibliotherapy appears particularly interesting – an approach that uses the reading and discussion of literature as a means of emotional support, self-reflection, and personal development. The term originates from the Greek words «*biblion*» (book) and «*therapeia*» (healing, care)⁵. The term «bibliotherapy» was first used by the American researcher Samuel McChord Crothers (1857–1927), who, in his article, demonstrated the positive impact of fiction and popular science literature in the treatment of certain psychological illnesses⁶.

We believe that bibliotherapy is essential in the context of shaping memory policy. Modern libraries are becoming centers for preserving historical memory by utilizing memorial projects and thematic book collections.

The «Veterans History Project» by the U.S. Library of Congress serves as a notable example, where the oral histories of veterans are recorded and their experiences are reframed⁷. Among Ukrainian initiatives, the project «Bibliotherapy: Your Book of Happiness», implemented by the Lesia Ukrainka Public Library of Kyiv, is worth mentioning. Within this project, thematic recommended book lists were developed, designed to address various psychological states, including stress, depression, loneliness, and difficulties in family relationships, as well as to support self-actualization processes⁸. From the standpoint of our research topic, the list of books recommended for strengthening national identity is particularly informative. Among the recommended titles are works by contemporary authors (M. Matios's *Almost Never Otherwise*, T. Hundorova's *Lesia Ukrainka. The Sibyl's Book*, A. Chapai's *Travels with Mamayota in Search of Ukraine*, S. Andrukhovych's *Amadoka*, A. Kokotiuha's *Chervonyi*), as well as Yu. Horlis-Horskyi's *Kholodnyi Yar* and A. Dimarov's *There Will Be People*⁹.

Bibliotherapy serves as a psychoprophylactic method that is especially relevant during wartime to support mental health and facilitate the rehabilitation of veterans. At the same time, libraries are evolving into spaces for memorial events dedicated to the heroes of the contemporary Russian-Ukrainian war. For instance, H. Ivanchenko from the Information Center on Culture and Arts of the National Library of Ukraine named after Yaroslav Mudryi prepared an analytical report titled «Practices of

⁴ Горностай П. Подолання колективних травм у контексті інтеграції України в європейський культурно-історичний простір. *Проблеми політичної психології*. 2022. Вип. 11 (25). С. 44.

⁵ Горчинська В. Від читання до відновлення: бібліотерапія в системі підтримки ветеранів. URL: <https://oth.nlu.org.ua/?p=12145>

⁶ Демиденко Н. Бібліотерапія як метод психопрофілактики та психологічної реабілітації: вітчизняний і зарубіжний досвід. *Вісник Національного університету оборони України*. 2025. № 2(84). С. 45.

⁷ Program Veterans History Project. URL: <https://www.loc.gov/programs/veterans-history-project/how-to-participate/>

⁸ Горчинська В. Від читання до відновлення: бібліотерапія в системі підтримки ветеранів. URL: <https://oth.nlu.org.ua/?p=12145>

⁹ Проект «Бібліотерапія: твоя книга щастя». URL: <https://luki.kyiv.ua/proyekt-biblioterapiya-tvoya-knyha-shchastyia/>

Remembering and Memorialization: How to Dignifiably Honor the Heroes, Victims, and Events of the Russian-Ukrainian War?». In this report, she presents various examples of memorializing contemporary war heroes and explores the search for a new language of remembrance by Ukrainian artists¹⁰.

The primary directions of library work in this field include: thematic exhibitions and displays (stands and photo exhibitions dedicated to fallen compatriots, the defenders of «Azovstal» and soldiers of the Armed Forces of Ukraine); commemorative evenings and meetings with the families of the fallen; presentations of military-historical literature, soldiers' diaries, and chronicles of the struggles of specific settlements; the creation of permanent memorial expositions (personal belongings, letters, and military awards); the compilation of bibliographic indexes and the creation of virtual exhibitions about contemporary heroes.

In their article «Museum Space as a Tool for Overcoming the Collective Trauma of the Modern Russian-Ukrainian War: A Regional Dimension», researchers V. Vodopian and O. Kravtsova argue that traditional museum activities (exhibitory, educational, and scientific) enable the documentation of the events of the modern Russian-Ukrainian war and perform specific therapeutic functions in overcoming traumatic experiences. The methodologies applied can vary in intensity and form to meet the needs of each specific rehabilitation group. A positive psychotherapeutic effect is achieved through: a sense of the collective (belonging to a specific group); art in its various manifestations; involvement in the creation of museum expositions and exhibitions; self-identification: pride in ancestors and contemporaries, as well as in one's ethnic group¹¹.

A notable example is the charity event «Christmas Traditions in Times of Struggle» held on December 21, 2024, at the Ivano-Frankivsk Regional Museum of the Liberation Struggle named after Stepan Bandera. Visitors had the opportunity to learn about Christmas traditions during the most difficult periods of Ukrainian history. Guides in thematic costumes spoke about Christmas during World War I, within the families of the Galician intelligentsia of the interwar period, in the Gulag concentration camps, in UPA (Ukrainian Insurgent Army) hideouts, and on the front lines today. Veterans of the Russian-Ukrainian war, Ivan and Andrii Markovetskyi, shared stories about Christmas on the modern front lines. The event concluded with a charity auction¹².

¹⁰ Іванченко Г. «Практики пам'ятання і меморіалізація. Як гідно вшанувати героїв, жертв і події російсько-української війни?». URL: https://nlu.org.ua/storage/files/Infocentr/Tematich_ogliadi/2024/memo1.pdf. С. 32.

¹¹ Водоп'ян В., Кравцова О. Музейний простір як інструмент подолання колективної травми Новітньої російсько-української війни: регіональний вимір. *Науково-теоретичний альманах Грані*. 2024. 27 (5). С. 73, 75.

¹² Дрогобицька О. Наукова та культурно-освітня діяльність Івано-Франківського обласного музею визвольної боротьби імені Степана Бандери. *Вісник гуманітарних наук*. 2025. № 6. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15181734>; Каразуб І., Веселовська Н. Свято в ГУЛАГу, в кривках і на передовій: у Франківську розповіли, як відзначали Різдво у різні часи. URL: https://suspilne.media/ivano-frankivsk/907959-svato-v-gulagu-v-kriivkakh-i-na-peredovij-u-frankivsku-rozpovili-ak-vidznacali-rizdvo-u-rizni-casi/?fbclid=IwY2xjawJY3WNleHRuA2FlbQlMQABHbqtOH65KB_6zexMseySvwMK-wMWSH-ZqM2D8b3iTKXJZnESl_k6pXJAw_aem_6FURIPV-jhenH3Um72GTIQ

Thus, both the library and the museum can serve as effective spaces for overcoming collective trauma and honoring the heroes of the modern Russian-Ukrainian war.

2. Art Therapy Spaces: Visual Dimensions of Memory and Modern Resilience Practices

Art therapy is an effective psychotherapeutic method for addressing collective trauma, as it activates symbols, harmony, and beauty to facilitate personal healing. Undoubtedly, expressive arts allow for the release of emotional experiences and help elevate the processing of collective trauma to a symbolic level. Receptive art therapy is considered essential for managing the consequences of such trauma. This primarily includes the contemplation of fine arts, museum-based art therapy, and theater – which allows for engaging large groups and working specifically with emotions – as well as music, cinematography as a multimodal art, and media art therapy, which combines therapy, the arts, and modern information technologies¹³.

Art therapy contributes to strengthening the resilience of both the individual and the specific community, fostering close interpersonal connections, and enabling the mobilization of various resources (emotional, social, spiritual, physical, and cognitive). Art and expressive self-expression are effective ways to «tell a story» through symbolic means¹⁴.

An example of this is the art project «War in Ukraine: Visual Dimensions of Memory» held at the Cherkasy Regional Art Museum (March 2023). Through artistic imagery, the project explored the meanings of «freedom», «national dignity», «Ukraine's civilizational choice», «heroism», «world peace», «sacrifice» and «historical truth» while also highlighting contemporary contexts of terms such as «genocide»¹⁵. As noted by O. Pushonkova and S. Pianzin, art projects dedicated to the Russian-Ukrainian war combine different temporal and spatial dimensions of memory and present new narrative practices. These practices enable a transition from expressing the emotional experience of collective trauma to comprehending it within the broader context of individual history and collective memory¹⁶.

Museum art therapy is actively implemented at the aforementioned Ivano-Frankivsk Regional Museum of the Liberation Struggle named after Stepan Bandera. Specifically, on February 21, 2024, the museum hosted an exhibition of graphic works titled «West-East» by artist Andrii Yefimenko, dedicated to the 102nd Brigade, with which he defended Ukraine¹⁷. On April 24, 2024, a large audience

¹³ Вознесенська О., Робело-Тимченко Н., Спейзер В., Спейзер Ф., Старовойтов А. Арттерапія в роботі з колективною травмою. *Простір арт-терапії: 36. наук. праць*. 2023. Вип. 1(33). С. 5.

¹⁴ Ibid. С. 16.

¹⁵ Пушонкова О., П'янзін С. Культура пам'яті у мистецьких рефлексіях війни (на прикладі проекту «Війна в Україні: візуальні виміри пам'яті»). *Культурологічний альманах*. 2023. № 3. С. 307.

¹⁶ Ibid. С. 30.

¹⁷ Художник-боєць Андрій Єфіменко презентував виставку графічних робіт, присвячену 102 бригаді. URL: <https://pravda.if.ua/hudozhnyk-boyecz-andrij-yefimenko-prezentuvav-vystavku-grafichnyh-robit-prysvyachenu-102-brygadi/>

gathered for the presentation of the painting collection «Colors Breathe War» by artist, volunteer, and Senior Soldier of the 67th Separate Mechanized Brigade of the AFU, Oleh Drobotskyi (1996–2023), who died on March 6, 2023, near the village of Orikhovo-Vasylivka in the Donetsk region¹⁸.

Co-creation is another equally important principle in overcoming the effects of collective trauma. Given this, it is necessary to seek new approaches to involving people in artistic and art-therapeutic projects. Such forms of collaboration are beneficial for mitigating the impact of collective traumatization. They facilitate the formation of a new shared collective memory, restoring hope for the future¹⁹.

According to psychologist P. Hornostai, the task of collective healing is currently being effectively performed by murals – a form of monumental painting²⁰. This refers to the works of the artist Banksy on the walls of buildings in the cities of the Kyiv region that suffered the greatest destruction during the occupation and hostilities in February–April 2022. This underground street artist and political activist created seven pieces of graffiti in Kyiv, Borodianka, Irpin, Hostomel, and Horenka, which are already being regarded as objects of cultural and historical heritage²¹. These examples can rightfully be considered forms of resilience²².

Media art therapy, which combines therapy, art, and modern information technologies, offers broad opportunities for overcoming the consequences of collective trauma at the societal level. The ability to post one's creative work online, receive feedback and support from around the world, and share one's tragic story are vital components in neutralizing the effects of collective traumatization²³. Today, it is difficult to find a Ukrainian who is not familiar with the work of artist Nikita Titov. His works can be seen on Facebook, as well as in exhibition halls in Ukraine and abroad. These posters often «speak» of pain and loss, but also of life, faith, and hope²⁴.

Another form of media creativity is meme-making. In the conditions of modern war, characterized by systematic overload of negative news and contradictory feelings experienced by everyone in our country, the use of memes acquires new functions. Researcher O. Voznesenska identified the following therapeutic functions of «war

¹⁸ Каратник А. У Франківську відкрили виставку загиблого бійця «Фарби дихають війною». URL: <https://report.if.ua/viyna/ne-prominyav-penzel-na-avtomat-a-zumiv-ce-poyednaty-u-frankivsku-vidkryly-vystavk-zagyblogo-bijcya-olega-drobotskogo-farby-dyhayut-vijnoyu/>

¹⁹ Вознесенська О., Робело-Тимченко Н., Спейзер В., Спейзер Ф., Старовойтов А. Арттерапія... С. 5–6.

²⁰ Горностай П. Мистецтво в подоланні колективної травми війни. *Простір арттерапії: мистецтво відновлення психічного здоров'я в часи війни* : матеріали ХХ Міжнародної міждисциплінарної науково-практичної конференції (31 березня – 2 квітня 2023 р.). Київ, 2023. С. 21.

²¹ Савицький О. Як графіті Бенксі на Київщині захищають від руйнування. URL: <https://www.dw.com/uk/ak-grafiti-benksi-na-kiiivsini-zahisaut-vid-vandaliv-i-rujnuvanna/a-64800086>

²² Горностай П. Мистецтво в подоланні колективної травми війни... С. 21.

²³ Вознесенська О., Робело-Тимченко Н., Спейзер В., Спейзер Ф., Старовойтов А. Арттерапія... С. 20.

²⁴ Яців Д. «Триматися, щоб підтримувати». Нікіта Тітов про психіатричну інклюзію, військових й акцію біля посольства РФ у США. URL: <https://suspilne.media/ivano-frankivsk/760813-trimatisa-sob-pidtrimuvati-nikita-titov-pro-psihiatricnu-inkluziu-vijskovih-j-akciu-bila-posolstva-rf-u-ssa/>

memes»: 1) the release of difficult feelings and the overcoming of fears; 2) providing confidence in one's own strength; 3) reducing uncertainty and predicting the future; and 4) restoring a sense of agency over one's life through creative activity²⁵. In her view, memes can perform the function of expressing feelings not only for the creator but also for those who perceive and amplify them. Complex information is transmitted through these simplified images, making it easier to process²⁶.

At the beginning of the full-scale invasion, the most common themes for memes were: the emotional states of Ukrainians, the elevation of the nation, the humiliation of enemies and their significant symbols, the glorification of the Ukrainian army and social institutions on which Ukraine's future depends, distancing from the enemy, and specific landmark events affecting civilians, the military, or the course of combat operations²⁷. It should be emphasized that Ukrainian internet memes are not aggressive but mostly ironic, reflecting traits such as maturity, wisdom, tolerance, peacefulness, and resilience. In modern conditions, internet memes have become a powerful counter-propaganda tool used both to mock the Russian occupiers and to lower the level of fear towards the enemy²⁸.

Thus, art therapy in its diverse forms – from museum expositions and murals to media art and memes – serves as a powerful healing tool that helps transform the traumatic experience of war into symbolic imagery and collective memory. By engaging in co-creation and expressive self-expression, it not only reduces social tension but also strengthens national resilience and shapes new visions for the future.

3. Ritualization of Tragic Events and the Culture of Memory

Among the various ways of overcoming collective trauma, the ritualization of tragic events holds special significance. Commemorative actions play a vital role, including naming streets after heroes, erecting monuments, and organizing creative competitions dedicated to fallen defenders.

The Roman Ratushnyi All-Ukrainian Essay Contest for schoolchildren, titled «Heroes in the Struggle for Ukraine's Independence: Researching National Identity in Social Transformations of the Early 21st Century» is held annually to honor the memory of the public activist and journalist Roman Ratushnyi (1997–2022). Furthermore, a Roman Ratushnyi scholarship for students was established through the initiative of international law firms²⁹. On February 27, 2026, the final of the 2nd Yurii Chopyk All-Ukrainian Creative Contest with International Participation, «Heroes Do Not Die», took place in Ivano-Frankivsk, involving over 500 participants. This competition commemorates Yurii Chopyk (1984–2022), a Candidate

²⁵ Вознесенська О. Мемі як засіб медіа-арттерапії в подоланні колективної травми війни. *Простір арт-терапії*. 2022. Вип. 2 (32). С. 13.

²⁶ Ibid. С. 27.

²⁷ Ibid. С. 14.

²⁸ Запорожець О., Белоусова Н. Вербальні інтернет-меми під час повномасштабної війни РФ проти України. *Вісник Київського національного університету імені Тараса Шевченка: Міжнародні відносини*. 2024. Вип. 56 (2). С. 23.

²⁹ Герої не вмирають: про заснування стипендії імені Романа Ратушного. URL: <https://avellum.com/ua/geroyi-ne-vmyrayut-pro-zasnuvannya-stip/>

of Pedagogical Sciences and lecturer at Ivano-Frankivsk Medical University, who died on February 26, 2022, in battle in the Kherson region³⁰.

Memorial days and anniversaries intended for the collective commemoration of tragic historical events serve as key mechanisms for addressing collective trauma. These include events on the Day of the Heavenly Hundred Heroes (February 20) and the Day of Remembrance of the Defenders of Ukraine (August 29), which recalls one of the bloodiest events of the war in eastern Ukraine – the Ilovaïsk tragedy.

Virtually every city also has its own days of remembrance. For instance, residents of Kherson annually honor the members of the Territorial Defense Forces who died on March 1, 2022, in Buzovyi Park (Lilac Park). Armed only with rifles, Molotov cocktails, and grenades, they stood against Russian occupiers equipped with tanks and infantry fighting vehicles. In 2023, a monument to all the fallen was erected in the park³¹. March 31 marks the Day of Remembrance for the victims of the Russian occupation in Bucha, Kyiv region³².

Unfortunately, during commemorative events for fallen defenders or civilians, one may encounter personal retraumatization. What is intended as an opportunity for the majority to overcome collective trauma may become an additional stressor for those personally affected, such as relatives and friends of the deceased³³. We fully agree with the assertion of Sofia Vlokh, a psychologist at the «Kolo Simyi» Development and Health Center, that «the paths to overcoming trauma lie in commemorating tragic events, not in denial or detachment. The brain needs this to mourn, grieve, and heal»³⁴.

Analyzing collective trauma and the culture of memory related to the modern war in Ukraine, it is worth emphasizing that every trauma contains resources for post-traumatic growth. This is achieved through recovery strategies such as the ability to perceive positive aspects in surrounding reality, strengthening empathy, restoring the capacity to reframe events, and activating internal reserves to maintain and restore mental and physical health.

CONCLUSIONS

Thus, the collective trauma caused by the modern Russian-Ukrainian war requires not only psychological but also socio-cultural processing. The process of

³⁰ У Івано-Франківську відзначили фіналістів II Всеукраїнського конкурсу з міжнародною участю «Герої не вмирають». URL: <https://kuryer.if.ua/u-ivano-frankivsku-vidznachyli-finalisty-ii-vseukrayinskogo-konkursu-z-mizhnarodnoyu-uchastyu-imeni-yuriya-chopyka-geroyi-ne-vmyrayut/>

³¹ Яворська Т. З коктейлями Молотова і гвинтівками проти танків та БТРів: останній бій у Бужковому парку Херсона – подвиг, який росіяни хотіли приховати. URL: <https://espresso.tv/suspilstvo-z-kokeylyami-molotova-i-gvintivkami-proti-tankiv-ta-btriv-ostanniy-biy-u-buzkovomu-parku-khersona-podvig-yakiy-rosiyani-khotili-prikhovati>

³² 561 вбитий цивільний: у Бучі вшанували пам'ять жертв російської окупації міста. URL: <https://armyinform.com.ua/2026/03/31/561-vbytyj-czyvilnyj-u-buchi-vshanuvaly-pamyat-zhertv-rosijskoyi-okupacziyi-mista/>

³³ Вознесенська О., Робело-Тимченко Н., Спейзер В., Спейзер Ф., Старовойтов А. Арттерапія... С. 19.

³⁴ Веляник А. Розмова з психологами. URL: <https://svidomi.in.ua/page/kolektyvna-trauma-rozmovy-z-psykholohamy>

«culturizing» trauma by creating new narratives, symbols, and myths is a key mechanism for its resolution, allowing society to move from passive grieving to the active formation of resilience. Modern library and museum institutions have moved beyond purely educational functions, becoming effective tools for psychosocial rehabilitation. Bibliotherapy and memorial projects provide emotional support and strengthen national identity. Museums, in turn, through exhibition activities and the involvement of visitors in co-creation, ensure a sense of collective belonging and the historical continuity of the struggle.

Visual arts – ranging from monumental murals to digital media art and posters – serve as powerful means of releasing traumatic experiences. A special place in the restoration of resilience is held by meme-making, which, through irony and humor, performs a protective function, reduces fear, and restores a sense of control over the situation.

The establishment of new rituals for honoring heroes is a necessary condition for processing trauma and healing at the collective level. At the same time, it is crucial to maintain a balance in memorial events to avoid the individual retraumatization of the loved ones of the deceased.

Cultural, social, and educational practices activate the nation's internal reserves, transforming pain into a resource for recovery, strengthening empathy, and shaping new visions for the future.

SUMMARY

The article analyzes the role of cultural and socio-educational practices as a strategic tool for shaping collective memory and restoring the resilience of Ukrainian society amidst the full-scale war. The author explores the concept of «culturizing» collective trauma, which involves transforming painful experiences into stable historical narratives and symbols. Special attention is paid to the potential of bibliotherapy and the modern transformations of library and museum spaces, which are becoming centers for psychosocial rehabilitation and memorialization.

The work examines in detail the visual dimensions of memory, specifically the impact of art therapy, murals, and media art on overcoming stress and strengthening national identity. The phenomenon of wartime «meme-making» is highlighted as an effective mechanism for reducing fear and restoring a sense of control through irony. Furthermore, the study investigates the significance of ritualizing tragic events and establishing new traditions for honoring heroes, which contribute to collective healing and the nation's post-traumatic growth.

It is concluded that engaging citizens in co-creation and active practices of remembrance activates the internal resources of the society to form visions for future reconstruction.

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