

## THE CONCEPT OF THE VICTIM IN THE CULTURE OF LATE MODERNITY AND ITS REFLECTION IN CRIME FICTION

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The concept of victim has been one of the central philosophical phenomena in the Judeo-Christian world. In the culture of the late Modernity it also becomes an integral part of a more complex notion of the game between the archetypes of a hunter and a victim functioning as a cultural, psychological and philosophical regulator of social life. It is noted that certain types of individuals are likely to be a subject of victimization due to their inner personal qualities and the external impact of the society. This concept is comprehensively reflected and considered in crime fiction as it is related to the mission of this genre, i.e. to restore order and justice, find and punish the culprit. The concept of the victim serves as a trigger for the plot deployment and the process of moral and legal assessment in the imaginary and at the same time true-to-life world of any detective text. The crime commission is stated to be an outcome of an active cultural, psychological and emotional interaction between a criminal and a victim, where the victim may provoke his/her offender to show up aggression and thus break the law, i.e. to make his/her existential choice. Besides that the concept of victim refers not only the characters of any crime fiction text but also goes beyond its limits and embraces the text addressees who frequently turn out to be the victims of the consumer society culture that manipulates the minds of individuals and groups, forming their needs and transforming their core values.

*Keywords:* victim, hunter, victimity, game, sacrifice, late Modernity, crime fiction genre, culture of Modernity.

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## КОНЦЕПТ ЖЕРТВИ В КУЛЬТУРІ ПІЗНЬОГО МОДЕРНУ ТА ЙОГО РЕФЛЕКСІЯ В ДЕТЕКТИВІ

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Концепт жертви є одним із базових філософських феноменів у просторі іудейсько-християнського світу. В культурі пізнього Модерну концепт жертви стає невід'ємною частиною більш глобального поняття гри між архетипами мисливця і жертви, що функціонує як культурний, психологічний і філософський регулятор суспільного життя. Зазначається, що певні типи людей більш схильні до віктимізації внаслідок дії своїх персональних якостей, а також зовнішнього впливу суспільства. Концепт, що розглядається, багатогранно відображено і проаналізовано в детективних текстах, оскільки він пов'язаний з метою цього художнього жанру, тобто відновлення порядку і справедливості, виявленням і покаранням винного. Концепт жертви слугує тригером для подальшого розгортання сюжету і процесу моральної і правової оцінки в ув'язненню, але реалістичному світі детективного тексту. Вказується, що скоєння злочину являє собою результат активного культурної, психологічної і емоційної взаємодії між злочинцем і його жертвою, де остання може сама спровокувати першого зробити екзистенціальний вибір, пов'язаний з агресією і порушенням закону. Крім того, концепт жертви відноситься не тільки до персонажів тексту детективного жанру, але й виходить за його межі і охоплює адресатів, які часто-густо виявляються жертвами культури суспільства споживання, яка вміло маніпулює свідомістю індивідів і груп, формуючи їх потреби і трансформуючи їх основні життєві цінності.

*Ключові слова:* жертва, мисливець, віктимність, гра, жертвувати, пізній Модерн, детективний жанр, культура модерну.

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### INTRODUCTION

The concept of the victim and related to it concepts of victimity, victimization and sacrifice are among the central phenomena in the humanities of the late modern culture, in particular, in philosophy, religious studies, psychology, sociology, political studies, literary and cultural studies, anthropol-

ogy, criminology including victimology. It should be noted that victimology (Latin *victima* – a living being, being offered to God, victim and Greek *logos* – a word, study) was established as a branch of science in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century within criminology. The rite of sacrifice is tightly associated with the concept of victim, which is a part of it. Sacrifice is defined as «an act of offering to a deity something precious; especially: the killing of a victim on an altar; something offered in sacrifice; destruction or surrender of something for the sake of something else, something given up or lost, e.g. the sacrifices made by parents». [16] The concept of victim is a driver in human life and it also predetermines specific choices that a person makes. Therewith, it is to be borne in mind that a human being and an animal are similar in many ways. Game-based relations between people, a philosophical binary opposition between *the hunter and the victim* are not a novelty for the modern and postmodern culture. Moreover, these relations are not typical of people only. In wildlife they are natural and evidence-based (e.g. in biology, mathematics etc.). However, the game players are then called *the predator and the victim*. The fact that the hunter-victim duad is present in nearly any area of culture may be confirmed, e.g. by the title of a recent exhibition – «Thriller exhibition» [3].

## BACKGROUND

The concept under consideration has been studied by numerous humanitarian scientists including G. Amelin, J. Bentham [13], P. L. Berger, H. Hentig, V.S. Solovyov, Ch. Wulf, A.N. Yashin etc. Game-based relations, which imply the presence of a winner and a loser (or a victim), and their psychoanalytical aspect in human culture of different epochs have been studied, in particular, by E. Berne [2], R. Caillois [7] etc.

The aim of this philosophical and anthropological research is to find out the specifics of the concept of victim in the culture of late Modernity and consider its reflection in the crime fiction genre.

## RESULTS

The concept of victim of one of the crucial concepts in the culture, philosophy and region of mankind. Depending on the time and place, the attitude to the victim and its functions has been different. However, no era and no culture may do without this cultural-anthropological concept. Perhaps, the point is that the development of civilization, philosophy and region is always related to the specific prohibitions and restrictions. In other words, a certain sacrifice is required from a person thus making him or her seek a victim and sacrifice it (her/him) in order to live peacefully in the contemporary society. The concept of a crime victim was first thoroughly examined in the works by criminologist H. Hentig [15]. He considered the interaction between the personalities of the criminal and his/her victim as a dialogue, a two-way street. The researcher believed that the victim is not a passive object of an action, but, vice versa, he/she is the subject, influencing the crime commission procedure. The crime itself is an individual psychopathological phenomenon. These findings may be confirmed not only with fiction texts, but also with legal precedents and practice. In particular, O. N. Yashin emphasizes that the leading Russian lawyers as early as in the nineteenth century began to form their speeches «not in favour of a criminal, not an impersonal accused, but a person, who as fate willed committed (or did not commit) a crime. Owing to the lawyers of the «first call» one of the principles of the Russian justice was the principle of humanism. This principle is the basis, the idea, stipulated in law, meaning humane, merciful, respectful attitude to those legally liable at the time of its establishment and application. In 1863, in the criminal law guidelines V. D. Spasovich clearly and explicitly examined and described the humanistic ideas of the Enlightenment, philosophical thought by I. Kant, J. Fichte, G. Hegel and others [11, 713] In addition, among the features that characterize the most humanistic relations between people there were compassion, responsiveness, respect, tolerance, kindness, mercy and justice.

Since humanism has various manifestations in literature, poetry, painting, science, music, and philosophy, it is quite logical that all the professional, creative and public activities of the best lawyers of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century was filled with humanism ideas and many of them were prominent writers, publicists, poets, musicians, artists etc» [11, 713]. Further it is stated that Russian mentality had its specifics. The Russian lawyers, unlike their Western colleagues, were the embodiment of victimity and sacrifice. Selflessness and personal beneficence was the base for the survival and development of the society on the whole. The symbol and model of the sacrifice was Jesus Christ and his death in tortures on Golgotha. Even today victimity and readiness to sacrifice something for the sake of the truth and justice is the presumption of the legal practice. A person of the late Modernity epoch has to make hard moral and aesthetic decisions, withstand material temptations and thus offering a sacrifice.

Crime fiction genre provides a wide range of assessments, descriptions and comprehensive reflection of the concept of victim. Finding and spotting the victim of a crime, both in real life and in the imaginary virtual crime fiction world, depends on a number of cultural factors, namely, the objective of

the crime, the sacrifice's addressee, the nature of sacrifice and the victim, the time and place of the ritual or a rite and some others. In the culture of Modernity and, in particular, in detective stories it is possible to study the phenomenon of victimity and point out several types of victims that are especially appealing to the criminals (a similar description was first given by Hans von Hentig [15]): 1) those who are physically weak and cannot resist the attack as well as those not being among the priority figure for the society: older generation, women and «aliens» – people of other religious confessions; 2) national minorities, those who suffers from alcohol and drug addiction, unemployed and children; 3) those having a *skeleton in the cupboard* (these people cannot stand helpless against blackmail and similar things; 4) the rich etc. It is to be noted that in the society of this epoch there emerged a trend of victimization and, on the other hand, the prestige of being a victim – desecularization, or counter-secularization (the term introduced by Peter L. Berger in [14]) and the religious fundamentalism rise of the past decades have encouraged the appearance of potential victims (victimized people), in particular, for terroristic attacks (*suicide murderers*). Partially the emergence of this religious victim type may be explained by the fact that before that the individual was in despair, at the edge of the abyss, where he or she made their existential choice, when (according to S. Kierkegaard) the ethical matters yielded to the religious ones. [6, 561] Moreover, the development of technologies and the destruction of human traditional social organization and philosophic thinking with attempts to replace it with artificial formations may be construed as victimization of the mankind, its vulnerability and susceptibility to machines, technical and political technologies employed to rule the world of the time. These motifs of crisis may be observed in numerous crime fiction texts with catastrophic elements.

An individual frequently needs tactical psychological and moral assistance to act correctly and accurately in certain situations. This support is in broad meaning may be provided crime fiction texts. The point is that detective stories are always characterized by standardization, formulaic nature, prevailing rational thinking, clear analysis of separate functions and roles in the created reality of a fiction text. The detective genre includes a play element not only in the plot deployment, but also in a wider context of communication between the general cultural environment of the time, the author, the recipient and the text. The crime fiction genre teaches the addressees to behave themselves, feel responsible for their activities, compensates lack of information, experience (especially of the feelings related to the shadowy side of the personality), meets the need in training their intellectual and logical knowledge and skills. The game in a detective story always includes the concept (image) of victim. It is given, often as a starting point for further investigation, detection and punishment of the guilty person. The fact that the detective formula always contains a secret and a victim, allows us to compare it with human civilization. M. Horkheimer and T. Adorno in «Dialectic of Enlightenment», referring to Z. Freud, noted that the development of rationality, the Enlightenment and emancipation in the civilization process are not possible without victims (sacrifice). They indicated that the history of civilization is introverted history of the victim [5, 124]. In particular, they mentioned that «In every product of the culture industry, the permanent denial imposed by civilisation is once again unmistakably demonstrated and inflicted on its victims» [12]. Even in the novels by marquis de Sade the victim is a required figure. It is this concept that makes the world created by Sade integral and complete. When media texts have defeated printed ones, the development of civilization is being accelerated, and the volume of data load is increasing, this hectic flow actively generates and promotes silence of the collective conscious, a kind of the maniac passion for killing, which, according to Oliver Stone is merely the consequence of public ideology. Furthermore, unlike most films and crime fiction texts with a *happy end*, at least in terms of relative justice, there are various works, which, similarly to Sade, not only encourage violence, but, unfortunately, describe and state the victory of the evil over the good in their texts [10, 30].

It is possible to correlate the detective text and a ritual (as a game). A ritual establishes its specific order, ensures this order with its organizational function. Otherwise, the lack of victimity, both individual and group, may entail a burst of violence in the society.

In the world of crime fiction victims are assessed according to the author's cultural background, actual cultural social environment for the contemporary recipient, including legal, moral-ethical norms and laws of the underworld. Rather often the image of the victim is a static character in a detective story, a fact, a trigger for the further actions by other characters and philosophical reasoning provided by the addressor and offered to the addressee for reflection. The active figures of the detective and the criminal have a possibility to show up *owing to* the image of the victim. On the other hand, Peter Sloterdijk notices that modern society is obsessed with detective stories, and these texts, especially quality ones, normally imply relativization of any crime. «If the detective were the representative of enlightenment, the criminal would be the representative of immorality and the victim would be the representative of morality. However, this constellation regularly becomes shaky when the investigation into guilt reaches the point where the victims – from a dramatic point of view, initially the «innocent» victims – themselves lose their innocence, are cast in a twilight, and are separated from the culprit

who assaults them by only a microscopically thin juridical line. This line distinguishes between cynical, nonpunishable immoralisms and truly punishable offenses. In the most extreme case, it is the culprit who, almost like a provoked enlightener, merely executes on the victim the latter's own amorality» [18, 305–306]. Another important point regarding the attitude to the victim is determined based on the addressee's viewpoint. A. J. Vetlesen cites a vivid description of tortures (and it is common knowledge that most crime fiction stories include a kind of torture) where people may criticise the victim who sooner or later strikes the flag out of the fear for his or her own life and praise only those who try to resist at any cost [4, 24].

The addressee may identify himself or herself with the depicted victim in crime fiction under specific circumstances. For example, the recipient is trying to look into his/her personality, reactions to certain situations, which are unlikely or forbidden in real life. A. J. Vetlesen argues that people are frequently eager to feel pain (thus, in our opinion, playing the role of a victim) and seek it despite the established moral law saying that this phenomenon is purely negative and we should avoid and minimize it. [4, 11–12] This addressee associates himself or herself with the victim to test and train the above reactions. There is a category of people, who are mentally victimized and prone to perceive themselves as victims, or take this image as a mask. Similar opinion was expressed by G. Amelin, stating that the fictional space outlines only what is *possible*, something that does not in fact exist. The researcher notices that the paradox is in the fact that the *possible* is something I lack to be myself [1].

However, normally the recipient of a detective text does not select the image and the role of the text victim but opts for that of the hero or the antihero of the story in order not to feel like the victim, but the hunter and the winner (at least while perceiving the text). Crime fiction texts often form series, which may be characterized, e.g. by the existence of one and the same criminal(s) and the detective with numerous victims (partially depersonalized but having common features). This is the case of investigating serial murders, where the criminal selects victims following a certain principle, being guided by specific motives and logic. A smart detective analyses and points out the rules of victim selection and changes further actions, either bringing the criminal to justice or receiving a chance for liberation and saving lives.

The concept of victim in the crime fiction genre has many faces, depending on the viewpoint. They include, primarily, the victim of the crime, the victim of circumstances, the criminal as the detective's victim (in philosophical psychological detective novels these relations provide the authors with a vast field for reasoning and reflections on human fears, anxieties, worries and values), the detective as the victim of the criminal or a gang, the person beloved by the hero, as the criminal's victim, used by the latter as a hostage and the object of blackmailing, based on the hero's feelings. Moreover, the victim who comes to the detective asking for help, e.g. «The Veiled Lady» by Agatha Christie, may eventually turn out to be not a victim but a manipulator, a criminal. The victims of this kind confuse and puzzle the detective, when acting and doing «good» deeds, concealing the truth, assist the hero, care for their victims etc. (similarly to a fairy tale, where Baba-Yaga earns the trust of aliens, who come to her, treats them well, provides them with food and water etc.) [9]. Thus, the victim may be a mask worn for satisfying personal interests. The important fact is that almost a flawless and an ideal crime, committed by this figure and the criminal's personality are *nearly* equal to the analytical genius, the detective [17, 21], since the hero is the only person who is able to reveal the crime, find the actual criminal and renew justice.

Another important remark related to understanding the concept of victim in the culture of late Modernity offers one more facet of this concept interpretation. In fact, the victim may be found not only within the text but also outside. For example, any recipient of crime fiction media texts may be understood as a victim since the very need in perceiving and consuming this genre is imposed on a contemporary person by the culture industry, not felt. Being under the continuous pressure of this industrial process technology, guided by economic expediency only, an individual gradually starts thinking as if the need was natural. Moreover, the person begins to construe this imposed (advertised and marketed) need as his or her personal wish and tries to make it come true. Consumption is cyclical. Any product becomes outdated and needs replacement. The sense of consumerism trends is in making us dissatisfied with what people already have, to encourage them to purchase more, to awaken the inner somewhat archaic feeling, regressive dissatisfaction, resembling rather childish whims, than logical and mature decision. Therefore, a consumer is a slave of his or her personal at times unlimited wishes [8].

## CONCLUSION

The philosophical and anthropological analysis of the concept of victim in late Modernity and its reflection in crime fiction has shown that this concept is an integral part of the game functioning as a cultural, psychological and philosophical regulator of social life. It is related to the mission of crime fic-

tion texts to restore justice, find and punish the criminal. The concept of victim serves a trigger for the plot deployment in the imaginary world of the text, since in many cases it is victim's behaviour that in fact causes crime commission. The considered concept remains complex, ambiguous and controversial, thus providing extensive basis for further anthropological research.

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