

## The Sacred Dimensions of Valerii Shevchuk' Prose

Creative work of Valerii Shevchuk, a unique creator of our time, an outstanding connoisseur of the Baroque age, is marked with a special atmosphere of the sacral, mysterious which characterizes the art of this epoch. The category *sacrum* is a key structural component of the author's fictional and scientific works and especially of the text production process, which is emphasized by the author.

Valerii Shevchuk's prose is characterized by the emphasis on the Biblical scenes, motives, characters and allusions functioning (as for example, in the novels *Eye of the Abyss* ("Oko Prirvy"), *Young Men from the Fiery Hearth* ("Yunaky z Vohnianoi Pechi"), *The Confession* ("Spovid"), *Dark Music of the Pines* ("Temna Muzyka Soson") and also by the modification of the unreal, mystical world in the novel-ballad *The House on the Mountain* ("Dim na Hori") and in the historical novels *The Dissected Circle* ("Rozsichene Kolo"), *Into the Dragon's Jaws* ("U Pashchu Drakona"), *The Demon of the Flesh* ("Bis Ploti"), *Silver Milk* ("Sribne Moloko"), the collection of gothic-parable prose *The Dream of the Expected Faith* ("Son Spodivanoi Viry"), etc.

The purpose of the article is the artistic reception of the novels *On the Submissive Field* ("Na Poli Smyrennomy") and *Three Leaves Outside* ("Try Lystky za Viknom") by Valerii Shevchuk in the context of category of the sacred and of the main connotations represented by it.

In Valerii Shevchuk's prose, especially in the novel *On the Submissive Field* ("Na Poli Smyrennomy"), the author emphasizes the meaning of the book as a sacred concept. The Book and characters-bibliophiles (first of all, narrator-monk Semen), which make up a strong spiritual force, become a Source of Experience and Light. Semen's idea to write the existential book of the mankind on the background of stories of the pseudo saints of the Kyivo-Pechersky Monastery determines the compositional structure of the novel. Thus, the image of the Book is transformed into many-sided *symbol of the world*, which relates the novel by V. Shevchuk with

G. Skovoroda's philosophical codes. In fact, the philosophers see the *world as a book*.

In the novel *Three Leaves Outside* ("Try Lystky za Viknom") the author also emphasizes the meaning of the Book. Thus, Illia Turchynovskiyi, on the one hand, is trying to experience the world, the symbol of which is the Book because different variants of people's fate are repeated in it; on the other hand, he creates the Book himself, writing down the things he managed to read there and to understand what is to his mind is the most important for the next generations.

In the narrative strategy of the novel *On the Submissive Field* ("Na Poli Smyrennomy") we can see Shevchuk's interpretation of the *concept Person-Nature*. Landscapes in this novel are an alternative of depicting reserved ascetic world – monastery world. On the contrary, open *sacred space* (the field, the sky, the river) represents beauty, joy of life. V. Shevchuk personifies nature, endowing it with intelligence, language and feelings. The author wants to reproduce the eternal harmony between a man and nature and to show that there is another world behind the monastery walls – the world of Nature. Love to every living thing – birds, animals, trees and even insects – can be felt in his thoughts.

In the context of mystical-philosophical interpretation of V. Shevchuk's works it would be useful to pay attention on the heading of the novel, which is the longest among his fiction works. The name of the novel can be interpreted as a flexible metaphor which expresses the sacred meaning of the number "3". Metaphorical sense is also expressed by the three epigraphs provided in the triptych – from the works of the following poets: G. Skovoroda, Yakiv Savchenko and K. Trankvilion-Starovetskyi. There also appears Skovoroda's theory of "three worlds".

In general, the book offers further transformation of Skovoroda's philosophical ideas. An important image originally interpreted in the book is the image of the GARDEN. On the macrolevel the garden can be seen as a sacred space (Garden of Eden) of an ideal world model. On the level of a microcosm this symbol is an embodiment of a human soul.

Onomastic symbols, which are important emblematic nominations, arouse researchers' interest in the context of the sacred dimensions connotative interpretations in the novels *On the Submissive Field* and *Three Leaves Outside* by Valerii Shevchuk. Characters' dreams, visions, which are included into the semantic space of the novels, should be paid special attention. They are also connected with the traditions of mystical, esoteric and sacred writing. In the character's dreams there is an intersection of micro- and macrocosmic dimensions, thus, reflecting universal unity of Baroque world order.

An important role in detecting the dichotomy between sacred and secular in the fictional world of V. Shevchuk's novels is given to the sphere of woman's beauty and physicality.

Thus, the system of sacred dimensions of the novels *On the Submissive Field* and *Three Leaves Outside* by Valerii Shevchuk, examined in this article, shows the important role of an anthropological constituent: person's spirituality develops from the idyllic space of nature which confronts the vector of secularity, artificiality and untrue. Unique usage and reconsideration of the Baroque world, G. Skovoroda's particular dualistic concepts about "external" and "internal" person, "two natures", "three worlds" etc. are completely evident. Thus, symbolic images of The Book, The Garden and Nature are shown as innermost cultural codes of the author's metatext.