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## Section: WORD AND TIME

### SIMULATION OF GNOSIS: WHICH DOORS DO "KEYS OF MARY" OPEN (ON THE BASIS ON THE NOVEL "KEYS OF MARY" BY A. KURKOV, YU. VYNNYCHUK)

*NATALIIA MAFTYN*

**Abstract.** Given article is the first study of the artistic features of the novel "Keys of Mary" since its publication. The article clarifies the difference between literary texts that attempt to provide answers to the philosophy of gnosis questions and those postmodern literature texts the authors of which use gnostic ideas to create the artistic world of the work while largely formalizing them. We consider it relevant to apply the concept of "gnosis simulation" for this group of works. The author argues that it was exactly the use of ideas and signs of this philosophical direction that made the basis for the plot and composition of "The Keys of Mary". "Simulation of gnosis" emphasizes the genre peculiarity of the novel defining it as a detective-adventure; it stimulates the reader's interest, because it serves as an intriguing factor. The work is modeled on the "cosmogony structure" principle: its bipolarity is manifested both in the division of characters and in the way the main conflict is resolved. Elements of gnosis, replicated at the subculture level, are successfully used to combine three storylines, three spatiotemporal dimensions. The focus point of the work is the image of the Maiden in her three novel incarnations (Maria, Aretha, Rina) – she is an eternally young savior of the mankind, whom the forces of evil hunt in all three of the "worlds". An interesting artistic discovery in the novel that draws reader attention is the plot of a lost historical chronicle about the knight Olgerd: in the narrative space of the work, it is perceived as a "supernova" that attracts the worlds of two time-distant plot orbits and creates a kind of insight on the last pages. Primarily, the authors of "The Keys of Mary" used the simulation of gnosis to model the plot, chronotope, and intrigue; but the values, deeply reflected in the legends and artifacts associated with the life of the Virgin Mary, prompt readers' need for self-determination.

**Keywords:** gnosis, subculture, postmodern novel, pastiche, irony, intertextuality, genre, plot, composition, intrigue, chronotope.

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

The problem of gnosis has been a subject matter to lots of research – starting from works popular in the previous century (V. Soloviev, Viach. Ivanov, S. Bulgakov, L. Gumilev) – to the modern ones, aimed largely at the analysis of the problem of perception of gnosis ideas in fiction (U. Eco, A. Usmanova, S. Yeremeev, S. Bulgakov, A. Ovcharenko, S. Slobodnyuk, M. Zolotonosov, O. Shostak, T. Bovsunivska) [1;2;3;6;7]. The most prominent works in the field include a monographic study by Harvard University

professor A. Versluis "Gnosticism and Literature" and O. Zabuzhko's intellectual bestseller "Notre Dame d'Ukraine".

It is only natural that the problem of gnosticism in the art of literature attracts this much attention: after all, the European literature of past centuries was evidently interested in the ideas of this philosophical movement. This interest was especially intense in the XX century, therefore, it resulted in a number of bright creative personalities pursuing their ideas in the given field; the list included F. Pessoa, H. L. Borges, W. Yates, M. Bulgakov, Lesia Ukrainska, T. Mann, H. Hesse, N. Koroleva, G. Meyrink, James Joyce, L. Leonov, M. Pavić.

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Most researchers of the given ideological and thematic layer of literature agree that to identify it properly they should be able to find in the literary work certain issues typical for gnosis around which the work itself revolves: the central issue of "the origin of evil", "the essence of this world creator, who is not the Supreme Deity, but a "demiurge", limited in his actions, who made mistakes. (...) therefore, the doctrine of salvation is interpreted as liberation from matter by means of gnosis, enlightenment that reveals the mystery of the world creation to a soul" [6, p.84]. It is logical to recognize literary works as gnostic only if they possess this necessary component. For instance, "The Gospel According to Jesus Christ"(1991), the novel by the Portuguese writer, Nobel Prize winner J. Saramago, is not a simple retelling of the occult teachings – it contains an attempt to "rethink" the "Gospel". To a certain extent, the motives of the Good and Evil confrontation are present in the literary works of all iconic artists, in all the top works considered classics of the previous centuries. Regarding the XXI century the situation is slightly different: most experts believe that by the end of the XX century, literature had exhausted its interest in the deep issues of gnosis and made a subculture out of it. U. Eco's novel "The Name of the Rose" can serve as a striking example of such a transformation: the author used Gnostic ideas to build the artistic world of the work; he formalized them for the most part and replaced the pathos of tragedy with a reference to postmodern irony. In the "Dictionary of the Khasars: A Lexicon Novel" by M. Pavić "lots of traditional motives of Gnosticism are replicated at the level of subculture without much reference to the plot" [6, p.84], they are used as specific "camouflage". Another work of this outstanding artist and scholar - "The Last Love in Constantinople", designed as a "guide to fortune telling" - is a masterful compositional embodiment of Kabbalistic ideas (a series of short stories are literary illustrations to the Tarot cards).

The novel "Foucault's Pendulum" by U. Eco offered its readers an interesting game with puzzles from certain areas of gnosis. The strength of talent, erudition of the writer made this game not only exciting but also intellectual. Thus, modern literature does not focus on the deep issues of gnosis, but uses the formal and semantic planes of these ideas to stimulate the reader's attention, makes them an intriguing factor. Therefore, we consider the term "simulation of gnosis" to be appropriate for the situations concerning this kind of application of the ideas of this philosophical doctrine.

However, some researchers advocate the opposite position. Thus, the Ukrainian scholar T. Bovsunivska emphasizes the active functioning of the motives of gnosis in the modern literature discourse (both foreign and domestic ones) and states: "The reader is tired of the loud postmodern poetics, which is full of schemes and simulations of images, they are attracted by its alternative, by the not yet lost tradition - by the poetics of the sacred. This trend can be traced not only in the literary world of France, but everywhere. Almost all the prose works of the Ukrainian writer Halyna Pahutayak can claim the status of "spiritual" genre books, in particular the works "The Scriber of the Eastern Gate of the Asylum" (1999-2001), "The Tale of Mary and Magdalene" (1982), "Notes of a White Bird" (1999) and others" [3, p.63].

Surely, the statement that the deep interest in gnosis in the fiction discourse has disappeared is far too strong. There are still traces of the "homo sacrum" poetics as the one opposing to the "homo ludens" poetics (T.Bovsunivska) as the postmodern dominant in the literary works like "Days of Anger" by Sylvie Germain, novels "The Last Temptation" by Nikos Kazantzakis and "The Secret

"Magdalene" (2005) by Ki Longfellow, as well as the trilogy "VALIS" Philip Dick.. On the other hand, the works of Dan Brown still remain popular, and these books use the ideas of gnosis at the level of a certain "simulation". In addition, works of various novel genres like a "philosophical novel", "spiritual novel" and detective-adventure novel still use elements of gnosis in different ways. If the authors of the former genres are mainly interested in the deep philosophical dominant, the latter genres use them to model temporal-spatial composition, plot architecture, to create story-telling tension; in fact, to write an interesting story where the distant light of Mystery inexorably attracts the reader, stimulating the reader's interest.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The above-mentioned variant found its textual embodiment in the novel "Keys of Mary", the result of the literary tandem of famous modern masters of the word Andriy Kurkov and Yuriy Vynnychuk.

The nucleus of the plot, the "epicenter" of both the narrative and the events unfolding in this work center around the idea of the immortality of the Virgin, borrowed from the Gnostics, around her eternal rebirth and hunt for the evil forces. Hence, here comes the idea of platonic love, the idea of love-servitude (the cult of serving to the Lady-soul), embodied in the central characters. After all, there is always a faithful dzhura (vassal) appearing near the Maiden - a knight whose duty is to protect and defend her, but to see her as a sister only. Here we can also find an echo of the motive of the five senses, which underwent certain interpretation in the Middle Ages; it's essence is the rejection of "destructive passions" and the triumph of charity. Now, let's find out how the elements of Gnostic knowledge were used by the authors in order to model the composition of the novel.

Thus, in the "epicenter" of the work there is the image of the Maiden (Virgin Mary) in her three novel incarnations (Maria, Aretha and Rina) - the eternally young savior of mankind, hunted by the forces of evil in all three plot dimensions. "Prologue" and "Epilogue", which create frames of the novel, play the role of a gateway of the entrance and exit, open to the space of many new stories. The two main chronological planes of quite autonomous plots of Oles Kurylas and Aretha-Maria (all events take place during several months of 1941-1942, in Lviv and Krakow, there are several flashbacks) and Oleh Bismarck and Rina (here the chronotope is even narrower: October - November 2019, Kyiv, and the Greek city of Ormos), interact with each other due to the "gravity" of another plot, almost until the final chapters of the novel; and this third plot is "historical", clearly implanted in the first story line and "interspersed" in the second one at the level of hints, signs, readers' guesses. The plot of the historical chronicle of the knight Olherd becomes a kind of the "supernova" in the context of the narrative space of the novel; it attracts the worlds of two distant from the point of time stories of the plot orbits and creates a kind of insight on the last pages of the novel.

Both the compositional approach to the work and the architecture of parallel plots were the result of an interesting artistic invention, that is the unfolding of the story of the Galician knights' march to the Holy Sepulcher described in the lost chronicle (surely, the authors could have made a wild guess about the existence of such a historical document, as, firstly, they had no obligation to be purely authentic, because the novel does not represent a historical genre, and secondly, there are few mentions of the Rus-Crusaders in several Old French chronicles of the XIX century.).

In the "Prologue" the authors give a clear hint at the non-linear chronotope of the work: recalling the past, Oles Kurylas mentions that it is the ancient manuscript that "connected the past with the future and interwove my fate into a tapestry of amazing complexity"; "in this tapestry, apart from Maria, Aretha and me, only the keys and rings turned out to be unchanged. Ancient keys and equally ancient rings. Eternal keys and eternal rings that travel from the hands and fingers of mortals to the hands and fingers of other mortals" [4, p.6].

For the story line, which unfolds in the 2019 space-time coordinates, the role of the prologue is performed by the first part - "Random Crimean meeting and its consequences." Then the two plots develop in parallel, and the reader's attention is never weakened due to skillful suspense building: each previous chapter ends at the critical point approaching the mystery key, and the events of the past

foretell surprises in the next chapter, happening in the present. Thus, the part in which Oleg Bismarck actually "touches" the Mystery for the first time (he finds the excavated burial under the walls of Sophia) – and where for the first time in the narrated story he and the reader face artifacts, the signs that will lead the story further (a ring and a handle of dagger with the symbols of the Templars) - alternates with the part describing the battle of the Crusaders under Shaizar (here also happens a signature finding for the story: the key to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and the lock that was forced from the door falling under the pressure of knights). In the same part of the story, the knight admits that during the last year of his stay in the Holy Land, he experienced an adventure that changed his life unexpectedly. Then, in the next part of the book there takes place a fateful meeting in the life of Oleh Bismarck - for the first time Rina appears in the "game", and all the energy of the mystery will revolve around her. Then again, in the next part dealing with Olherd's plot, a knight meets the Maiden (Virgin).

This kind of internal composition of individual parts, that looks as if not connected by a single plot and which is following the mirror principle, guarantees an incessant suspense, inherent for detective and adventure genres. For instance, the impulse of the "pre-culmination burst", which ends the part of the "Lviv-Krakow" plot (Aretha is preparing to carry out the sentence and execute the Gestapo serviceman), literally transgresses its dynamics into a contemporary story part: having lost consciousness, Oleh wakes up in an unfamiliar dungeon.

It's worth mentioning that from the point of the book composition Olherd's plot line is presented in the form of separate interim episodes: due to its final point of note of high tension, each episode is distinctly relevant to the other two plot lines, which narratives unfold in parallel, although both of them happen in different and distant space-time planes. Sometimes Olherd's plot line continues in the form of a story told by one of the protagonists of the "Lviv-Krakow" plot (Colonel of the NKVD, Professor Bohdan Kurylas, Aretha). The plot of the "historical" line appears indirectly - in the stories of Aretha (Maiden's (Virgin's) escape from the termei dei Papi), while the culmination of the story – the episode in which the Maiden (Virgin) is burnt at stake as a witch - unfolds in the papal nuncio's letter to Pope Paschal II.

The main plot line of the novel starts with the list of archaeologists which Adik hands over to Oleh after a successful excavation, the list contains name of archeologists who have already tried to dig something up under the walls of Sofia. Bismarck has to visit their relatives (the archaeologists themselves are unlikely to be still alive) and find out what has been found by the listed five in their distant time. Like a real detective, Oleh notices the signs that speak out and testify for the secret, which, according to his guesses, Adik hides from him. Bismarck finds the heirs of four archaeologists one by one, than he learns that one person on the list is still alive and permanently lives in Greece. Yet, no one knows the fifth one. It is only old Kleinod who recognizes Igor Vavrikov on the accidentally found photo.

Similarly to the previous example, for the storyline unfolding in Lviv-Krakow 1941, the following episode describing NKVD Colonel Oleh Vavryk's conversation with Professor Bohdan Kurylas plays a similar role: that's when the Colonel hands over a continuation of Olgerd's chronicle, which has been considered lost, together with the mysterious fourth Book of Enoch. The professor also receives a task: to find the Maiden (Virgin). The adventures of Oles', Professor's son, are full of dynamics and surprises; they include the story of training in a Soviet saboteur training camp, fleeing to Krakow, crossing the Carpathians again, rescuing his parents, "recognizing" his identity through the memories of the past, sign symbolism, demonstration of amazing abilities of Aretha... All these events make the reader ready for the culminating episode - the girl performing her duty as a liquidator of the OUN: sentencing the Gestapo executioner Kessel to death and his execution. At the same time, the parts dedicated to the "Lviv-Krakow" plot alternate with the parts switching to the contemporary time and space. The protagonist of this plot, Oleh Bismarck, conducts a truly detective investigation involving surveillance and hiding, and finally he finds out where Rina usually heads and disappears. And it is also the moment when he sees the fifth person depicted in the old photos - Ihor Vavrikov.

In the final chapters, the "historical" storyline is not simply parallelized, it is rather actively included in the main storyline by means of becoming a motive of the animated history-game (the past speaks to the present). This game appears in the lives of dazed "children of the XXI century" and saves them from death, and it is in the final chapter "The key finds the lock" that all the puzzles of history are finally put together into one complete pattern. However, the finale of the book is open: The Story does not end here. And the battle between the good and the evil does not end as well. This openness of the finale combined with the anticipation of new events (that where Oleh's dream comes to the fore) unobtrusively offers the reader to test their own self-identification. By the way, the finale of Oles Kurylas's story is also open: having avoided persecution on the part of Gestapo, after Areta's death, the Kurylas family in Lisbon is waiting for a ship to take them to a new world. Thus, a seemingly casual acquaintance with the far-from-ordinary daughter of an Austrian professor, in whose mind "sometimes strange voices break through...", also hints at the possibility of the continuation of the story.

Both "Prologue" and "Epilogue" form a circular frame, that is responsible for a compositional echo not only between the ending and the beginning of the work, but also between different space-time planes, where the parallel plots unfold. This technique emphasizes the main motive of the literary work: History is alive, there is no past that can be forsaken forever as it flows into the future, intertwines with it, it is reborn in new episodes, images, and ideas. Therefore, the main thing is to understand who you are, which side you are on, and how not to lose self-identification.

The novel is modeled on the principles of the "cosmogony structure" (U. Eco) – its "bipolarity" is manifested in the way the characters can be grouped and in the resolution of the main conflict: it is as early as at the excavation of the tomb of a Taurus that Adik explains to Oleh how the "universe" works : "The world is black and white. White archaeologists work on its white side, black ones - on the black side. The main thing is that they should not interfere with each other". Although similar modeling of the literary world is characteristic of the vast majority of literary texts, we still tend to single out certain "flirtation with gnosis" in the bipolarity of Vynnychuk-Kurkov's novel, a hint that the core of the plot has a game in its essence. After all, in the final chapters of the work, the exciting game proposed by the authors ceases to be just a metaphor: a computer game, somehow uploaded onto the phone and computer of Kolia's "brother", activates itself when Kolia puts a ring on his finger, accepting the keeper's mission. In this game somebody's mystical "hand" warns the Maiden (Virgin) and her guardians that they need to flee immediately, as their lives are in danger. Thus, the text of the chronicle seems to come to life through the animated pictures and it creates the chronotope projected at the present: the heroes must accept that they are "chosen ones" and start the game. And this is another sign of postmodern poetics in the novel, which involves the interpretation of the work as an intertext.

Oles Kurilas's contemplation of a total premonition of war echoes the Gnostic interpretation of evil, expressed in the "Prologue": "There is a premonition that I will not be able to step aside and wait until all of this goes away " This gloomy conviction "merged with the anticipation of future enlightenment" - "as if universal evil would eventually make my life brighter and better" [4, p.5]. The magic of numbers and symbolism used in the novel both eloquently reveal Gnostic sources. Thus, one of the recurring symbols in the novel is the key (in the "historical" plot it appears as a result of the Crusaders' seizure of the Holy Sepulcher; in the "Lviv-Krakow" plot, Oles received from Aretha the key "to her apartment near Kyiv", and it is only in the final chapters of the contemporary plot line that there appears the lock which this key opens). Yet, the key symbol - is not only the symbol of the Maiden (Virgin). The keys, kept by Lviv citizens who have been forced to leave their homes while fleeing from the Red Horde, may not be endowed with the clear-cut sacred significance, but they are definitely perceived as an obvious metaphor of "self-identification": "Surely, everyone has their own ideas concerning the most necessary things to be taken along when embarking on the dangerous road, but there is one thing common for them all - the key to the apartment. It symbolized the hope to return" [4, p.43]. Among the other important signs-symbols, which contribute to the dynamics of the plot, there are the handle of the dagger and the guardian's ring. In fact, the ring with the Templars image on it leads the reader to the story about the Holy Grail, the history of the order, which was obliged to preserve and protect the sanctuary and the sacred objects. Traveling through time, the ring occasionally appears on the pages of

all three central storylines. First, Oleh learns the meaning and significance of the artifact, found in the excavated grave, from the Internet. In the "Lviv-Krakow" storyline Aretha presents Oles Kurylas with the same ring as the birthday gift (here it also plays a compositional role). The appearance of this artifact in the lives of the characters triggers the beginning of certain events and changes: just after Oleh felt the warmth of the ring, there appeared "brother" Kolia in his apartment, the IT specialist who is fated to protect Rina, "not her brother, but a brother near her". The novel also uses the symbolism of "recognition": there is a birthmark in the shape of a crescent moon (this birthmark indicates that its bearer is the embodiment of the Maiden (Virgin), and the same birthmark appears on the body of the guardian) - both Aretha and Oles, as well as Ryna and Oleh have it.

The authors of the novel also use the symbols of Kabbalah, in particular the "magic" of number 7. Thus, in the "Chronicle of Olherd" seven knights came to the Holy Land from Halych; in the contemporary plot line, after the first acquaintance with the main character, the main events take place only seven years later; looking for a grave near Sofia and digging it, Oleh "squatted to the ground seven meters from the wall of the monastery"; it is no coincidence that the Mystery enters Bismarck's life in the seventh chapter (the guardian's ring finds a new dzhura (vassal); Ryna appears in his apartment, though he has not given her the address). That means that fate-changing events happen to him in this chapter. The new Abode of the Guardians consists of seven knights, "heavenly special forces", who will be "the guardians of eternity." Yet, the excessive usage of the magic number also clearly hints at the postmodern irony - it is no coincidence that the amount on account of the NGO "Institute-Archive" equals to 777 thousand 777 Euro 77 cents.

The characters of Gnostic writers often search for the "hieroglyphs of existence", while for Ryna and Oleh their non-awareness, lack of knowledge, their ignorance is not a problem. They blindly follow the signs. Oleg tries to keep on the leads in order to learn about quite real, in his opinion, things: the shadow market of buying and selling of the Templars gold as well as drugs (this is how Bismarck perceives the amazing powder, which restores strength and makes diseases recede). While Ryna realizes that something is wrong with her - the girl suffers from the state of anxious anticipation of something incomprehensible that will reveal her purpose, both Oleh and Kolia not fail in comprehension of the "hieroglyphs of existence", they also remain ignorance of their inner voices for quite a long time. On the contrary, Bismark is far from being an ordinary black archeologist; he is also a brilliant detective, who tries to untangle the history trap which "caught" him, as he puts it. Therefore, the markers, the hieroglyphs, which failed entering his consciousness breaking through his dreams, are revealed gradually; they come forth as a result of each subsequently untangled knot, and then they explode in the form of an insight on a Greek island in the apartment of an old archaeologist. The text of the novel features the apocryphal Books of Enoch (they are often interpreted as a mystical "hieroglyph of existence" that contains the secret of all matter), but here one can also hear the echo of the postmodern irony.

The authors of the "Keys of Mary" use the "simulation of gnosis" primarily to spike the intrigue and to make the plot dynamic, yet, those values that are deeply reflected in the legends and artifacts associated with the Holy Grail, the life of the Virgin Mary, cannot but stimulate the reader's need for self-realization. The authors do not moralize about the way of life of the main characters (Oleg is involved in a not quite legitimate business, secretly digging up ancient burials; Ryna doesn't shy away from a drink), they do not emphasize their "virtues", but somehow the reader begins to involuntarily realize that a black archaeologist becoming a guardian is far from a coincidence: he acts in the way that proves his in-depth decency, without really attaching importance to it. Oleg lets a weird stranger into his apartment, she needs his protection, and, without realizing it, he starts to care about her. When he meets old Kleinod, prompted by his originally utilitarian interest (as Kleinod is one of those who can take him to the treasure) he begins to take care of the old man. Without hesitation, Oleh rushes to save Polsky, and the fact that he is in a foreign country and things can turn out badly for him, does not stop the guy. The authors are clearly favouring such moral qualities as honor (for more than 30 years old Kleinod abstained from an attempt to find out what was in the package entrusted to him), responsibility, sacrifice (Aretha worries about the lives of others being endangered, but she has no fear

of losing her own life). Olgerd, Oles, Oleg, Kolya, and Ryna... all of them become "chosen ones" because they are able to clearly identify themselves: they know which side of the world they belong to - black or white.

Let us emphasize once again: the elements of Gnosticism in the novel mainly serve to express the genre-compositional dominants of the detective-adventure type of literary world organization; there the main role belongs to intrigue, and the composition of the work is a kind of crossword puzzle, in which the reader is immersed fully and inadvertently. The architectonics of this novel is really akin to a crossword puzzle. Even the names of the characters in all three space and time planes resonate, even though they belong to completely opposite characters in terms of their qualities and "spiritual vocation". This kind of "juggling of names" implicitly hints at the Gnostic idea of the good and evil correlation: Galician knight Oleh (Olgerd), the guardian of Mary - NKVD Colonel Oleh Vavryk, who persecutes Aretha Maria in 1941, - Oleh Bismarck (Kachok), the contemporary guardian of Mary; Iov Pochaivsky - IOV (son of the Colonel, Igor Olehovich Vavrykov, who uses Ryna (Maiden/Virgin) for his own interest; Prince Igor, whom Olgerd served and who helped save the Maiden (Virgin) from King Baldwin and the Pope - Ihor Kleinod, the long-term keeper of the artifact entrusted to him - Ihor Vavrykov again, the successor of his father, who is keeping an eye on the archaeologists under the "authorities" orders. Also there is Adik, black archaeologist, who is hunting for the Templars gold, and whose full name is Adolf.

In this novel evil is far from mysterious or infernal. More often than not it has a real human face: of Pope Urban, of Stalinist' and Hitler's executioners (the Colonel of the NKVD; Gestapo executioner Kesslell, in peacetime he studied philosophy and played the violin, was a caring father, but in the occupied Krakow he organized a brothel selling young Jewish girls and later sent them to the gas cameras of the concentration camp), of faceless Red Army soldiers and their families, who stained and demolished Lviv, brought there chaos and fear, as well as vulgarity and lack of taste to the cultural space of the city. The signs of "evil" are the clear markers of the Soviet "paradise" in Lviv, the atmosphere of espionage and backstabbing, which is promoted by the new government by all means, as well as of the Nazi occupation of Krakow.

Yet, the novel is void of Christian theodicy and reflections on the ideas of ancient Gnosticism, there is no trace of the issue of the equality of Good and Evil. This is only natural, because the novel is representative of a detective-adventure genre, not philosophical one. Instead, one can clearly trace the simulation of gnosis, characteristic of postmodern intellectual prose of the day. The novel also contains the elements of Gnostic pastiche: quite often, without much connection to the plot, the authors present mixed and summarized variety of information on the occult issues (reference to the Tutankhamun chronicle, legends about the eternally young Egyptian goddess Maa, Joseph Ernest Renan's mystical information about Jeanne d'Arc, stories about the underground country of Agartha, about the mysterious Virl energy, stories and legends about the hunt for the Grail and the Maiden (Virgin) by both the Nazi Anenerbe and the secret structure of the NKVD, the cooperation of the Nazis with the Tibetans, and much more). The Pope Urban's speech is also full of the pastiche as it echoes the works on the Crusades. All of this postmodern irony with a flavour of Gnosticism replicated at the level of subculture (to rouse the interest in a greedy for mystery reader) – those things that have recently infested the Internet, and are actively promoted in the programmes of the channel "Mega" – is intensified by means of bold "winking" at the reader: it can be clearly traced in the small introductions to several chapters ("Crying girl in search of a boon companion/soul mate", "Bismark wants to go to Greece again. Or to eat a chop, at least", "How to successfully impersonate a loser when you are taken for a loser", "In search of delicious borsch Bismark finds an unexpected interlocutor"). One of the introductions tells: "Bismark suddenly finds a way to see the invisible." However, the reader's expectation of Bismark possessing some supernatural abilities bursts like a soap bubble, and the authors only smile. The same effect of a "postmodern smile" can be traced, for example, in a computer warning Oleh and his friends received: along with the promise of imminent death in case they do not leave the apartment in a few minutes, there is an order to "collect toothbrushes".

It is no coincidence that the title of the novel refers to S. Yesenin's essay with the same name; in it the Russian poet expressed his own philosophy of art along with his reflections on the peculiarities of the artistic image: "An artistic image as a synthesis of heaven and earth, mystical and prose, secret and obvious..."? Isn't this energy that sets the plot dynamics, pulsates in between the lines of the work, and which is symbolized by the mysterious Virl in the Kurkov-Vynnychuk's novel? Only the authors know it. It is obvious that this story is convincing not due the strength of its facts, but due to the engaging plot, based on the Mystery and moral grounds, that the humanity have worked on for centuries. This is convincing as "misreading" (Harold Bloom's term), i.e. reading as a "creative distortion" where a reader becomes a player in the field of history.

In his book "Storytelling for Ears, Eyes, and Hearts", Mark Livin quotes Tyrion Lannister from "Game of Thrones" who ponders on what unites people. It is not gold, or army, or standards. It is a good story told by a skillful master: "There is nothing more powerful in the world than a good story." Such a story should reflect ideals and values developed by mankind throughout its existence, stimulating the reader's interpretation of not so much what the text really means, but rather "who I am because of the read text and how the text can be read thanks to me" [5, p.33].

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The mystery of the "Keys of Mary" becomes not only the sense of the characters' lives, or unites different time planes, but it also charms the reader in the process of reading, because it is a story that does not let go. It is noteworthy that the path of the modern guardians, as well as the one of the Maiden (Virgin), does not disappear in the mist of obscurity. The monastery near Kyiv and the underground church, where the Maiden (Virgin) has decided to reside in solitude until a certain time (the motive of apocalypse, a terrible threat to the whole world that inevitably advances from the East); the disguised as a horse-racing club, secret monastery guardians club ready to act any moment fulfilling the God's will ("Yes, this is celestial special forces. And the bravest of them will be the guardians of eternity!" [4, p.563]); all these inspire self-identification at the national-existential dimension level: who I am with, what my choice will be... These lines are clearly projected at our present.

On the backstage of history, same ideas come to life at different times, they acquire human features - and the Divine Comedy continues, and new patterns are woven in the endless creation of an amazing tapestry - the Story told to the Reader.

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**Address:** Nataliia Maftyn, Vasyl Stefanyk Precarpathian National University, 57 Shevchenko St., Ivano-Frankivsk, 76025 Ukraine.

**E-mail:** nataliia.maftyn@pnu.edu.ua

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Мафтин Наталя. «Симуляція гнозису»: які двері відчиняють «Ключі Марії» (на матеріалі роману А. Куркова, Ю. Винничука «Ключі Марії»). *Журнал Прикарпатського університету імені Василя Стефаника*, 8 (2) (2021), 70–78.

Пропонована стаття — перше дослідження художніх особливостей роману «Ключі Марії» з часу публікації твору. У статті з'ясовано різницю між художніми текстами, що постали як спроба відповіді на запити філософії гнозису, і текстами літератури постмодерну, автори яких використовують гностичні ідеї для побудови художнього світу твору, значною мірою формалізувавши їх. Вважаємо за доцільне застосовувати для цієї групи творів поняття «симуляція гнозису». Автор доводить, що основою сюжету й композиції «Ключів Марії» є саме таке використання ідей та знаків цього філософського напряму. «Симуляція гнозису» увиразнює і жанрову специфіку роману як детективно-пригодницького, стимулює читацький інтерес, адже слугує інтригоутворювальним чинником. Твір моделюється за принципом «космогонічної структури»: двополюсність виявляється в групуванні персонажів й у вирішенні основного конфлікту. Елементи гнозису, тиражованого на рівні субкультури, вдало використані для поєднання трьох сюжетних ліній, трьох часопросторових вимірів. Епіцентром твору є образ Діви у трьох її романних утіленнях (Марії, Анети, Рини) — вічно юної рятівниці людства, за якою в усіх трьох сюжетних «світах» полюють сили зла. Цікавою художньою залишкою в романі став сюжет утраченої історичної хроніки про лицаря Ольгерда: в космосі наративу твору він сприймається як «наднова», що притягує до себе світи двох віддалених у часі сюжетних орбіт і творить своєрідний інсайт на останніх сторінках. Автори «Ключів Марії» використали симуляцію гнозису перш за все для моделювання сюжету, хронотопу, інтриги, однак ціннісні орієнтири, що глибинно відсвічують у легендах і артефактах, пов'язаних із життям Діви Марії, стимулюють у читача потребу самовизначення.

**Ключові слова:** гнозис, субкультура, постмодерністський роман, пастиш, іронія, інтертекстуальность, жанр, сюжет, композиція, інтрига, хронотоп.