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Research paper



Semantics of the Church Image in the Spatiotemporal Worldbuilding of Short-story Collections by Nikolai Vasilievich Gogol" Evenings on a Farm Near Dikanka" and "Mirgorod"

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Abstract

The article deals with the peculiarities of churches' depiction, semantics and functions of the church image in the cycles by Nikolai Gogol "Evenings on a Farm Near Dikanka" and "Mirgorod". In particular, there have been considered meaning-making, plot-creating, image-creating functions of the church image in the first Gogolian collected stories. The authors of the article have analyzed the place of the church in the spatiotemporal worlbuilding either of every tale separately, or of both collections altogether, comparing and contrasting the images of church in different stories. There have also been taken into account the allocation and role of the church in the human realm (as opposed to the space axes of the demoniac world), as a bastion of hope, the noise and colour saturation of the church space. This article also considers decline in sacredness, representation of the church as household, carnal and fleshy space as a symbol of the moral lapse, spiritual and moral fall of the characters, the deformation of their inner (spiritual) space. The church is examined as the key image of the short-story "Viy". The peculiarities of representation of faith, different Christian traditions, various kinds of temples are explained in relation with the plot, the characters and the key motives of every tale.

Keywords: *a church, a temple, space, locus, topos, worldbuilding.*

Introduction

In Gogol's cycles "Evenings on a Farm Near Dikanka" (1829-1832) and "Mirgorod" (1832-1834) each type of the artistic space or chronotope corresponds to its own heroes: real-everyday, mystical, fantastic, historical, heroic or idyllic. The synthesis of real and unreal space and time in the Gogol's first collections of short stories causes the artistic diversity of the characters portrayed by Gogol. They are numerous representatives of the Ukrainian national character, the Ukrainian ethnos (young and carefree "girls", courageous "lads", severe fathers and wicked stepmothers, quarrelsome peasants wives, Cossacks, comic sextons and priest's sons), as well as demonological images (devilry, "chorts" (dickens), witches, sorcerers, healers, spirits, monsters, "mugs", "pans", "kissers"). In the first Gogol's cycles, all the short-stories are "connected" with the unity of the author's world perception, with images of real and unreal heroes, and also with the scene of action.

Main body

R. Pevear and L. Volokhonsky note that "the fantastic and the diabolical were always essential dimensions of his world" [1, p. 11]. To our opinion, the two worlds – the human realm and the demonic realm – do not just coexist peacefully in Gogol's short-story collections, but intercross and leave traces on each other. In this case, heroes who have visited "unclean" places, very often pay the price for such visits, while the evil spirits usually suffer defeat in the human world. M.V. Praskovina points out that the driving force of the conflicts in all the stories of these cycles is "the absence of the boundary as a dividing line that would help to avoid confusion between the two worlds" [2, p. 279].

However, in the space-time of this world, in our opinion, there is rarely a sharp partition into polar pairs of opposites heaven/earth, God/devil, top/bottom, etc. The sky in Gogol's novels "embraces" the earth, and the pond (water) merges with the sky, the earth reflects the sky, and the church and the priest cannot protect the village from "a devil in human form". Real and unreal, accursed and sacral, magic, sorcery and prayers are mixed in the space of Gogol's Ukraine in mystical, socio-historical, calendar, daily time. In Gogol's world there are not always and not everywhere the borders that separate times and spaces, sleep and wake, fiction and reality. Here everything merges into everything, and not only Gogolian heroes and storytellers, but also space and time personate, undergo transformations and wear masks. "The real is not separated from the fantastic by anything in Gogol's creations, and every minute the impossible in them is capable of becoming possible" [4], – writes V.Ya. Bryusov.

The very enigma of Gogol's birth is closely related to Faith and Religion. Legend has it that, after the death of two sons, Mariya Ivanovna Gogol-Yanovsky, the mother of the future writer, made a pilgrimage to the icon of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker in

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Dikanka, after what she gave birth to her sole survived son – Nikolai Gogol. Though his family was very religiously devout, the first impressions of God were more connected with pagan-Christian folk beliefs, legends and tales of yore, than with God and church.

Young Nikolai Gogol created his first short-stories inspired by German Romantic Movement, increasing focus on demonologic motives and the description of the world in the toils of sinister forces and the struggle of light against darkness. Along with these works of genius, Gogol starts to experience not piety and adoration, but religious fear, fright of higher forces and Deity. This fright will haunt the writer until his death hour, leading him from laughter over the devil to fanatical religious commitment and ideas to take the monastic vows.

The problem of Gogolian world duality, literary time, literary space and chronotope, as well as toposes, locuses and spatiotemporal characteristics of the writer's works were mentioned passingly by many researchers [5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11], but the image of church in his first cycles has never been considered separately and carefully.

The church image as a leitmotif and keynote runs almost through all the short-stories from the cycles by Nikolai Gogol "Evenings on a Farm Near Dikanka" and "Mirgorod". Even if the image of the temple is not embodied in a fictional work "spatially" (three dimensionally), it plays a meaning-making and sense-making role indirectly, subtextually, as and underlying idea through Biblical allusions. In many stories there are churchmen, ecclesiastics or faithful characters, who stand against the evil or wrestle against temptations. Prayers, the sign of the cross, the divine afflation and the fear of God play a significant role both in each story separately and in these collections of stories as a whole, taken in conjunction with each other. As in many other aspects, in the context of Church, Religion and God, these two cycles stand apart from the writer's late creative works. But again, if Gogol's religious beliefs, described either expressly or by implication in his "Dead Soles", "Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends" and "Author's Confession" from time to time become the subject of research, the Church and the God in his first two collections are underinvestigated. Researchers downplay the functions of the Church and, more importantly, its role in spatiotemporal worldbuilding in 8 short-stories of the first cycle and in 4 short-stories of the second cycle.

It is interesting to note that the church in both collections is depicted by the author in different ways. Taking into account the peculiarities of picturing the church image and its functions in the text of a particular short novel, the stories from the first cycles "Evenings on a Farm Near Dikanka" and "Mirgorod" can be conditionally divided into 2 groups (according to the increment of negative or positive connotation and ability/inability of the church to resist evil). The first group includes the following short-stories: "The Tale of How Ivan Ivanovich Quarreled with Ivan Nikiforovich" – "St. John's Eve" – "A Terrible Vengeance" – "Viy". The second group adds in such stories as: "May Night, or The Drowned Maiden" – "Christmas Eve" – "Taras Bulba" – "The Old World Landowners".

According to our reckoning, after all in most of fictional works in the cycles by Gogol, the church cannot yet save the heroes from the demonic invasion of their world, it cannot resist evil creatures, spirits and undead - the devil, dickens, witches, the Antichrist (unlike the writer's late works). M.Ya. Vayskopf believes that "the thing is that the carnal, fleshy, material, corporeal embodiment of the church in Gogol's short-stories completely absorbs or pushes out the spiritual one" [12, p. 112]. The icons, holy pictures, interior decorations and heavenward broach spires along with colorable piety of the characters substitute for the very pith and marrow of the Faith. The soul of the creed is not revealed yet and, although, in spatial dimension the Church is traditionally at the center of the world (even if it is only a farm, a hamlet, a village or the entire territory of Ukraine from the Carpathians to the Liman), it is not able to secure completely the ordinary Orthodox Christians, acting in the short-stories.

So, in the mystical space of the farm in the story "St. John's Eve", this settlement and its inhabitants cannot be protected from the evil spirit either by Father Afanasy, or even by the very presence of "a church in the hamlet, of St. Panteleimon" [1, c.16]. V.Ya. Zvinyatskovskiy emphasizes the symbolism of the belonging of the farmers (village inhabitants), including Petrus Kithless (Rootless), to St. Panteley (St. Panteleimon). This saint was prayed for "weaker brethren (impotent) and the wakeful (insomnolent)", therefore, from the point of view of the researcher, the expression "very" should be understood as "even": even St. Panteley cannot heal Petrus from the illness to which he was brought due to the union with the evil one. According to V.Ya. Zvinyatskovskiy, it is this "strengthlessness (feebleness) motive" of formerly powerful holy places over the last hours before the Judgement Day, will be further developed in the short-story "Viy" [13, p. 402].

In this story the priest Father Afanasy and the Church itself are opposed to the "devil in human form" – Basavriuk. It is worth noting that in the first redaction of this narrative his name was written as "BISavriuk", and "bis" (Ukrainian) is "a demon, an unclean spirit", so, the author from the very beginning laid emphasis on the fact that he was hellborn and contrasted him with divine power and the good. Moreover, not only village church, but even Kiev Pechersk Lavra, mentioned at the end of this short-story, is not able to conquer evil in the person of Basavriuk, as even after Pidorka was admitted to the veil, this devil continued to behave outrageously in the hamlet and different devilment and hellish stuff was happening long afterwards.

In the short story "Christmas Eve" the devil was depicted in the most unattractive form, having very sleazy appearance, and ridiculed in the church (in the painting written by Vakula on the wall in the back of church). It is interesting to note that in this novelette the clergyman – deacon Osip Nikiforovich, was similarly ridiculed because of his love affair with Solokha. It is notable that in this literary read the devil is very humanized and is more frolicsome, than evil, while the priest commits sins. In such a way Gogol humorously levels the good and the bad, showing, that they are not black and white, but the devilish and the godlike sometimes violate the borders and intermingle in the human world of Gogolian "Ukrainian tales".

It is noteworthy that in the text of the tale "Christmas Eve", the tavern in the value-based axes of coordinates is often located next to the church. "The Church and the evil spirits in general interact extremely easy and willingly, they flow into each other ..." – writes M.Ya. Vayskopf [12, p. 113]. At the same time, in the first two Gogol's cycles evil spirits act most freely in the space of a tavern, an inn, a tap house, which occupy the opposite to the Church pole in the Gogolian worldbuilding (picture of the world). Gogol's characters live between the inn/tavern and the church. The author ironically contrasts these opposite types of space: "…it suddenly became so dark all over the world that no one could find the way to the tavern, to say nothing of the deacon's"; "If on Sunday a pious muzhik or squire, <..>, went to church – or, in case of bad weather, to the tavern – how could he not stop by at Solokha's, to eat fatty dumplings with sour cream and chat in a warm cottage with a talkative and gregarious hostess?" [1, p. 25, 30], the Choub's chum instead of the deacon's new house also gets himself to the tavern, and so on. As it is evident from the last quotation, the way either to the church, or to the drinkery, runs past the mother of the blacksmith Vakula, who at the same time goes to church and flies on the broom, being simultaneously the transitional creature that belongs to both realms (demoniac and humane ones). In this case, for many characters the tavern turns out to be more valuable. But, despite this, at the end of the story, it is the locus of the church that performs integrative, unifying, conciliative and placatory functions. On a holy Christian holiday, almost all the characters appear before the reader in the space of the church. In this short story, the Church fulfills the role of the purificatory, purgative, expurgatory space. Here at Christmas the

whole Dikanka gathered, amalgamating in a devout, reverent unity. It is a funny thing, but in the system of spatial coordinates in Gogol's stories, the house, the church and the tavern are on the same value scale, and the demonic forces act the least easily and free, paradoxically, not in the house of God – a church or a temple, but in an ordinary house (dwelling).

The church is a significant locus in the life of Gogol's characters; trespasses and sins against the church are considered the most terrible and are punished most severely. In the text of the narration "A Terrible Vengeance" the author emphasizes two times that the sorcerer was convicted and sentenced to execution for his crimes against the Church: "It is not for sorcery, not for deeds of apostasy, that the sorcerer sits in the deep cellar", but "He sits there for secret treachery, for conspiring with the enemies of the Russian Orthodox land to sell the Ukrainian people to the Catholics and burn Christian churches» [1, p. 65-66]. That is, he was convicted, first of all, for thoughts against the church, and not for the collusion with the Evil One. At the same time, in this work neither icons of "an honorable monk, the elder Varfolomey", nor holy places: the walls of an ancient deep cellar, built by a holy monk, "…and no unclean power can take a prisoner out of here without unlocking it with the same key the saint used to lock his cell" [1, p. 67], or the walls of the cave of a hermit, to whom Katerina's father came for penitence (repentance), are neither a physical (spatial) barrier to evil forces (the sorcerer) nor an obstacle to the fulfillment of new, even more terrible sins.

Here it is possible to draw a parallel between the church images in the the most traditional of Gogol's tales – "A Terrible Vengeance" and "Viy". If in the first literary work neither icons, nor prayers or holy walls can save from the unheard-of cursed sinner and are profaned of the blood of innocently murdered, then in the second story the very house God itself appears desecrated and defiled. Our understanding is that the sinister image of the church in the story "Viy" originates from "A Terrible Vengeance".

It is remarkable that in Nikolai Gogol's collections of short stories "Evenings on a Farm Near Dikanka" and "Mirgorod", the house space and the space of the church (as the house of God) perform similar "protective" functions. However, it must be acknowledged that in these short story cycles the church is still spatially distant from the characters, from the farms, hamlets and villages that they inhabit, and as little protects them from evil spirits who are not afraid of the priesthood and some representatives of which (the witch Solokha) are even accepted in church.

It is the church image that ensures the cohesiveness of the "old world" space on the spiritual, clerical level in the short story by Nikolai Gogol "The Old World Landowners". According to V.I. Matsapura, there is special symbolic meaning in the fact that Pulkheria Ivanovna asked to bury her by the church fence, and Afanasy Ivanovich expressed the desire to be buried next to his wife, [16, p. 123]. It is understood that Pulkheria Ivanovna and Afanasy Ivanovich, being buried near the holy place, will remain together not only "in this world" (on this side of the grave), but also "in the other realm". I.A. Esaulov lays special emphasis on the fact that "the Orthodox Church in this literary work becomes such a spiritual space that unites the heroes even after death" [14, p. 38].

It was the church that united the motley and disheveled comradeship in the story "Taras Bulba": "And all the Setch prayed in one church, and were willing to defend it to their last drop of blood, although they would not hearken to aught about fasting or abstinence" [1]. All those who "believe in Christ" and "believe in the Holy Trinity" were accepted to the Setch, inasmuch as faith was the main criterion of reliability and the stronghold of "the Setch brotherhood". For the sake of protecting the Christian faith and "our churches", the Cossacks lived, for faith, for the church they fought and died. In the changeable time of civil strives and wars, the faith and the church were the only stable, correct and righteous touchstones.

The most unusual, contradictory, fantastic and terrible is the church image in the short story "Viy" (which is called a "folk legend" by Gogol himself). It should be highlighted, that Russian literature had not known such an image of the temple before Nikolai Gogol. And the examples of such a church as in the first edition of the Gogol's story, in the walls of which the writer depicted much more diverse, unthinkable, shocking (even for a modern reader) monsters, cannot be found in Russian, Ukrainian or foreign literature, not only in the pre-Gogol period, but even up to the 20th century.

With the help of spatiotemporal characteristics, the author emphasizes the moral and spiritual decay and corruption of Khoma Brut, his immorality and, above all, his not firm faith in God. Unlike the heroes of folk tales about riding a witch, Khoma not only could not defeat the evil spirits, but even died, atoned for his disbelief by his life. Moreover, he, a clergyman, who abandoned himself to sins without a twinge of conscience, died in a church, which is very symbolic, as he had to put into practice Commandments of the Church. This character died after the third rooster's crow, when, as it seemed, the danger had passed, Khoma was safe then and there was nothing else to be afraid of. The image of the church, as a rule, symbolizes the sacral space. However, in this prose piece by Gogol, a defiled and ruined church is associated with a sinful world and fragile faith.

M.M. Bahtin pointed out that the chronotope as a formally content-related category largely determines the image of a man in literature; this image is always significantly chronotopic [15, c. 235]. The seminary ("bursa" in Ukrainian) chronotope and the chronicle-everyday (household) chronotope of Gogol's narrative "Viy" contribute to the revelation of the philosopher's image. The personal becoming of Khoma Brut, of course, depended on his environment, in particular from the place where he studied and from the time in which he lived. These factors largely determined not only the cut of his jib and habits, but also his character, behavior, mental and emotional worlds. Among other things, the philosopher does not consider it shameful and dishonorable to tell lies to the old woman, whom he and his fellow travellers (the theologian and the rhetorician) beg of a night's lodging. He is also not embarrassed to confess to the "sotnik" (the Cossack military officer) that he "went calling on the baker's wife on Holy Thursday itself" and that he himself is "devil knows what" [1, c. 122]. Khoma Brut triply swears by nightfall, which was considered unacceptable at that time, especially for a churchman. In addition, the seminarian allows himself to sniff tobacco in the church - in sacral space.

Yu.M. Lotman believes that in the cosmic world of "Viy", where all the qualities are ambivalent, where life and death, love, suffering and pleasure, beauty and ugliness are synonymous, a person cannot exist [3, p. 647]. Another world greets a mere mortal – Khoma Brut – only from a birds eye view, during the flight, and at great speed. In addition, not every philistine can get into parallel space. The philosopher brought disaster upon himself, because, as the Yu.M. Lotman puts it, he "... could not draw the line between "us" and "them" [3, c. 50]. For example, he swore three times after the sunset, when, in accordance with mythological ideas, unclean spirits begin to walk around in the world and cause mischiefs. The seminarian was fainthearted, cowardly and deceitful. Besides, "he liked very much to lie about and smoke his pipe. When he drank, he was sure to hire musicians and dance the trepak. He often got a taste of the "big peas," but with perfectly philosophical indifference, saying what will be, will be" [1, p. 112]. The philosopher tried to deceive the old woman, promising to pay her for dinner the next day. That is, by his sinful actions Khoma Brut himself provoked the appearance of a witch. Therefore, it is no coincidence that out of three seminarians the old woman chose him. Y.P. Mehela considers the philosopher to be a hero who does not have "his own face, his own business, his own inner imagination", capable of instantaneous transformations and momentary adaptations to the structure of the surrounding space [16, p. 28].

The values in the small closed world of the sotnik's farmstead have been changed. The owner of the farmstead – a chief, an elderly man – is portrayed by Gogol as a man far from faith. The

author emphasizes that people here give preference to merriment rather than spirituality, and the role of the church in the village is played by the kitchen, which partially fulfills the church functions, including the protective ones. Thus, the house serfs of the chief ("sotnik") sat down to supper under the open sky in front of the kitchen porch "in a wide circle", in this way symbolically shutting themselves off from evil forces. In this circle people carry on conversations about the young miss – the witch. "Opposing the abandoned church to the busy kitchen contrastively, <...>, the author emphasizes the earthly, mundane nature of the interests of those who lived in the chief's (sotnik's) estate" – notes V.Y. Matsapura [17, c. 228].

The image of the church is a key image of the story "Viy". "It is here that the main characters come together, it is here that the climax (resolution) happens" [18], – Ya. Turov emphasizes. This is an unusual church. The author mentions that beyond the small churchyard "there were no trees and nothing opened out but empty fields and meadows swallowed by the darkness of night" [1, p. 127]. Nothing grew near the abandoned temple, it seems that nature left this place out. "Most of the symbolic images of the story are anyhow connected with the image of the rural church, in which the culminating narrative events unfold and which, of course, is the semantic, notional and compositional center of the literary work" [18], – writes Ya. Turov.

However, the image of the church in the short story "Viy" is contradictory. "The blackened wooden church, adorned with green moss and topped by three conical cupolas, stood desolate almost at the edge of the village. One could see it was long since any service had been celebrated in it." [1, p. 123]. This church, according to Y.A. Esaulov, "is not simply remote from participation in the "common" life: it is, as it were, uninhabited, desolate, deserted" [19, p. 76]. A.H. Kovalchuk justly notes the dualistic structure of this space – light and darkness [20, p. 38]. The presence of God and the witch, the divine and the devilish meet in the sacral, but forgotten and desecrated place, ending in the local fight of the good and the bad. Sinister darkness seems more oppressive and horrifying, being illumined by the candles: "soon the whole church was filled with light. Only the darkness above seemed to become deeper, and the dark images looked more gloomily from the old carved frames on which gold gleamed here and there» [1, c.127]. On the one hand, in the daytime it is sacred space, a temple, even if it is abandoned. Gogol especially emphasizes that its dilapidated and decrepit wooden vaults showed "how little the owner of the estate cared about God and his own soul [1, c.133-134]. On the other hand, at night the church becomes a fantastic space, in which demons freely enter and in which the act of revenge takes place.

Inside, as well as outside, the church was also destroyed and abandoned. "Candles flickered before dark icons. Their light illumined only the iconostasis 8 and, faintly, the middle of the church. The far corners of the vestibule were shrouded in darkness. The tall, ancient iconostasis showed a profound decrepitude; its openwork, covered in gold, now gleamed only in sparks. The gilding had fallen off in some places, and was quite blackened in others; the faces of the saints, completely darkened, looked somehow gloomy" [1, c. 127]. Gogol now and then emphasizes that "the candles poured out a whole flood of light. Terrible is a lit-up church at night, with a dead body and not a living soul!" [1, c. 128]. V.D. Denysov regards the church in the short story "Viy" as an image of a "dark" church [21]. The researcher pays attention to the color spectrum of the church: the coffin is black, the images are dark, the corners of the church "were shrouded in darkness". It is noteworthy that in this church, forgotten by God and people, even the churchware was dark, shady and malicious, as if everything heavenly has abandoned this house of God to its fate. Such a concentration of darkness, gloominess and black colour in the fantastic space of the sombre church has, in our opinion, special semantic implication, because in Christian, as well as in pagan-mythological color symbolism, black is the color of death.

In this story, the church is the space subject to the demons of darkness. "The church itself is ominous and evil (no one has prayed in it for a long time), and the holy pictures, hung on the walls, look sullen, as though they were painted not by a pious icon-painter, but by an apostate" [22, p. 39], – notes Y.P. Zolotusskyi. In addition, the coffin with the witch's body stands in the very center of the temple, which contradicts the Christian canon: "the coffin was placed in the middle, right in front of the altar". [1, p. 123-124]. In that regard Ya. Turov considers the following: "The terrible detail – the axis, the center of the Orthodox church (and it, as we recall, symbolizes the whole Christian world) is nothing more than a black coffin of a witch" [18].

Y.A. Esaulov fairly observes that in Gogol's prose piece the depiction of unclean spirits and devildom from beginning to end is accompanied by the depiction of the church [19, p. 70]. Indeed, as a hardly distinguishable shadow, the image of the church rings the whole story altogether: it begins with the blows of a sonorous and booming seminary bell and ends with a conversation between the philosopher Tiberiy Gorobets and the bellringer of the tallest belfry – Khalyava. Following the researcher, it is necessary to draw attention to the strange "neighborhood" of the church with the witch in the episode of the young miss's death, when Khoma Brut "looked into her eyes: dawn was breaking and the golden domes of the Kievan churches shone in the distance" [1, c.116]. According to the researcher, this is a single "picture frame" or "image frame" [19, p. 70]. However, these images of God's temples are allegorical, indirect, presented in reflection. In the horror novella "Viy" spatial flesh is given only to a "dark" temple – the neglected and scolded church at the Cossack chief's farmstead shut in from the outside world.

The church in this story combines opposite, mutually exclusive qualities: the holy and defiled place, the place of pacification and fear, the place of forgiveness and the place of fulfillment of revenge. This is a real and fantastic space at the same time. A temple (a church, a cathedral) in Christian culture has long been considered, as A.Ya. Hurevych believes, a symbol of the universe; its structure was conceived as similar to the cosmic order in everything, which could give the complete picture of the world structure of [23, p. 64]. If usually a person, praying in the temple, contemplated the beauty and harmony of the divine creation, then in the tale by Nikolai Gogol "Viy" the praying philosopher observes the revived dead witch and the evil spirits scouring the church. Thus, in this literary work, the defiled church symbolizes not the prototype of the house of God and God's world, but the demonic world order in which evil, uncharacteristically, wins and remains unpunished. An act of revenge takes place in a sacred place, least suitable for it. The space, in which a person must feel calm and pacified, causes fear and horror.

V.D. Denysov places special emphasis on the fact that "the world of Viy" is shot through with fear: a person here was weakened by formal, insufficient faith, and his soul became more subject to the temptations of flesh and "external beauty" [21, p. 126]. In the fantastic space of the night church, the philosopher is filled with opposite feelings: on the one hand – with fear, on the other hand – with the contravolitional desire to look at the decedent again and again. The space of this church consists entirely of antitheses and discrepancies, from something that should not have existed. For example, the face of the defunct was "as if alive", and her "such terrible, dazzling beauty" did not turn off, but, on the contrary, arrested sight of the frightened seminarian. Temples are always characterized by fine acoustics, but in this church Khoma Brut's voice "solitary, without echo, poured in a low bass into the utterly dead silence and seemed a little wild even to the reader himself» [1, p. 128]. For the fantastic space of the church in this narrative, "dead repose" is more typical: "If only there was a sound, some living being, even the chirp of a cricket in the corner! There was just the slight sizzle of some remote candle and the faint spatter of wax dripping on the floor" [1, p. 128]. All the sounds that are heard in this church are of "dead", "inanimate" origin: the crackling of a candle, the sound of a falling wax drop, the clang of a

dead woman's teeth, the whizz of a coffin, the clap of a casket door. The silence in the church on the second night is characterized by the writer no longer as "the dead", but as "menacing". After an hour of church service, this temple was filled with the sounds of the witch's incantations, wind and "a noise as of a multitude of fluttering wings". Then the philosopher "heard wings beating against the glass of the church windows and their iron frames, heard claws scratching iron with a rasping noise and countless powers banging on the doors, trying to break in" [1, p. 130]. But the greatest horror in the last, most terrible night is caused not by demonic sounds, but by the total absence of any sounds whatsoever. "The silence was dreadful; the candles flickered, pouring light all over the church", – the author observes [1, c. 134]. And again, as on the second night, this silence is preceded by the terrible noise from the wings and from the scratching of claws: "Suddenly … amidst the silence … the iron lid of the coffin burst with a crack and the dead body rose. It was still more horrible than the first time. Its teeth clacked horribly, row against row; its lips twitched convulsively and, with wild shrieks, incantations came rushing out. Wind whirled through the church, icons fell to the floor, broken glass dropped from the windows. The doors tore from their hinges, and a numberless host of monsters flew into God's church. A terrible noise of wings and scratching claws filled the whole church. Everything flew and rushed about, seeking the philosopher everywhere" [1, c. 134]. The arrival of Viy is also preceded by the silence in the church and wolf howl in the distance. A. Terts notes that this wolf (or similar to it) "howl" in Gogol's novelette either opens or closes the story of the philosopher's adventures: "within the distant howl of the wolves (or anyone else) we enter the Viy's sphere of influence, we come into the night and fantastic world, opposite to Kiev, where everything is simple, naked and ordinary, where noisy and crowded, where day and laughter rule" [24, p. 587]. From this howl, in his opinion, "Kiev" ends and 'Viy" begins. That is, the narrative from the real chronotope passes into the unreal – mystical and fantastic chronotopes.

On the third night, the sacred space of the church is desecrated by evil spirits. The holy place turns into the defiled one: "The frightened spirits rushed pell-mell for the windows and doors in order to fly out quickly, but nothing doing: and so they stayed there, stuck in the doors and windows. When the priest came in, he stopped at the sight of such disgrace in God's sanctuary and did not dare serve a dead-office in such a place. So the church remained forever with monsters stuck in its doors and windows, overgrown with forest, roots, weeds, wild blackthorn; and no one now can find the path to it" [1, c.134-135]. "Weeds" and "wild blackthorn" are in this case the symbols of desolation and oblivion.

In the temple of God, the devil's servants appear, and "when Khoma Brut reads in the "dark" church about the future resurrection of the holy soul, an unnatural miracle of reviving a dead witch takes place", – V.D. Denysov justly notes [21, p. 127]. The incompatibility of the place and the characters, the opposite effect that the prayers make, eloquently characterize the time-space in this fragment of the story as fantastic.

However, it should be noted that, at the first glance, there is nothing unusual in the fantastic space of the church at night. The seminarian himself thickens the climate of fear around him with his doubts: "raising his voice, he began singing in various voices, trying to stifle the remnants of his fear. Yet he turned his eyes to the coffin every other moment, as if asking the inadvertent question: «What if she rises, what if she gets up?»" [1, c. 128]. By day the quietened philosopher, who had had a good sleep, recalled all the events of the night as if they had happened in a dream. Fear intensifies the feeling of hopelessness in Khoma's heart, and panic terror before the revived deceased darkens the church space. But it is not the church, even defiled, that kills the sinner (the seminarian). It is the absence of internal ramrod and of his faith, rather than the eerie atmosphere in the church at night lead to the philosopher's death. Khoma Brut himself, from within, with his doubts and weak faith in his prayers strengthened the horror towards the presence of monsters in the church.

It is important to emphasize that in this church pagan magic is more effective than Orthodox prayers. The magic circle, outlined by the philosopher around himself, becomes an obstacle to the witch, which she cannot overcome, it is an impenetrable wall for her through which she is unable to see the seminarian. N.D. Tamarchenko, S.N. Broitman and V.Y. Tiupa consider this circle as a sacred space, which in Gogol's short story "Viy" is part of the antithesis of "closeness/openness" [25, p. 183]. However, even the double sacralization of space (the church and the magic circle) does not help Khoma Brut in his struggle against evil spirits.

In the final tale in the "Mirgorod" collection by Nikolai Gogol "The Tale of How Ivan Ivanovich Quarreled with Ivan Nikiforovich", the narrator repeatedly call attention to a puddle in the center of Mirgorod. We believe that the author does not accidentally mention this puddle in such an ironic context. After all, the puddle (micro bog) in Slavic mythology was the refuge of evil spirits. In Gogol's story this "micro bog" together with the local court of judiciary (the court is the symbol of the labyrinth here) occupies the place of the church, which should have risen in the city square, but nothing is known about its architecture and location in Mirgorod. The local court, on the contrary, is described carefully and in detail and gives the impression of the most beautiful building in Mirgorod, which, again, the church should have been. Yet at the beginning of the short story, Nikolai Gogol ironically writes the following: "And what a pious man Ivan Ivanovich is!" [1, c. 128]. This remark receives semantic continuation when Ivan Ivanovich, who visits the church on Sundays, and Ivan Nikiforovich, about whose theopathy nothing was said, became frequent visitors of the court. Instead of going to the church and repenting, the characters go to the court and exacerbate their quarrel. As in the horror novella "Viy", the spatial and value substitution of the church by the court and the puddle testifies to the breakdown and disruption of the world order, to the loss of spiritual orientations and values, to the incorrect positioning by the heroes of themselves not only in physical space, but also in spiritual and ethical and moral. A feeble flash of hope is the meeting between the narrator and Ivan Ivanovich and Ivan Nikiforovich in the church at the end of the story. However, in the sacred space, in a sacrosanct place, many years later, these two former friends think only of their own lawsuits and revenge, which drove the narrator into despondency and sad reflections about how "It's dull in this world, gentlemen!" The author intentionally finished the story with this meeting in the church, emphasizing that the quarrel between the two characters loses any sense against the background of the all-destroying action and effect of time.

In "The Tale of How Ivan Ivanovich Quarreled with Ivan Nikiforovich" the very name of the city in which the events, described by the narrator, occur, is symbolical. After all, the idyllic nature of this space is proved by the fact that the two friends, the main characters of this short story, live in MIRgorod, while "mir" both in Russian and Ukrainian means "peace", and "gorod" is translated from Russian as "the city". Therefore, the main topos of this tale is called "peaceful city". Here all the issues should be decided, judging by the name of the city, and are partly solved Christian-like, amicably, out of court. The the police chief agrees not to seize Ivan Ivanovich's sow in exchange for couple of sausages with pork blood and fat, the city residents try to reconcile the quarreled friends, and the lawsuit was not put in motion so as not to cause harm to anyone. M.Ya. Vaiskopf traces the etymology of Gogol's Mirgorod in Mir-city (Peace-city), in the translation of the word "Jerusalem" used by H.S. Skovoroda. Thus, the researcher mentions that in Skovoroda's works an ascent of a mountain is effected "from meanness to the mountain <...> from pigs' puddles to mountain springs" [12, p. 215]. Accordingly, from here, in his opinion, Gogol's realias – a sow and a puddle – emerged and the place of the mountainous Zion Gogol gives to the church, to which Ivan Ivanovich and Ivan Nikiforovich go on Sundays, as if parodying Skovoroda's mutilated friends-travelers. M.Ya. Vaiskopf

has a theory that Gogol opposes a conversation about peace to a story about a quarrel [12, p. 216]. V.Sh. Kryvonos also believes that Gogol's Mirgorod does not become an authentic city-world (in the sense of "well-ordered human realm") [26, p. 179].

In the end of the short story, the space of Mirgorod appears from the narrator's words as fragmented and destroyed: "some sort of unnatural green – the creation of dull, ceaseless rains – covered the fields and meadows with a thin net", "poles with bunches of straw tied to their tops stood everywhere", "several cottages had been demolished. The remnants of palings and wattle fences stuck up dejectedly" [1, p. 171]. Even the church, despite the festive day, was empty. Moreover, the author points out that the church was sullen and gloomy. It remotely resembles the dark temple in "Viy": "The church was empty. Almost no people. One could see that even the most pious were afraid of the mud. The candles in that bleak, or, better to say, sickly daylight, were somehow strangely unpleasant; the dark vestibule was melancholy; the oblong windows with round glass poured down rainy tears" [1, p. 171]. Perhaps, after the church in the Cossack chief's (sotnik's) estate in the tale "Viy", this is the darkest image of the church in the cycles by Nikolai Gogol "Evenings on a Farm Near Dikanka" and "Mirgorod". Such a decline in sacredness, representation of the church as household, carnal and fleshy, symbolizes the moral lapse, spiritual and moral fall of the characters, the deformation of their inner (spiritual) space, which must be filled with love and forgiveness, absolution. The image of the church in the short story is a new "face" of Mirgorod, his new appearance "at bad time". In a destructured, fragmented space, even the house of god cannot resist meaningless enmity; it also changes and deadens along with the inhabitants of Mirgorod and former comrades. In the fragmented Mirgorod, not only the church is gloomy. Here the very nature is dark and gloomy, and the sky, almost for the first time in Gogolian cycles, is "tearful and without a bright spot". According to Y.A. Esaulov, the feast day turns into "dull" and "sick", the windows of the church "poured down with rainy tears", and the sky was "tearful and without a bright spot" as a result of the violation of the Gospel-precepts [19, p. 76].

Conclusions

If the image of the church is traditionally depicted in the short stories "The Old World Landowners", "Taras Bulba" and "The Tale of How Ivan Ivanovich Quarreled with Ivan Nikiforovich", in the tale "Viy" it also performs character-creating functions. However, in all the stories of the cycles by Nikolai Gogol "Evenings on a Farm Near Dikanka" and "Mirgorod" the image of the church fulfills the meaning-making and plot-creating functions.

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