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**PETAR II PETROVIĆ NJEGOŠ – HRYHORIY SKOVORODA:  
LITERARY AND EXISTENTIAL DIALOGUE  
(To the 170<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of the great  
Montenegrin metropolitan, reformer and artist)**

Članak je posvećen poredbenoj analizi djela Petra II Petrovića-Njegoša i Grigorija Skovorode. Književno-egzistencijalni dijalog obuhvaća ne samo tipološke veze biografskih činjenica dvaju autora, nego i njihove vrijednosne duhovno-moralne orijentacije te koncepte, povezane za karakter ljudskog postojanja u smislu kršćanskog asketskog života i nacionalnog identiteta. Interpretacija je djela „Luča mikrokozma“ i „Gorski Vijenac“ Petra II Petrovića-Njegoša, a također zbirke pjesama „Vrt božanskih pjesama“ te filozofske rasprave „Zmijin potop“ Grigorija Skovorode ostvarena u svezi etnopsihološkim značajkama književnih tekstova i društveno-političkim događajima, pod čijim su utjecajem živjeli i pisali svoja djela spomenuti pisci.

*Ključne riječi: umjetnički prostor; aforističko razmišljanje, orijentacijska metafora, etnopsihološke osnove, junak, zaplet, duhovne i moralne vrijednosti, filozofska rasprava, ep, slike-simboli*

„Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen“ (Біблія або Книги Святого Письма Старого й Нового Заповіту, Євр. 11:1). These words of the Apostle Paul probably best express the mental essence in the person of Petar II Petrović Njegoš and Hryhoriy Skovoroda, for whom verbal creativity became an analytical and eloquent „service staff“ of the Truth and the meaning of human existence. Despite the fact that the life and career of the prominent Ukrainian and Montenegrin artists, thinkers and theologians shared nearly a century, but they were united by the restless spirit of the holy aspirations. After all, Petar II Petrović Njegoš (1813–1851), who was called „Montenegrin Shakespeare“ in his homeland, and Hryhoriy Skovoroda (1722–1794), for whom the image of „Ukrainian Socrates“ was applied to, led

a Christian ascetic way of life. They loved their nations and were constantly in search of the knowledge of the Truth through inner spiritual self-absorption. Both thinkers lived in the era when the Ukrainian and Montenegrin peoples had to fight for their state independence, preserve their national and religious identity, and assert the right to speak and write in their native language. One of such dreams of Petar II Petrović Njegoš was implemented recently in 2007 when the Montenegrin language became the official language of Montenegro. After all, „a large number of Montenegrin lexemes, which now, we hope, will return to the circulation – according to the appropriate supervision of Liudmyla Vasylijeva – are given in the dictionary of works by Petar II Petrović Njegoš“ (Vasiljeva, 2016: 59). Similar language issues can be traced in the modern Ukrainian space. For many lexemes in the work of Hryhoriy Skovoroda, recorded primarily in Church Slavonic and Russian languages, as opposed to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, were functionally Ukrainian for the speakers in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, i.e. they were perceived by the Old Ukrainian language consciousness as their own, native (Гнатюк, 2010). This happens because language never ends as a finished result and is a process of constant creative effort of the spirit.

A prominent Ukrainian linguist, Corresponding Member of the Emperor Saint-Petersburg Academy of Sciences, Oleksandr Potebnia proved in his *Language and nation* (1895) that language is the fruit and expression of the national spirit. „If the unification of humankind by language and nationality in general were possible“, – wrote Oleksandr Potebnia, – „it would be deadly to universal thought, as the replacement of many sensations by one, even if this one was not a touch, but a sight“. Other people are needed for human existence; for nationalities, other nationalities are needed“ (Потебня, 1976: 229).

Thus, a language, as a means of human thinking, embraces and reproduces the phenomena of his inner life and worldview. Of course, unlike the spiritually lonely Hryhoriy Skovoroda, who was skeptical of society as a whole, renouncing any social privileges, Petar II Petrović Njegoš (Petar Negoš) was destined to be a public official: the last theocratic ruler of the country. After becoming the head of state at the age of seventeen, he managed to carry out a number of important reforms in various spheres of Montenegrin society during the twenty-one years of his rule. Petar II Petrović Njegoš was always considered to be one of the most popular and influential leaders in times of national liberation movements in the Balkans, and therefore, „a symbol of Montenegrin culture“ (Domachowska, 2020: 38).

The typological property of literary, philosophical and religious works by Hryhoriy Skovoroda (*Tales of Kharkiv*, the poetic collection *Garden of Divine Songs*, the philosophical treatises *Narkis. Talk about that: know thyself*, *The Alphabet of the World*, *Silenus Alcibiadis* and other) and Petar Njegoš

(with the collection of poetry *Cetinje Hermit*, a poem *The Freedom Song*, *The Ray of the Microcosm*, *The Mountain Wreath*, *The False Tsar Stephen the Little* and other) is metaphorized into a kind of literary and existential dialogue through the worldview prism of Christianity which still finds its reader on the tablets of time, overcoming time and space.

„To live emotional drama of Njegoš, – wrote Serbia’s Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović, – means to live a spiritual drama of not only one person, but the whole world. From his soul, whose purpose is to take care of a large number of poor people, Njegoš created a stage on which the drama of the whole universe took place. This scene – his microcosm <...> it was still too small and cramped to accommodate the whole universe. This disproportion became the cross of the poet’s whole life“ (Сербский (Велимирович), 2008).

If we consider Hryhoriy Skovoroda’s „emotional drama“ in this aspect, there are, of course, significant differences between the Ukrainian and Montenegrin thinkers. Njegoš was a public man and his spiritual endeavour is inextricably related to his nation and the national liberation movement, and Skovoroda experienced rather a reserved and itinerant lifestyle. He felt more comfortable in the bosom of nature than among people. After all, according to Skovoroda, God is nature itself, and humans are its creation.

The fact that the Ukrainian artist tried to avoid the „vanity of life“ is evidenced at least by his poem *To every city – custom and law...* (1759), where the author ironically reproduces the grayness and absurdity of human life. A lot of biographical data show his persistent religion and intercession before God. Certain considerations are motivated at least by the fact that Hryhoriy Skovoroda had the gift of prophecy, cured incurable diseases, foresaw his death in advance and dug his own grave near the grove under a linden tree ordering to make an inscription above the tomb: „The world was chasing me, but did not catch me“. In fact, Skovoroda deeply loved his nation. He said, „When I can’t serve any homeland, in any case I will try my best never to harm it in any way“.

The Belgian writer Julien De Valckenaere once asserted that „an aphorist tries to surpass an entire book in a few words, and an entire library with one book“. This intention relates to the Montenegrin and Ukrainian artists along with Petar Njegoš and Hryhoriy Skovoroda, being masters of aphorism in poetry and treatises where ideological content is implemented through a key phrase that runs like a refrain through the entire plot. Literary critics with different artistic tastes agree that the secret of the poetic genius of both artists lies in the simplicity through which lies the shortest path to the reader’s heart. Thus, it is about the skill of accessible and easy to present complex things. In fact, this is the work of Petar Njegoš and Hryhoriy Skovoroda. At first glance, in their art and imagery

system, they seem to repeat something somewhere once already heard, but at once, they join a known image of one fragment of reality metaphor to another one by providing innovation aphoristic style similar to the system of already compiled concepts. For example, we present several lines from the works of Hryhoriy Skovoroda: „The value of time is only cherished when it is lost“; „Is it not surprising that one is poor in wealth, and the another one is rich in poverty?“; „The sage must also pick out gold from manure“; „Good mind makes any life-style easy“; „Target at the top – and you will reach the middle“ and the like.

Certain aphoristic parallels can be traced in the reception of the poetic word by Petar Njegoš. For example: „The punch finds a spark in a stone“; „Without death there is no resurrection“; „Gullibility is measured by the human folly and gravity – by the deeds and truthfulness“; „Law to them is what the heart yearns“ and the like.

As you can see, both artists could reproduce the entire ocean of human thoughts and feelings in a drop of water. They eternally fight for a Human who acts in accordance with its natural essence that is good. In the creative works by Hryhoriy Skovoroda and Petar Njegoš one can find numerous considerations about the main and passions of man which, in their opinion, are the result of original sin and reveal the secrets of our existence.

For example, Petar Njegoš provides rather clear interpretation of the contradictory duality of human nature saying that the beginning and end of the good is humbleness, and the beginning and end of evil is the pride. Thus, Montenegrin artist in his philosophical and religious poem *The Ray of the Microcosm* (1845) describes the consequences of the original sin of a man:

„Man is lulled to a very heavy sleep,  
in which he beholds terrible phantasms,  
and he can decide with difficulty  
that his being does not belong in them.  
Quickness and cunning are given to him  
just to make him a worthy member  
in the incongruous fair of the world;  
and the foundation of his will is laid  
right on the wings of inconsistency;  
of terrible passions is his desire  
an inciter and a sightless leader;  
malice, envy – a hellish heritage;  
this makes Man lower than an animal,  
yet his mind equals him to immortals!“ (Njegoš, 2019: 11–12).

Here Petar Njegoš adheres to the well-known aphorism: „If people learned more about humanity from animals, the world would be less ferocious“. The word „passion“ in Church Slavonic is translated as „suffering“. It is necessary to fight it, especially through the sacraments of the Church and prayer, with good deeds, so that at the end of one's life one can say in the words of the Apostle Paul: „I do not live already, but Christ lives in me“ (Pecharskyi, 2019: 210).

In the poem *The Ray of the Microcosm* Petar Njegoš tries to answer these topical existential questions. They point to the wrong psychological setting of most people who seek the Evil in external circumstances: the injustice of legislative and executive powers, lack of material goods in society, aggressive wars, criminal activity, etc. (Pecharskyi, 2019: 210). However, it should be noted that in his work he departed from the biblical canonical text concerning the fall of the first man on Earth, Adam. In the plot of the poem *The Ray of the Microcosm*, Adam is not a man, but the youngest voivode of the legion of angels, who was tempted by Satan to rebel against God. Unlike Satan, Adam does not get into hell, but – to the Earth, there to atone for his sins. From all over the Universe, the author sees that only the Earth disturbs the celestial harmony of the planets. It seems that Petar Njegoš preferred creating a space epic in which, through the light of the Old and New Testament, was trying to show their own mystical vision of the struggle between good and evil, where countless heavenly hosts participated. What is the ray of the microcosm in the work of the same name by Njegoš?! In the material aspect, this is a small current model of the universe, in the spiritual one – God's grace, and in the anthropological one – the eternal Hamlet question: „to be or not to be“?!

By the artistical and image shape of presentation, the poem *The Ray of the Microcosm* by Petar Njegoš is unique, though often, literary researchers compare it with the *Divine Comedy* by Dante Alighieri and *The Lost Paradise* by John Milton. However, if you still try to hold correlation parallels of the poem by Montenegrin artist with the work of Ukrainian one, then by the content and epic scale, philosophical treatise by Hryhoriy Skovoroda *The Serpent's Flood* most closely approximates *The Ray of the Microcosm*. Here, the author presents his vision of the existence of the Universe through the prism of a dialogue between the Soul and the Imperishable Spirit: „Everyone born in this world is an alien, blind or enlightened. Is this world a beautiful temple of a wise God? There are three worlds. The first is universal and the world is inhabited where everything born lives. This one, composed of countless worlds, is a great world. The other two are partial and small worlds. The first is the microcosm, that is, the small world or man. The second world is symbolic, that is, the Bible. In any world, the sun is his eye. And the eye is the sun. And since the sun is the head of the world, it is not surprising that man is called a

microcosm, that is, a small world. And the Bible is a symbolic world, because it gathers celestial, earthly and deep creatures of the figure, so that they are monuments that lead our thought to the concept of eternal nature..." (Сковорода, 2019: т. 2, 142).

Thus, Hryhoriy Skovoroda speaks of the three-dimensional nature of a human: „body“ (without it, it is impossible to perceive personality), „soul“ (mind, will, heart (feelings) and „spirit“, which is nourished by prayer and the Holy Spirit. The soul is closer to the body; and the spirit, to God. The spirit has the same components as the soul, only on a different level. In this aspect, Ukrainian and Montenegrin artists are unanimous, assuring that passions cannot be overcome in man. In fact, when we try to tame them in ourselves, then we can apply only the energy of the same sinful passions. The Holy Fathers of the Church shared similar views on the fact that purification from passions is not in human forces, but only in God's. This leading idea can be traced in the works of Petar Njegoš, in particular in the poems *The Ray of the Microcosm*, *The Mountain Wreath*, and in Hryhoriy Skovoroda, particularly in his treatises *Narkis. Talk about that: know thyself*, *The Alphabet of the World* and so on.

However, in terms of worldview, there are many differences in the work of both artists. If Skovoroda was influenced by the teachings of Epicurus, using the views of the ancient philosopher in his work, for example in the fables of *Bee and Hornet*, Petar Njegoš, in particular in the poem *The Ray of the Microcosm*, had a negative attitude to the atomistic teachings of Epicurus, whose anthropological essence was that man's soul is corporeal. It follows that the death of the body is the death of the soul, because its essence is movement.

However, both artists – Petar Njegoš and Hryhoriy Skovoroda – in their creative works tried to adapt the language of biblical symbols to our usual understanding that reflects the realities of life on earth. Thus, the visible world of man reflects the trinity of the Creator. For example, time – past, present, future; state of matter – solid, material and gaseous; the variety of colors consists of three main – blue, yellow and red. Ultimately, a human manifests himself through thought, word, and action, being also a trinity: body, soul, and spirit. From the point of view of Christianity, the salvation of our souls is to preserve the purity of the three virtues: faith, hope and love. Our Lord also revealed His triune nature (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) in the Old Testament Book of Genesis, when He said, „Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness“ (Біблія або Книги Святого Письма Старого й Нового Заповіту, 2009: 1М.: 1; 26). And later he appeared to Abraham in the form of „three Men“ (Біблія або Книги Святого Письма Старого й Нового Заповіту, 2009: 1М.: 18; 2). The fact that the leitmotifs of love and freedom are the most common motifs in the literature of all time, is evidence that Literature, consciously or un-

consciously, is in the gospel search of „the Way, the Truth and the Life“. In the same way, Petar Njegoš in his poetic masterpiece *The Mountain Wreath* unfolded a whole epic of sacrificial love for his homeland.

The plot of the poem was based on the historical events of the national liberation struggle of the Montenegrin people against the Turkish yoke. So, in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Turks under Suleiman Pasha Skutari captured almost all of Montenegro. The rule of the Turks was significantly supported by the Montenegrins who converted to Islam. The morally oppressed people elect the ruler Daniel who was insidiously abducted by the Turks and sentenced to death. Having bravely endured all the insults against him, Daniel returns to his homeland by ransom and persuades the people's leaders to cut off all the Montenegrins converted to Islam, except those who will convert to the Christian faith. This bloody event, which took place on Christmas Eve in 1702, saving Montenegro from Turkish domination and infidelity, was the subject of the story.

Petar Njegoš in the *The Mountain Wreath* as William Shakespeare in his *Hamlet* exacerbates the current problem: on the need for spiritual change of the human nature. And it is not ethical or psychological need, but above all as required compulsory condition for the survival of the Montenegrin people. The protagonist Daniel is faced with the problem of choice: on the one hand, he commits sin, killing his Islam-converted Montenegrin brothers, and on the other hand, this is the only way to cleanse the nation of infidelity and free it from under the Turkish yoke. Daniel, like Shakespeare's Hamlet, suffers from procrastination:

„I'am a lone straw tossing in the whirlwind,  
a sad orphan without friend or kinfolk.  
My people sleep a deep and lifeless sleep;  
no parent's hand to wipe away my tears.  
Above my head the heaven is shut tight;  
it does not hear my cries or my prayers.  
The world has now become a hell for me,  
people have turned into hellish spirits.  
O my dark day! O my black destiny!“ (Njegoš, 2000).

The hero's consciousness revolts and is torn in the vision of the historical national tragedy of the Montenegrins. In this regard, rightly remarked Milutin Micovic: „Through the awareness of the historical clash of nations, the protagonist of the epic, King Daniel, comes to understanding the mental burden of the so-called „internal occupation“, i.e., seizing of the man by dark forces, spiritual oblivion, horror of loneliness“ (Мичович, 2013: 355).



Often, the functions of images-symbols in the poem *The Mountain Wreath* by Petar Njegoš depend on the intensity of the author's power of feelings that accompany them.

Nostalgia for national independence, the desire to overcome this abyss add an emotional touch to the symbolization of Montenegrin ethno-psychological dependence on the active desire for life change. In this case, they are expressed in the images of freedom and a warm heart being a kind of poles of the mental forces of the hero. In general, this indicates one of the components of the Montenegrin character, expressed in the words of Abbot Stefan:

„Your destiny it is to bear the Cross  
of the fierce fight against brothers and foes!  
„The wreath's heavy, but the fruit is so sweet!  
Without death there is no resurrection.  
Under a shroud of glory I see you  
and our nation's honour resurrected.  
I also see the altar turned eastward  
and a fragrant incense burning on it.  
Die in glory, if die indeed you must!  
Wounded honour inspires courageous hearts;  
those hearts cannot tolerate such illness“ (Njegoš, 2000).

However, a range of ethnic features of the images and symbols in *The Mountain Wreath* by Petar Njegoš is determined not by the ideological stratification of meaning as by the internal author's unconscious way of thinking, which from the perspective of the semantic scope, is consistent with the orientation of the text metaphorical system. Its name is related to the spatial orientation „UP-DOWN“, „INSIDE-OUTSIDE“, „CLOSE-FAR“, etc. These oppositions arise from the fact that the human body has certain physiological properties functioning in the surrounding material world. For example, „happiness“ – „UP“ (because positive emotions make us raise our heads), „sadness“ – „DOWN“ (because such a mental state depresses a person, and he/she mostly becomes gloomy). But, to quote the American linguist and professor at the University of California, George Lakoff, „although polar opposition „UP-DOWN“, „INSIDE-OUTSIDE“, „CLOSE-FAR“, etc. have a physical nature, but the orientational metaphors built on them can vary from culture to culture. For example, in some cultures the future is ahead of us, while in others – behind“ (Лаккофф, Джонсон, 1990: 396).

Thus, the orientational metaphors in the poem *The Mountain Wreath* by Petar Njegoš characterize the ethnic communicative system of images-symbols which provides a certain homogeneity in ways of thinking, acting, desires



– the units that together form a single nation, the „spirit of cultural cycles“ (according to Oswald Spengler). In other words, it is about the ethnopsychological basis of the function of images-symbols: „freedom“, „dignity“, „patience“, „nostalgia“, „sadness“, „joy“, „courage“, „love“, „hate“, „life“, „death“ etc. in the light of mostly vertically oriented metaphors „DOWN-UP“.

Although in this labyrinth of thoughts and feelings, the image of „freedom“ in the poem *The Mountain Wreath* by Petar Njegoš raises a number of the existential questions. In this regard, we give the right arguments of Slavits Rankovic: „Freedom is seen as an ultimate ideal, but it is far away from the abstraction to be contemplated in the comfort of a drawing room. It is looked at from the dirty mess that is reality and therefore, „what price freedom?“ is one of such questions. Do ends justify the means and does the heroic clash with the humane? Is man a being of instinct or spirit, a creature of nature or culture?“ (Ranković, 2003: 37).

The answers to these questions are left to the discretion of the reader. After all, a poetic masterpiece *The Mountain Wreath* by Petar Njegoš is the product of most concentrated images with philosophical overtones of folk wisdom that gives wide scope for associative bonds and thinking of the recipient.

There is no such national epic in the works by Hryhoriy Skovoroda. Finally, in literature as in society, every phenomenon is the call of time. However, Hryhoriy Skovoroda showed perhaps the most important word about internal freedom and national identity through the example of his life. After all, it is a known fact that the thinker refused the promising offer of Catherine II to move from Ukraine to the capital of the Russian Empire, St. Petersburg. Skovoroda, listening to the invitation, replied: „Tell the queen that I shall not leave my homeland... My pipe and sheep are more precious to me than the royal crown“.

Generally, typological characteristics of the creative works by Petar Njegoš and Hryhoriy Skovoroda are primarily spiritual and moral horizons of truth-love, patriotism, faith, hope and love, which testify timeless character of the literary and existential „dialogue“.

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**PETAR II PETROVIĆ NJEGOŠ – HRYHORIY SKOVORODA:  
LITERARY AND EXISTENTIAL DIALOGUE**  
*(To the 170<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of the great  
Montenegrin metropolitan, reformer and artist)*

The paper made a comparative characteristic of the creative works by Petar II Petrović Njegoš and Hryhoriy Skovoroda. Their literary and existential dialogue includes not only typological connections of biographical facts, activities and artistic and imaginative artists thinking, but also their spiritual and moral values orientation concepts associated with the person's meaning of life in terms of the Christian ascetic life and national identity. The interpretation of the poems *The Ray of the Microcosm*, *The Mountain Wreath* by Petar II Petrović Njegoš, and, thus, the poetic collection *Garden of Divine Songs*, the philosophical treatise *The Serpent's Flood* by Hryhoriy Skovoroda is carried out by taking into account the ethnopsychological features of artistic texts and socio-political events of the epochs in which the Montenegrin and Ukrainian artists lived and worked.

Key words: *artistic space, aphoristic thinking, orientation metaphor, ethnopsychological foundations, character, plot, spiritual and moral values, philosophical treatise, poem, images-symbols.*