

# Transgressive Character of the Femme Fatale Image in Oles Ulianenکو’s Novel “Seraphim”

**Feliks Shteinbuk**

Comenius University in Bratislava  
Department of Russian and East European Studies  
Šafárikovo námestie 6, 81499 Bratislava, Slovensko  
Email: [feliks.shteinbuk@uniba.sk](mailto:feliks.shteinbuk@uniba.sk)  
ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4852-815X>  
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**Abstract.** The article is dedicated to one of the most talented and the most controversial modern Ukrainian writers Oles Ulianenکو. However, his literary works did not receive the appropriate professional interpretation because the literary scholars and critics applied either the erroneous or unproductive professional methodology for many objective and subjective reasons. As a result, the writer’s works remain unread or read in an arguable way. Taking one of the most contentious novels of O. Ulianenکو’s “Seraphim” as an example for analysis, the aim of this article is to suggest an alternative variant of theoretical and literary analysis based on the corporal-mimetic method to interpret fiction works. Due to the chosen approach, it is possible to draw the conclusion that the image of Seraphim is the image which only seemingly claims the status of the femme fatale; actually, the content of this image is a constant overcoming social, property, status, space, gender, corporal, sexual and other rules and norms. It says about overcoming in order to overcome, about complete overcoming which can be stopped only by death which, being unmotivated, is another variant of phenomenal, namely feminine transgression.

**Keywords:** Oles Ulianenکو; corporal-mimetic method; transgression; femme fatale; death.

## Introduction

Oles Ulianenکو, one of the most talented and controversial modern Ukrainian writers, passed away more than ten years ago. However, his literary works did not receive the appropriate professional interpretation because, due to many objective and subjective reasons, the literary scholars and critics applied either the erroneous or unproductive professional methodology. As a result, the writer’s books remain either unread or read dubiously.

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That is why it is not surprising that critics' and literary scholars' point of view on the novel by Oles Ulianenko *Seraphim* (*Serafima*) express some ambivalence. The latter is conditioned foremost by the fact that according to Tetiana Trofymenko's opinion, "psychology of characters in Ulianenko's works is not developed at all" (Trofymenko, 2007), and "it is not possible, from Samokhina's point of view, to say that the author explains or at least tries to explain psychology of the hero's behavior" (Samokhina, 2010).

The aim of this article is to suggest an alternative variant of theoretical and literary analysis, taking one of the most contentious novels of Oles Ulianenko "Seraphim" as an example, based on the corporal-mimetic method to interpret fiction works that have been developed and tested in the doctoral and postdoctoral studies (Shteinbuk, 2007; 2009; 2013). This method is to study literary texts considering their corporal determination primarily.

The content of the corporal-mimetic method can be outlined by the following parameters.

1. The corporal-mimetic method to analyse work of fiction makes it possible to take into account its corporal basis and comprehend senses appearing in such works as the result of the mimesis mechanism, which transforms (transmits) corporal being into an artistic experience.
2. The content of the corporal-mimetic method to analyse fiction works is determined by a rich, varied functional and categorical apparatus based on the concept-philosophic approach and correlation of these categories to both corporal-material basis and abstract-discourse representation.
3. The corporal-mimetic method, unlike any other literary method, does not focus on some separate aspects of fiction or non-fiction. However, it is grounded on the fundamental principle that a literary text harmoniously unites two realities without being reduced to none of them.
4. In the realm of the corporal-mimetic method, the real world represents fiction to the same degree as fiction does reality. Nevertheless, it is not about historical, social or even ethnic senses because they change or are characterised by definite distinctive features. It is about constant, stable and universal ontological senses generated by a corporal form of man being and, broadly, by corporal human existence.

Thus, unlike traditional socially conditioned approaches, the corporal-mimetic method can be defined as analysing corporal existence being the basis of fiction discourse. Abiding by this method, it is possible to interpret fiction works and achieve unexpected results.

## 1. Perception of the novel *Seraphim*

In a few critical pieces of research, the novel *Seraphim* by Oles Ulianenko appears to be a semi-detective story about a woman, a young woman-murderer, or a woman-poisoner. According to Trofymenko's (2007) interpretation

once upon a time there lived a girl, who was beautiful, but who could not find a better way to use her beauty than to hang out with criminals and cops, and who got terribly offended at life and started poisoning everyone indiscriminately to death with chemicals and natural substances, but who finally was caught by our heroic police.

A somewhat different opinion of the novel *Seraphim* is expressed by Samokhina, who shares Ievheniia Chupryna's point of view who, in her turn, unequivocally states that "if you are not a masochist" then "you had better not read this book" (Chupryna, 2010).

Nevertheless, Oles Uliianenko arouses similar allusions to the cult novel by German writer Patrick Süskind *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer* in Chupryna and Samokhina, with Olha Punina giving the same opinion (Punina, 2016, p. 200). Finally, it should be recognized that the literary scholar has retranslated the corresponding ideas of Oleh Solovei, adding her thoughts that "the parallel with [...] Jean-Baptiste Greanouille [...] is seen in Seraphim's desire to possess someone's life, to control it, destroying the person" (Punina, 2016, pp. 200–201).

However, this seemingly obvious allusion resembles a model aberration in the meaning when, at a close look, the outer likeness proves to be its opposite. Greanouille murdered the girls who were random strangers to create unsurpassed perfect perfume, whereas Seraphim made original poison to murder those she knew well and even had made love with many of them before.

It is reasonable to refer to the research the authors of which do not depend on emotions, as the quoted above critics do, not on the things far from fiction analysis but the clear methodological rules.

First of all, one cannot but mention two latest pieces of research dated 2018 and correspondingly represented in Olha Bashkirova's and Svitlana Pidopryhora's articles. The former writes about the problematique of *la femme fatale*, the so-called fatal woman, whilst the latter raises the issue that is not less exciting but more complicated – the problematique of transgression.

O. Bashkirova could not avoid sociologically conditioned intentions in her research, though, but involving broad historical and cultural context into the research, which is treated by the scholar as "cultural periods [when] crisis tendencies, doubts about people's rational power prevail, they apparently actualize the idea of feminine as irrational spiritual embodiment which opposes masculine rationalism" (Bashkirova, 2018, p. 170), – such type and way of speculations can be considered completely reasonable.

Moreover, the scholar's research is not about interpreting commonplace, plain apathetic image-schemes of "passionate revolutionists" who are absolutely deprived of any life pleasures or a little vital energy but about "the actualization of the fatal woman image in modern Ukrainian novel writing". This actualization in Bashkirova's (2018, p. 176) opinion

is determined by specificity of the worldview complex of new *fin de siècle* characterized by total doubting the current knowledge systems and even the positive knowledge which is traditionally associated with creative cultural masculine.

Indeed, it is hard to disagree with the thesis, according to which the fact that a fatal woman appears in this or that literary work is correlated with some definite, usually radical, turning points in the history of human civilization. Nonetheless, it might be incorrect not to differentiate the peculiarities of these characters and neglect their individual specificity.

## 2. Representation of a *femme fatale* image in literary works

To illustrate what has been said above, how the image is analysed depends on the chosen paradigm of characters that create this image. For example, the image paradigm of Judith, Lady Macbeth and Cathy Ames is presented by one type of a fatal woman – a seductive and cruel one who will not stop at anything and will step over blood kinship to achieve their own goals and victory, in particular in a social and existential sense.

If the mentioned paradigm consists of the images of Lilith, Carmen and, for example, Old Izergil, it is an entirely different type of *femme fatale* – also a lethally dangerous woman but who is foremost concerned for the necessity of living in the world where they have to be seductive and threateningly hazardous as it is the only way for them not to die trying to keep up the illusion of freedom and independence.

Furthermore, typological variants of a fatal woman depend to a high degree upon cultural-national specific character and the cultural-aesthetic tradition. Hence, one of these types transformed into a worthless character marked with mockingly parodic intonation and, thanks to Nikolay Leskov, correspondingly named “a Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk county”. After all, it says about a merchant’s wife, Ekaterina Lvovna Izmailova. She, because of her lust for a young lover, at first poisoned (sic!) her father-in-law, then helped Captain (Osavul) Sergii kill her husband, and finally, she suffocated her little nephew Fedia with a pillow so that he would not be able to claim the inheritance of his murdered relatives in future.

## 3. A *femme fatale* image in Ukrainian literature

As to the Ukrainian variant of the vamp woman in classical literature, it is a character that desperately struggles for personal freedom. It is a reason why sexual-passion motives almost wholly faded out into the gloom of social, economic and national unfreedom; and most Ukrainian people suffered from it. It is why, especially in Ukrainian classical literature, few women images could unconditionally be interpreted as *femme fatale*. The most illustrative example of such type is an image of Olena Liaufler of Olha Kobyljanska’s story *A Human Being* (*Liudyna*).

Thus, considering the studied research reviews, the content and ideas related to the problematique of a fatal woman in general, the fatal Ukrainian woman in particular, and images of the fatal woman in O. Kobyljanska’s story appear Oles Uliianenko’s novel specifically.

First, it should be noted that the realization of a fatal woman image can take place not only globally or mystically infernally but also locally, not less dramatically, though.

Neither Olena Liaufler nor Seraphim could claim more than personal happiness in both cases. Olena restrains her desires metaphysically and physically, namely in a spatial sense, whereas Seraphim conquers the world in the capital. Here is their common trait, which shows that at first, both of them lessen themselves to rise later in order to achieve their goals.

The circumstances Olena and Seraphim find themselves in are considerably different, but it is all about their attempts to get rid of their parents' dependence. For this purpose, the former marries the man she scorns while the latter leads a dissolute life with Atas. However, neither Fels nor Atas, an older man with a criminal past, control a young woman acting as if she had no rights and is underage, but, on the contrary, Olena and Seraphim guide those two men creatures.

The epigraphs, opening both texts and, despite unlike words, have similar intentions, indirectly prove that heroines have common existential-sexual attributes. Comparing the statement that "царство брехні панує, як ще ніколи дотепер" ["realm of lies dominate as never before"] (Kobylianska, 1994, p. 13), and the maxim "всяка людина омана, а істина Бог" ["let God be true, but every man a liar"] (Uliianenko, 2013, p. 3) – the maxim belonging to Apostle Paul, it would become obvious that in the first case it goes about insincerity and treachery of the outer world whereas in the second case – about illusion and inconsistent degree of human responsibility which is the thing that exactly determines the kind of this world.

Not surprisingly, during the last hundred years, the described above degree has increased because to "tyrannize" the future husband is one thing and to poison actual lovers and one's own husband is another. The basis, the corresponding potential realized on, is determined by an analogical, serpent beginning, which is characteristic for both heroines and makes us study the problematique of a fatal woman afresh.

Firstly, it should be asserted that in both literary works, to compare the viper image cannot appear accidentally because it has an ambivalent and multilevel character. It is true as about its traditional negative connotations so as about phallus-vagina content of the serpent image in psychoanalysis as well. The image of a viper, a snake or part of it is topical for a great number of famous chimerical representations, which resonates with the poetic characteristics of the text under analysis by O. Kobylianska (see Kobylianska, 1994, pp. 18, 20, 27, 34, 41, etc).

Almost in every textbook, including the school ones, the image of Olena is interpreted as an exclusively positive one representing the dramatic fate of the woman who tries hard to remain honest and incorrupt for the sake of prosperous life. It must be acknowledged one can find enough reasons in the story's text to support this point of view.

However, if you have another closer look at the text, read it more thoroughly, you are sure to discover unexpectedly amazing things. Several times, Olena was called a "serpent" by her father, emperor-royal forest adviser Epaminondas Liaufler: the first time an "ungrateful" one because she refused a marriage of convenience, and the second time when the girl protected her mother from the drunk and furious forest adviser.

Considering complicated relations between the father and his daughter, one could neglect such a curse, but Olena was called so two more times which could not be explained

by the father's despair only. The first episode is when Olena "наче *гадина* [тут і далі курсив мій. – Ф. Ш.] та звинулась, випростувалась, та й так чатувала на <...> слова" ["like a *serpent* [here and further the italics are mine. – F. Sh.] curled, straightened and kept listening to"] (Kobylianska, 1994, p. 32) "лікар[я] і приятел[я] родини Ляуфлерів" ["the doctor and friend of the Liaufalers"] (Kobylianska, 1994, p. 25).

Another episode, which cannot be explained by father-daughter relations, is when, at the end of the story before her marriage to forester Fels, "якесь незнане доти, упряме, дике чувство обгорнуло її – одне лише чувство. Вона ненавидить. Ненавидить з цілої глибини своєї душі! Вбивала б, проклінала б, затоптувала б, як ту *гадюку*... Чи його? Адже вона винувата!! Сама, саміська вона... І чим вона оправдається? Що вона людина?.." ["some unknown before, stubborn, wild feeling wrapped her up – one feeling only. She hated. She hated from the bottom of her heart! She would kill, curse, and stamp out as she did that *serpent*... Or him? She was to blame!! It was her, only her fault... Was there any excuse for her? That she was a human being, wasn't she?.."] (Kobylianska, 1994, p. 72).

These three cases when Olena is named a "serpent" are used in completely different discourse. So, the conclusion can be made that it is not lack of words or absence of synonyms – on the contrary, this vivid image, mostly negative, having traditional connotations at the same time, is characteristic of cold, diabolic and cunning nature. It proves an ambivalent, very controversial character of the main heroine of O. Kobylianska's story and correlates to the noteworthy, ambitious story title – *A human being*.

All said above indicates that the image of Olena Liaufler acquires a different meaning: her strange attitude to Fels becomes obvious and understandable. Thus, the defining element of the relations between Olena and Fels was that, at the stage when they were planning their marriage, he "стратив багато зі своєї звичайної сміливості супроти неї. Зате вона була розмовна, весела і опанувала його зовсім" ["lost most of his usual boldness in her presence. But she would be talkative, cheerful and completely possessed him"] (Kobylianska, 1994, p. 60). Moreover, even though that Fels considered Olena to be a "тиранку" ["tyrant"] (Kobylianska, 1994, p. 60) and was emotionally confounded by her being so "гостра" ["bitter"] (Kobylianska, 1994, p. 60) towards him, he "би стерпів, хоть би вона йому й ногу на карк поставила" ["would tolerate everything even if she put her foot on his neck"] (Kobylianska, 1994, p. 61).

However, Olena was partially satisfied by Fels' behaviour, though, because "їй було б приємніше, наколи б він був їй противився" ["it would be more pleasant for her if he resisted her"], rather than "піддався охотно її сітям..." ["willingly fell for her charms..."] (Kobylianska, 1994, p. 61).

It is notable that the heroine told that to her old teacher of music and her "friend" Margaret while explaining why she did not want and could not marry K. During their conversation, it became clear that it was not about the absence of love to a rich candidate to become her husband. However, it was more important that Olena did not consider herself "нагурою, котра б могла зносити на своїм карку панування другого" ["the one who would be able to put up with someone's dominance"] (Kobylianska, 1994, p. 43). It could

mean that Olena's choice of man, locally, and future, existentially, or as O. Kobylanska wrote, "futureness", was caused not by high and noble feminist ideas but by basic desires to solve her personal, correspondingly human, problem to have a decent living.

This viper-like image structure of Olena Liauffer lets the author of the story, relying on the artistic devices, transit the action and content of the text from the tendency declarative level to the level of authentic anthropological-literary problematique, the centre of which is, in fact a human being. Depicting the human image, having chosen a woman for this purpose, the Bukovyna writer is not limited by it but reveals its inner ambivalent and contradicting character. Thereby, the idea-artistic content of the story does not manifest in a primitive thought that a woman is a human being but that a person is determined, constituted by contradictions belonging to them. Just the lack of any discrepancies makes it impossible to consider an anthropological creature a human being (see Shteinbuk, 2013, pp. 151–160).

#### 4. A serpent-like character of the image of Seraphim

The outlined characteristic is accurate to depict the image of Seraphim because the serpent-like structure of this character leaves no doubts. If for the image of Olena it is an additional aspect, for Seraphim image, taking into account the fact that she lacks her real name, it becomes crucial and significant to define its content.

It does not relate to "красивої шоколадної змії" ["a beautiful chocolate snake"] (Uliianenko, 2013, p. 6) or half-joking remarks of Atas who calls Seraphim a "зміючкою" ["snakeling"] and a "змією" ["snake"] (Uliianenko, 2013, p. 19, 25), fundamental, anthropological features at least. That is why having these features Seraphim somehow "знала, що в підлітковому віці проявляється найбільше те, що люди намагаються потім приховати, скоряючись немислимим і невидимим законам" ["knew that during the teenage years there were strong manifestations of the things which people would try to hide later observing unbelievable invisible laws"]. That is why "у тринадцять хлопці агресивні й злі, вони дрючуть і б'ються" ["being thirteen, boys are aggressive and wicked; they jerk off and fight"] whilst "у дівчаток проявляється вся їхня зміїна сутність" ["girls show their serpent nature"] (Uliianenko, 2013, p. 14).

The "serpent" motive, ambivalent and at the same time ontological, is expected to appear. On the one hand, the protagonist of the same novel by Oles Uliianenko rescues her friend-lover Lorca, who "себе називала Лерою" ["called herself Lera"] (Uliianenko, 2013, p. 73) and who "вкусила гадюка" ["was bitten by a snake"] (Uliianenko, 2013, p. 89), from inevitable death. On the other hand, Seraphim even during the so-called, sexually anxious communication with Atas and Nastia felt that "унизу живота холодно склалася змія [...] І тоді вона" ["a cold snake curled down her stomach [...] And then she"] realized, "наче хто прочитав їй історію про неї на вухо чи показав кольорові слайди її життя" ["as if somebody had read a story about her into her ear or had presented a colour slides show about her life"], – "вона знала, чим все це закінчиться" ["she knew how it all would end"] (Uliianenko, 2013, p. 20).

One cannot but pay attention to Seraphim's bisexual desires which, first, directly correlate to phallus-vagina symbolism of the snake motive. And, second, determine the following metaphors which appear when “вона збиратиме зелений запашний болиголов, викопуватиме довгі, роздвоєні, як язик змії, корені аконіту, ламаючи рожеві, ще дитячі нігті, викопуватиме кореневища дурману” [“she is picking up scented hemlock, digging out long split, as a snake's tongue, aconite root, breaking her pink still childish nails, digging out jimsonweed rootstock”]. And “потім сидітиме на пагорбі, склавши ноги по-турецькому, і печально проведжатиме сонце”, і “взнає, що таке печаль” [“then she will sit on the hill, her legs tucked in a Turkish way, saying sadly good-bye to the sun” and “will feel what sadness is”]. However she “не запитува[тиме], для чого це і звідки прийшла потреба в цьому. Тому, що їй не було у кого запитувати” [“will not ask what for and why it is needed. As she has nobody to ask”] – instead Seraphim “завмре, як жива стріла, чи як змія, готова стрибнути у небо” [“will freeze as a living arrow or a snake ready to spring into the sky”] (Uliianenko, 2013, p. 40) (the italics are mine – F. Sh.).

The mentioned above metaphor proves to be related to the divine-infernal image chain since the image of the snake-headed up into the sky can be interpreted in the corresponding categories. As a result, there appears, justifiably, an association with the Serpent Tempter, the satan transformed into to penetrate into the kingdom of God in order to tempt God's creation!

However, the article is not about the religious content of this story – on the contrary, it is about a completely secular-philosophical disposition, the content of which is a transgression that, due to its fierce power, a woman transforms into such a polyvalent creature as a snake, a snake in its turn transforms into the Tempter; the latter invades the God's territory and there, in the Gardens of Edem, tempts the God's creature – the God punishes this creature (or it may be impossible that the serpent Tempter should be punished for the second time?!) – this creature (in the forms of a man and a woman who become aware of themselves as being such ones or due to the temptation, or as a consequence of the God's punishment the victims of which they become) try to be independent in the new and, surely, not in comparatively more difficult conditions of their being.

This man and woman cannot boast of much success, though, because they find themselves in the world where the “царство брехні панує, як ще ніколи дотепер” [“realm of lies dominate as never before”] (Kobylianska, 1994, p. 13), and because they themselves are “омана” [“lies”] (Uliianenko, 2013, p. 3). Then it comes to the global catastrophes, or sometimes – to the local incidents when, for example, Ivan Bilozub, the main character of another Oles Uliianeko's novel *Dauphin of Satan (Dofin Satany)*, starts seeing an angel or when a thirteen-year-old girl, who calls herself Seraphim, becomes aware of her poisoning talent, and, certainly, the talent to poison too.

It is relevant in this context to refer to the etymology of the name the girl chose for herself. Seraphim is of the old Hebrew origin meaning “noble”, “bright”, “lightning”, “fiery”, “blazing”, “flaming”, “burning”, “a fiery”, “a six-winged angel” in particular, and besides “the one who can sting”, “a snake”, “a dragon” or even “a griffin”, apparently, due to the winged mythical creature (Collier's Encyclopedia).



Finally, the story of incredible metamorphoses and transformations of the mystery proposed above can be limited to by the interaction and correlation between two characters who at long last found themselves to blame and were to "eat bread" "in the sweat of their brows" (Genesis 3:19), "in torment to bear[] children" (Genesis 3:16), and to feel "a desire for husband" (Genesis 3:16). All that led to clinical consequences that were delicately and romantically called a phenomenon of *femme fatale*.

All mentioned above, it is rather difficult to agree with Bashkistrova's (2018, p. 176) statement that a "*femme fatale* represents instinctive, irrational, ruining by its nature impulses of human psyche actualizing the principle, dominating in the classical literature, to portrait a woman as an outer object". It is also hard in this context to avoid doubts about Liudmyla Suvorova's opinion who thinks that "a fatal woman image is a projection of a man's fear of a woman's influence" as

this image is attributed with the fanatic traits not because a woman possesses destructive ruining intentions but because she is seen so by a man. He perceives a woman as fatum who seeks to become part of his life, radically changing the destiny with ruining effect.

*Femme fatale* is death, a thanatic lust in a man's eyes (Suvorova, 2016, p. 117).

If, however, we refer to literary sources, it would appear that the responsibility for these deviations is out of the man-woman dialectically conditioned duality.

## 5. Transgression of a *femme fatale* image

Thus, it is high time for us to refer to the problematics of transgression for the chain and correlations described above, vividly illustrate possibilities to transit between the phenomena which are far from each other at a distance, at least, between the image of Olena and the image of Seraphim.

The idea to interpret the novel of Oles Uliianenko from the point of transgression belongs to Svitlana Pidopryhora; it is a part of her thesis research dedicated to the *Ukrainian experimental prose*, the so-called "'impossible' literature" in particular. Thereby, the scholar says that "prose of O. Uliianenko (Oleksandr Uliianov) can be determined as 'transgressive literature' than anybody else's one because it shocks people by referring to a nasty aspect of people's life and the society in general". Oles Uliianenko in his novel *Seraphim* truthfully depicts 'life inside out', using disgusting metaphors and similes ('terrible worms of horror', 'the sight of the chopped red horizon') that form the ugly anti-world where everything is perceived through the category of death, torture and murder, sexual perversion (Pidopryhora, 2019, p. 18).

However, the modern, productive and adequate idea of Oles Uliianenko's works as an example of "transgressive literature", unfortunately, has been suppressed by inner prejudices and stereotypes. It can be seen in the discourse dedicated to transgression where there are only complaints on "catastrophic conscience", "hell of the world", a "'little' man", and "vital capacity", and even "demonic mysticism"!

In fact, according to Oleksandra Visych

transgressive strategy is one of the features of culture development in XX century. One should understand transgression as some definite destructive shift, ruin, trespassing strong traditions to establish the formal-contentual innovations of poetics including the aspects which used to be tabooed. Paul-Michel Foucault, referring to the ideas of many philosophers from Hegel to Georges Bataille, states in his work 'Introduction to transgression' that this phenomenon is a foundation stone of controversial culture, thinking with non-linear matrixes to perceive the world, transition of being into new states. The transgression phenomenon, in the philosopher's opinion, is connected with the idea of 'the God's death' that logically influences the change of language tendencies and literary images (Visych, 2018, p. 287).

Another opinion, expressed by Viacheslav Faritov, can be added to the already given ones, who writes that "in transgressive mode nothing confronts the other – on the contrary, transforms one into the other, overlaps one another" (Faritov, 2014). As a result, "instead of penetrating and mixing varied everything which exists in the general vortex of Being or Nothingness, appear encounter and divergence of perspectives, formation of new rows and their intersection at different angles" (Faritov, 2014).

The most essential for the author of the article, though, is the quoted philosopher's thought that "it is not about some half-mystical other world or transcendence of all being towards something existing beyond its borders" (Faritov, 2014). On the contrary, Faritov (2014) puts that "on transgression horizon [...] being loses its strictly marked and fixed semantic borders which provide its isolation and self-identity", hence "stops being what it is metaphysically and reveals its characteristics at the encounter and divergence point of semantic vectors".

## 6. Preliminary conclusions

Having summarized every highlighted above opinion on transgression phenomenon, the conclusions are as follows:

Firstly, the image of Seraphim is another character of a Ukrainian girl who, like some other predecessors, in particular Olena Liauffer, tries to overcome her doomed fate and absolutely desperate social, property, status, regional and gender limits;

Secondly, the way she has chosen from the very beginning refers, in fact, to transgressive aspirations since, on the one hand, she realized them through her sexual practice. On the other hand, she realized them by denying her sexual nature (when "підкоряючись неясному пориву, що наростав дедалі більше, наче гудіння далекого поїзда, вона пішла у ванну, взяла металевого прута й загнала собі між ноги. Вона знепритомніла, а коли отямилася в калюжі липкої крові, то зрозуміла, що дитини вже нема і навряд чи колись у неї будуть ще діти" ["bending to a vague impulse which was constantly increasing as if the horn of the far train, she entered the bathroom, took a metal bar and

thrust it between her legs. She fainted but when she recovered in a puddle of sticky blood she realized that a child did not exist anymore and she would never ever have children"] (Ulianenکو, 2013, p. 51);

Thirdly, Seraphim's interest in poisons was also of transgressive perspective because the girl's making lethal poison resembled more or less a precisely calculated but a creative act (in this regard Oles Ulianenکو's heroine as truly reminds P. Süskind's Jean-Baptiste Greanouille as she reminds any other artist).

Having considered the given arguments, it might be asserted that the author's opinion differs from O. Bashkistrova's (2018) and S. Pidopryhora's (2019) points of view, because from the common point, which has been described above, their further research is in the social or even transcendental plane.

In this regard, the author, on the contrary, thinks that in the research, it is more reasonable to follow the way which is not determined by a social or religious perspective, but a corporal one since the poison made by Seraphim was not used to overthrow the existing political or any other regime but for a destructive effect on the concrete corporal shell of the definite character. After all, the protagonist failed to use the possessions she received (she had no idea about some of them!) by using unique poisonous substances because Seraphim's body prevented her from it when, without any obvious clear reasons, "лікарняний криміналіст констатував смерть від зупинки серця" ["the hospital criminalist declared her dead of cardiac arrest"] (Ulianenکو, 2013, p. 215). It happened even though the woman was nearly twenty.

It is more interesting for me to interpret the story when "to her own surprise, she began writing poems". Another important fact and context is when we see seemingly almighty Khrust, who had already been poisoned by Seraphim; the novel protagonist's suffering from her dreams – "одні й ті самі. З дитинства", її бажанням "бути, як і всі", та її "любов'ю" до "порнографі[ї] – чорно-біл[ої]", бо "це давало їй натхнення" ["all the time the same. Since the childhood" her desire "to be like anybody else" or her "love" to "pornography – black-and-white" because "it gave her inspiration"] (Ulianenکو, 2013, p. 128).

Instead, she composed poems "банальні й прості. З граматичними помилками. Круглими, школярськими буквами. 'Сонце світить, квіти пахнуть, а коханий мій не прийде. О коли його побачу. І напевне так загину'" ["banal and plain. With grammar mistakes. With round, school letters. 'The sun is shining, the flowers are smelling, but my beloved is not coming. Oh, when I will see him. And I am likely to die'"] (Ulianenکو, 2013, p. 128). For Seraphim, it was a chance to return to some behavioural norm the only way she could, which at the same time was a creative way.

Can we consider "banal and plain" poems a creative product that equals a death poison?! However, as a substance that attributes carnival character to the discourse or being transgressive at its boundary, yes, it surely can. This variant of interpretation accepted we can understand why at some moment Seraphim all of a sudden not only started writing poems but also began experimenting with poison on herself (see Ulianenکو, 2013, pp. 197–198).

## Conclusion

Thus, the conclusion is made that the author of Seraphim faced a mystery he never, figuratively speaking, solved. His heroine was born and grew up in conditions that made her become like Nastia. But she did not!

In a big city, the girl from the province could have lost or died as Lera or Khrust's wife Alisiia Khrustenko. But she survived!

Having received much money and high social status, Seraphim was to have been happy about her fortune and enjoyed her life victory till her old age. Nevertheless, she ignored that incredible opportunity she had.

Whatever might be, the protagonist of the same novel neglects everything one could imagine – even herself suffering from strange and unmotivated attacks (see Ulianenko, 2013, pp. 190–191); moreover, she refuses her feminine motherhood nature in order, almost at her own will, to stop her living.

The novel content leaves no chance to assert at least one undeniable maxim. It is the very reason why critics and the author of the novel himself were completely perplexed as they could not explain credibly any motive the protagonist was guided by.

Thus, having attributes of a fatal woman, Seraphim is not the one because she, on the one hand, cannot benefit from her new possessions, and, on the other hand, she is indifferent either to her own or anybody's life. The only thing one can be sure of is the transgressive character of Seraphim image; however, her existential transgression is not only to achieve some definite goal but to be a form and way for it to exist in literary discourse.

In simpler words, the image of Seraphim is the image which only seemingly claims the status of the *femme fatale*; actually, the content of this image is a constant overcoming social, property, status, space, gender, corporal, sexual and other rules and norms. It is overcoming in order to overcome. Complete overcoming, which can be stopped only by death which being unmotivated is another variant of phenomenal, namely feminine transgression.

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