

UDC 130.2/82.09/821.161.2N. S. PODOLIAKA^{1*}^{1*}Nizhyn Mykola Gogol State University (Nizhyn, Ukraine), e-mail nadechdasum@gmail.com, ORCID 0000-0002-6136-1665**Strategies of Desacralization of Writers by Means of Merch**

Purpose. The purpose of the research is to outline the strategies of desacralization of writers by means of merch, to determine the positive and negative aspects of the search for new meanings in the reproduction of cult figures. **Theoretical basis.** The article examines merch as a tool that encourages people to change sacred meanings and ideas about writers as bearers of the sacred for Ukrainians. The source base of the study is the works devoted to the problems of the sacred in philosophical thought, as well as the process of desacralization in art and literature. The peculiarities of the destruction of tendencies regarding the notions in the perception of writers as idols of the nation, the formation and emergence of new meanings regarding sacred figures are highlighted and described. The relevance of this study is due to active searches in business, propaganda, agitation for the use of literary practice, transformation and new contexts of literary idols. **Originality.** Until now, the change in the processes of sacralization and desacralization of writers by means of merch has not been considered as a reversal of worldview in culture, vectors of changes in the dominants of spirituality in the world picture. It turned out that the metacategory of the sacred has been studied by many scholars, both foreign and domestic, in recent years. The problems of the sacred are in the centre of attention of sociologists, philosophers, literary critics, and culturologists, but merch as a basis for the desacralization of man was not considered in publications in the field of mass communication theory. Scientists considered the worldview vectors of the sacred and desacralization as processes that are inherent not only in post-modernity, but also those that accompanied Ukrainian culture during previous periods. It is determined that the most noticeable manifestations of desacralization are the reproduction of the figure of Kobzar, moreover, in quite unusual and even provocative images of him. However, the majority of Ukrainians positively perceive the updated images of the prophets of the Ukrainian nation and talk about the permanence of their worldview, despite the change and reinterpretation of many years of later development. **Conclusions.** Conscious desacralization of literary images is gradually gaining momentum. We observe a tendency to positive perception of merch with the figures of T. Shevchenko, I. Franko, H. Skovoroda, Lesia Ukrainka in a new interpretation: during the war, on the barricades – wherever the struggle for Ukrainian statehood is taking place. From the results of the survey it becomes clear that stereotypical perceptions of writers need to be changed, but only if it is an organic fusion with value imperatives, only emphasizes and affirms the spiritual greatness of Man and serves the growth of Ukrainian society and every Ukrainian.

Keywords: merch; sacredness; desacralization; writers of Ukraine; mass communications

Introduction

In a democratic society, freedom of expression is an integral part of state policy. Art and literature are especially sensitive to such democratization. International treaties, in particular Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, define the right of every person, regardless of artistic forms of expression, to freely seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds ("Mizhnarodnyi pakt", 1973). Therefore, the creative thought of artists from all over the world is not stopped by the question of how to depict certain "idols" of the nation. It allows to make any work, including in artistic form, regardless of how such a product of art is defined or evaluated.

People's habitual things and established ideas acquire new meanings, transform and expand the idea of the world. Art has all the necessary tools for this, to go beyond the limits, to expand the worldview, because people strive to be flexible and not to stay forever in the "warm light" moment, they choose development and the need to learn new things.

There are many examples of this, one of which is "Shevchenko's Quantum Leap", which confounds the sacred figure of Kobzar (Zadorozhna, 2019). Such non-standard images appeared in

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the form of badges, were exhibited at the exhibition, placed in the form of prints on T-shirts and other materials. This caused both resistance and support for the author. On the other hand, a certain part of Ukrainian society has not yet formed its own opinion about Shevchenko and treated this and other issues of their own identity passively and indifferently.

An example of unusual artistic performances is also the dubstep festival Skovorodub held in Kyiv, the emblem of which is Hryhorii Savych Skovoroda in stereo glasses. Kyiv graffiti artists from Sociopath in Hrushevsky Street recreated the image of Taras Shevchenko with a tattoo and in modern clothes. And on the wall of Donetsk airport there was a slightly corrected quote of the poet from "Testament".

So this study is called to answer how the strategies of displaying the sacred samples of the literary field have changed thanks to merch technologies.

The metacategory of the sacred has been studied by many scholars, both foreign and domestic, in recent years. Worldview vectors of sacred and desacralization have been considered by scientists as processes inherent not only in the postmodernity, but also accompanying the Ukrainian culture in previous periods. The works of V. Prosalova (2020), N. Deviatko (2020), M. Bachev (2013), and others are devoted to this. However, merch as a basis for desacralization of man has not been considered in the publications in the field of mass communication theory and literary criticism. It is mostly a subject of marketing or publishing business.

Purpose

The purpose of the study is to outline the strategies of desacralization of writers by means of merch, to determine the positive and negative aspects of the search for new meanings in the reproduction of cult figures.

The *object* of the study is the traditions of desacralization in culture and art, communication technologies of using merch in the construction of the worldview reference points, propaganda and patriotic sentiments education. The *subject* is desacralized art in merch.

The *relevance of this study* is due to the active search in business, propaganda, agitation for the use of literary practice, transformation and new contexts of literary idols.

General scientific methods of analysis, synthesis and generalisation were used in examining the theoretical basis of the issue under study and drawing conclusions. The descriptive method helped in identifying strategies of desacralisation of writers by means of merch. A systematic approach was applied, which made it possible to outline the directions of changes in views on sacredness through the use of merch technologies.

In order to investigate the research object more thoroughly, we used a questionnaire method, which is the fastest way to collect the necessary information. When developing the questions we tried to give an adequate description of those processes and phenomena that occur in society. There are 14 questions in total. The survey process itself was conducted with the use of Google-form through messenger channels. The total number of respondents is 110 people aged 18 and over. At the final stage, the data was processed and analysed.

Statement of basic materials

According to the definition of the term given in the "Great Ukrainian Encyclopedia", desacralization is the refusal to "treat something with a high level of involvement and depth",

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which leads to the impoverishment of an individual's life, loss of the sense of the "sacred" and the shrinking of his worldview ("Desakralizatsiia", n.d.).

Let us try to clearly outline the meaning of the concept of "sacred". We will proceed from the fact that the concept of holy/sacred is widely used in the humanities and theology, but it was most fully developed in phenomenological methodology. Here the understanding of the sacred experience (or the experience of the divine), presented by Protestant theologian Rudolf Otto (1869-1937) in his book "The Sacred" (1917), can be useful. The sacred (numinous, divine) is not only that which is opposed to the mundane, profane, but it is also in itself an experience of some completely different, higher reality that absolutely surpasses everything human. Therefore, the experience of the sacred is the action on a person of a force that is superior to the human, and the experience of the sacred is a response to the influence that such a higher force objectively exerts on a person. This higher power is dual: on the one hand, it is experienced by the believer as a "terrifying mystery" (*mysterium tremendum*), which causes a feeling of horror, on the other hand, it is a "fascinating mystery" (*mysterium fascinans*), which captivates and fascinates. Due to the action of such a dual force, a person puts himself in a state of shock and feels a spiritual "trembling", or, in other words, it is that incomprehensible mystery that throws a person into awe (Otto, 2008). But this is the only way the divine reality is revealed to him. Be that as it may, the sacred is the level of our experiences, when the numinous force perceived in this way appears to a person directly and sensually.

Another representative of the phenomenological tradition, the Romanian researcher of religions Mircea Eliade (1907–1986), generally agrees with the interpretation of the sacred that it manifests itself as a force, but also supplements it with his own interpretations. He talks about hierophanies (from the Greek *ἅγιος* – holy, and *φαίνω* – to show, to appear), that is, about some physical or ideal phenomenon in which a person sees manifestations of the sacred. Hierophany does not manifest itself in any, but only in a chosen object: the sun, a sacrificial stone, a symbol or incarnation of God in Jesus Christ; that is, it does not necessarily point to the Christian God. Thus, the sacred exists objectively, outside of human consciousness, only being embodied in objects, and when it meets human consciousness, it manifests itself in hierophanies. In addition, Eliade, in contrast to R. Otto, interprets the sacred as something experienced with the greatest fullness, because it is not partial and relative, but an absolute reality. It is the fullness of being that is revealed to man when it can be grasped with the greatest fullness (Eliade, 2001). And when an object is perceived and experienced in this way, they say that it is sacred.

Therefore, with this interpretation of the concept of "sacred", the source of "sacred awe" can be not only the God (gods), but also objects of the profane world: historical figures, significant historical facts, or places memorable for the nation. Such objects can also contain a force that penetrates into people and causes this "awe"; and then everything physical dissolves in the ideal-material unity, the past is perceived not only spiritually but also bodily, and the objects themselves acquire a sacred character. Having become sacred, such a profane object, preserving its own nature, appears as something fundamentally different from other objects of the profane world.

If now we apply the ideas of phenomenology about sacralization of image, for example, to such "father" of Ukrainian nation as Taras Shevchenko, we can say that Ukrainians, remembering Kobzar, feel the force radiated by this personality, evoking a sense of sacred awe at the level of human experience (Hrabovych, 1998; Hrytsenko, 1998; Zabuzhko, 1997). Bearers of Ukrainian identity, absorbing that sacred power, seem to combine with the image of Shevchenko, and

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then Kobzar appears as an integral part of existence, becomes too close and familiar, the figure of the prophet is brought out of the temporal dimension of everyday life to the level of timelessness. The national hero in all his uniqueness seems to become alive, breaking out of the past time context for us, getting as close as possible to contemporaries in his symbolic meaning, and sometimes he even appears "forever" alive. And with all the variants of symbolic loads and experiences for Ukrainians, the figure of Shevchenko then appears more real than they are themselves.

In our case, the images of such "cult heroes" of the Ukrainian nation as Taras Shevchenko, Ivan Franko, Lesia Ukrainka, Hryhorii Skovoroda, once sacralized within the national mythology, are desacralized in merch. Then the desacralization of these and similar historical figures consists in filling their archetypal images with profane content. Such images continue to remain significant, but they do not allow the nationally engaged person who creates and contemplates them to experience the fullness of being, accompanied by moments of emotional upheaval and "sacred awe". Why has this become possible? Well, probably, because the Western man lives in a secularized society and this context simply does not allow him to fill the images of Ukrainian "cultural heroes" with sacred meanings. It is not that such a non-religious person does not want to meet with the sacred, but he does not even know that there is such a possibility. Here we can say that merch only outwardly imitates religious behaviour with sacred experiences empty of sacredness.

Let us try to answer whether desacralized art in the form of merch has the affection of the public; whether such reactive events are art; and what value such actions have. It is worth recalling the postulate: to allow freedom to others means to give the opportunity for free self-expression to everyone and hence freedom for oneself.

In order to understand the modern features of the destruction of trends regarding ideas about writers, role models and classics of literature, the formation and emergence of new meanings regarding sacred figures in literature and art, to outline the directions of changes in views on sacredness by means of merch technologies, we applied the survey method. Such a method can become the basis for understanding and establishing effective communication of artists and designers with their target audience, as well as serve to some extent to change evaluative stereotypes about cult figures and the possibility of using their images in patriotic actions.

The survey was conducted using a Google-form through messenger channels. The total number of respondents was 110 people aged 18 and over. The balance of the age categories of the interviewees was observed, since the advantage in certain questions of the respondents of one generation can significantly affect the subjectivity of the assessment. Thus, among the participants of the survey there were 18.1 % of respondents aged 18 to 25; 19.1 % – from 26 to 35 years old; 16.4 % – from 36 to 45 years old; 20 % – from 46 to 55 years old and 26.4 % – from 56 and above.

When asked "What do you primarily associate the concept of "sacred" with?" 76.3 % responded "religion and beliefs". Only 15.5 % associated the concept with philosophy, 6.4 % with art, and a small percentage (1.8 %) of respondents indicated the category "literature". Thus, we can observe that most respondents support the original meaning of the term, as sacredness is defined by the central category of religion. However, sacredness can be interpreted through images in fiction and art as well. Attitudes towards the sacred, elements of this concept are the subject of philosophical teachings.

In order to better understand what this very sacralisation is, not at the level of some connection with heavenly gods, but at the level of attributing signs of sacredness to very earthly beings

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such as cultural heroes, we asked respondents "Should sacredness be attributed to earthly beings, in particular to cultural heroes?". If both the creators and the perceivers did not know, because they were outside of this value paradigm from the very beginning, we can conclude that it is we, the researchers, who attribute these signs of sacredness to them, while they, like Jourdain of Molière, did not know that they were speaking in prose.

As a result of the survey, it was found that 33.6 % of respondents hesitate to answer this question, and the percentages of those who answered affirmatively or negatively have little difference. 36.4 % answered "yes", "no" – 27.3 %, other – 2.7 %. This speaks of the unstable and ambiguous position of different categories of the population in society and the change of stereotypes regarding "icons", which have been formed for a long time in the cultural stratum of the nation. There are gradual changes in attitudes towards the reproduction of the divine in cultural heroes, spiritual freedom and the phenomenon of individuality, an active search for the presence of a new essence of the divine in completely earthly heroes. There is a conscious desacralization of world images.

Continuing our research, we asked what the respondents, first of all, actually imagine under the concept of "desacralization", offering options for the answers. The responses "devaluation of sacred models" (31.2 %) and "change of established stereotypes" (33.9 %) had a close percentage ratio. Other indicators are as follows: change of attachment to a certain person – 4.6 %, change of conservative views – 6.4 %, new interpretation of artistic and cultural heritage – 19.3 %, other – 4.6 %. Therefore, people's modern vision of the process of desacralization preserves established views on its key point, such as the devaluation of models, but also makes some significant corrections in the return of human desire for changes in established stereotypes and a new interpretation of artistic and cultural heritage. We do not see a definite assessment today, but there is a departure from the archaic vision.

The most visible manifestations of desacralization are observed in the reproduced figure of Kobzar. Against the background of modern political battles, the image of Taras Shevchenko is increasingly perceived not as a serf, a pauper, an exile, but as a charismatic person with a subtle soul who is an active creator of the nation and its independent ideology. There is a tendency towards rather unusual and even provocative images of him: in the images of Spider-Man, David Bowie, Frida Kahlo, with a machine gun and in a bulletproof vest, despite the fact that he is an "icon" in Ukrainian literature, whom everyone perceives as a national prophet.

The usual image is that of a fighter and martyr for the truth, a prophet, a wise old man in an astrakhan hat, a spiritual leader. But today, such an academic, state, glossy, template attitude towards the poet is based mainly on his quotes learned from school, and sometimes in the minds of people is not supported by a deep understanding of his work. More often, views on Kobzar remain stereotyped, uncreative and ossified, far from a common person. There is another side of the coin: mostly one-sided attempts to portray the poet, changing worship to denial of Shevchenko and his cult, as Oles Buzyna does, for example, in his work (Stech, 2013).

Each new wave in the history of Ukraine gives rise to a new perspective, actualizes the figure of Kobzar and his image, which leads to new meanings, reinterpretations of Shevchenko's works and ideas. Oligarchs, politicians, and businessmen begin to use manipulative technologies in relation to the concepts of Genius, speculating on the name of the national idol. There is a process of violation of the semantic balance: they want to see Taras Hryhorovych in all the variety of mass forms of culture: at war, at the barricades, wherever the struggle for Ukrainian statehood is going on.

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Objectively, this can defame everything Ukrainian: language, culture, literature (Voitenko, 2000). So does such art defame one of the symbols of our Ukraine? We asked the respondents this question. To the question "What is your attitude to the stylized images of T. Shevchenko or other classics of literature in art?" we received the following data: positive attitude – 65.4 %, negative – 6.4 %, neutral – 28.2 %. It turns out that in this difficult rhetoric Kobzar remains one of the most popular images for artists of Ukraine, he continues to be perpetuated and perceived positively, despite the stylization of time.

But this discussion has both positive and negative aspects, as evidenced by the answers to our next question: "Is it necessary to overcome evaluation stereotypes in the established stereotypes of interpreting the works of famous writers by means of art, literature and using merchandising technologies?". The share of those who support the overcoming of stereotypes is the highest – 45.4 %. But there is a considerable percentage of those who have not yet decided on their vision of the problem (29.1 %). 10 % adhere to conservative views and do not want to break the stereotypical image of writers that has developed over a significant period of time. Noteworthy is the position of those who believe that the established stereotypes about the images of writers should be changed, but not always (15.5 %). Thus, society is increasingly moving towards changing old paradigms.

The next question was intended to expand the understanding of respondents' assessment of stylized images of writers. We asked "Do the images of literary classics on merch items (T-shirts, sweatshirts, cups, bags) serve to actualize the creative background of writers and rethink the symbolism and semantics of poetry?".

A patriot and citizen who shunned the slave mentality, Taras Shevchenko is now destroying stereotypes about himself. His poetry, like the poetry of many classics of Ukrainian literature, does not lose its relevance.

Many people continue to ask the question: "Should history repeat itself, especially in such difficult times for our country?". Our fate is in our hands – writers convince with their works. A new reading and rethinking of the written contributes to the understanding of Ukrainians.

You can use merch to express a public position that coincides with what the classics said. Therefore, the majority of respondents (54.5 %) are inclined to believe that such products are necessary and contribute to rethinking the creative background of writers and a new reading of poetry. However, a lot depends on how much such creativity is perceived by a person, whether the picture is distorted. This is indicated by the percentage of respondents who answered "both yes and no" (19.1 %). Because no matter how much you like creativity, but if, say, Lesia Ukrainka appeared in an image that levels your ideas about aesthetics – such a "gift" will not please the eye, but will only cause resentment and negative reaction. A certain proportion of respondents do not consider merch as a means of actualizing the writer's creativity (16.4 %). There are also those who hesitate to answer the question (10 %).

We also asked the respondents "Do stylized images of the classics of literature on merchandise items serve as a factor of uniting the nation?". The spiritual guidelines of our society today are the dream of Taras Shevchenko – a renewed Ukraine, free from slavery both in consciousness and in the desire for independence, and the unifying criteria of the nation are the condemnation of social injustice, untruth, slavery, violence, hypocrisy. Therefore, 58.2 % of respondents consider it relevant to have a merch item that states the idea of uniting the nation. Some respondents (12.7 %) do not consider merchandise to be such a unifying tool. Also noteworthy is the percentage of those who hesitate to answer this question (9.1 %) and have the opinion that it does not always work, but only in certain moments (20 %).

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In the modern world, a merch item appears in the form of Taras Shevchenko on banknotes, T-shirts, vests, cups. Such mass culture in its hybrid forms, the so-called rebranding of the writer's image often undermines the ideological foundations, because the creative product primarily aims to follow the laws of a unique selling proposition, that is, to make a profit from the sale. This generates a new process of desacralization ("Desakralizatsiia/rebrendynh", 2021).

We asked the respondents "Does the so-called rebranding of the writer's image undermine the worldview foundations?". The majority (41.3 %) answered "no". Therefore, the majority of Ukrainians positively perceive the updated images of the prophets of the Ukrainian nation and talk about the constancy of their worldview, despite the change and reinterpretation of many years of layering. The distribution of other answers is as follows: "yes" – 15.6 %, "I hesitate to answer" – 28.4 %, "both yes and no" – 14.7 %.

In these dramatic times of our history, humanity once again think about the cult of the classics of literature in wartime. Their creativity has always been used by society and government to achieve ideological goals. Soviet propaganda used poetry for its own purposes, bringing out the idea of the people's class struggle for a better future; as a call to fight against the Nazi occupiers in World War II. A new vision appeared during the Revolution of Dignity, when they became heroes of the surrounding reality. And if earlier people like Shevchenko were perceived as a monument, then in the conditions of aggression, they seem to have become "alive". The image of Shevchenko and other writers, in particular Ivan Franko, is used today for the needs of the front in the form of banknotes, on which well-known personalities appear in an unusual militarized form. This project "Frank to the Front" creates the possibility of micro-donations to the Armed Forces. Its author is Andrii Mishchenko. Now the team plans to go outside Ukraine and conduct a large-scale campaign to help the soldiers ("U merezhi", 2022).

So the next question was "Should we use the images of literary classics on merch items for the needs of the war, the front?". The positive answer was given by 53.7 % of respondents. However, there are a lot of those whose position is negative (22.7 %). The percentage of those who have not decided on their position is stable (10 %) and there are those who consider the use of militarized merch situational (13.6 %).

Accordingly, the answers to the question "Would you buy a militarized merch item with the image of Taras Hryhorovych Shevchenko at war, on the barricades, with weapons?" correlate with the previous result. 43.1 % answered positively. Negatively – 37.6 %, 19.3 % hesitated to answer.

And regarding the purchase, we asked "What would be the reason for buying a merch item with a stylized image of a writer?". The distribution was as follows: I am a fan of this author's work – 12.7 %, in memory of the event that took place – 17.4 %, creative reproduction of the writer's image – 23.6 %, the position of this writer coincides with my public position – 23.6 %, a useful thing in everyday life – 4.5 %, a unique and collectible item that not everyone has – 9.1 %, other – 9.1 %. The ratio is relatively proportional.

In fact, today we observe that there is a departure from the cult created in previous centuries, writers become heroes of the surrounding reality, role models. Therefore, we only need to find out whether it is necessary to popularize a merchandise item with stylized images of writers? Accordingly, 58.9 % of respondents believe that it is necessary, 15.9 % answered "no", the same number (15.9 %) hesitate in their assessment, but 9.3 % see such a need as situational.

However, conservative views on the literary and artistic heritage should not be lost due to constant shaking and attempts to reinterpret texts, there are other ways of actualizing the creative background and rethinking the symbolism and semantics of unsurpassed poetry.

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From another point of view, in the context of the development of the young Ukrainian state and the Russian-Ukrainian aggression, the figure of Shevchenko serves as a powerful factor in uniting the nation. Since 2014, Kobzar's image has become closer to the fighters on the barricades who defended the writer's ideas on the Maidan. He is depicted with a "Molotov cocktail", in a bulletproof vest, with a machine gun. And modern well-known Ukrainian bands perform songs to the words of the immortal Genius accompanied by bandura and at rock concerts.

Originality

The originality lies in the fact that until now the change in the processes of sacralization and desacralization of writers by means of merch has not been considered as a reversal of worldview in culture, vectors of changes in the dominants of spirituality in the world picture. The conducted survey helps to understand the specifics of the destruction of tendencies regarding the notions in the perception of writers as idols of the nation, the formation and emergence of new meanings regarding sacred figures.

Conclusions

Nowadays, stereotypical attitudes towards the reproduction of the sacred in cultural heroes are changing, an active search is underway for the presence of a new essence of the divine in completely earthly heroes. Conscious desacralization of literary images is gradually gaining momentum. We observe a tendency to positive perception of merch with the figures of T. Shevchenko, I. Franko, H. Skovoroda, Lesia Ukrainka in a new interpretation: during the war, on the barricades – wherever the struggle for Ukrainian statehood is taking place. However, from 10 to 30 percent of respondents still have not decided on their attitude to the stylized images of the nation's heroes on merch items. This indicates rather the situational nature of the attempts to re-display the "idols", because they are not often seen in everyday life, and few people are engaged in their popularization, although, as the survey has shown, there is a need for it.

Is it necessary to overcome evaluative stereotypes in the established stereotypes of interpreting the work of famous writers by means of art, literature and using merch technologies? Undoubtedly, only when it is not an adjustment to a stylized Shevchenko or Franko, but is an organic fusion with value imperatives, only emphasizes and affirms the spiritual greatness of Man and serves the growth of Ukrainian society and every Ukrainian. Today, such attempts at desacralization are mostly sporadic and not permanent (Pres-tsentr, 2019). We found out that in this case, the merch only outwardly imitates religious behaviour with experiences devoid of sacredness. That is why it is worth paying attention to the changes that desacralized art brings to the modern world, and, perhaps, making more efforts to popularize the work of Ukrainian classics of literature with the help of merch technology.

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Стратегії десакралізації письменників засобами мерчу

Мета. Основною метою цієї статті є окреслити стратегії десакралізації письменників засобами мерчу, визначити позитивні та негативні аспекти пошуків нових смислів у відтворенні культових осіб. **Теоретичний базис.** Мерч розглянуто як інструмент, який спонукає людей змінити сакральні смисли та уявлення про письменників як носіїв священного для українців. Джерельною базою дослідження слугують праці, присвячені проблемам сакрального у філософській думці, а також процесу десакралізації в мистецтві та літературі. Виділено й описано особливості руйнування тенденцій щодо уявлень про письменників як ідолів нації, формування й появу нових смислів щодо сакральних постатей. Актуальність цієї студії зумовлена активними пошуками в бізнесі, пропаганді, агітації використання літературної практики, трансформації та нових контекстів літературних ідолів. **Наукова новизна.** Досі зміну процесів сакралізації та десакралізації письменників засобами мерчу не розглядали як розворот світосприйняття в культурі, вектори змін домінант духовності в картині світу. З'ясувалося, що метакатегорію сакрального протягом останніх років досліджували багато вчених, як зарубіжних, так і вітчизняних. Проблеми сакрального перебувають у центрі уваги соціологів, філософів, літературознавців, культурологів, проте мерч як підґрунтя десакралізації людини не було розглянуто в публікаціях у сфері теорії масових комунікацій. Світоглядні вектори сакрального й десакралізацію науковці розглядали як процеси, які притаманні не тільки постсучасності, а й такі, що супроводжували українську культуру протягом попередніх періодів. Визначено, що найбільш помітними проявами десакралізації є відтворення постаті Кобзаря, до того ж у досить незвичних і навіть провокативних його зображеннях. Утім, українці здебільшого позитивно сприймають оновлені образи пророків української нації й говорять про постійність їх світогляду, незважаючи на зміну й переосмислення багаторічних нашарувань. **Висновки.** Свідома десакралізація письменницьких образів поступово набуває обертів. Спостерігаємо тенденцію до позитивного сприйняття мерчу з постатями Т. Шевченка, І. Франка, Г. Сковороди, Лесі Українки в новій інтерпретації: під час війни, на барикадах – усюди, де точиться боротьба за українську державність. Із результатів опитування стає зрозумілим, що стереотипні уявлення про письменників потрібно змінювати, але лише в тому випадку, коли це буде органічним сплавом із ціннісними імперативами, тільки підкреслюватиме та стверджуватиме духовну велич Людини й слугуватиме зростанню українського суспільства та кожного українця.

Ключові слова: мерч; сакральність; десакралізація; письменники України; масові комунікації

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