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## THANATOLOGICAL MOTIFS OF M. KHOLODNYI'S POETRY: A DIALOGUE WITH DEATH

### ТАНАТОЛОГІЧНІ МОТИВИ ПОЕЗІЇ М. ХОЛОДНОГО: ДІАЛОГ ЗІ СМЕРТЮ

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Among the cohort of writers of the 1960s stands out Mykola Kholodnyi. He is a poet from Ukrainian Polissya (born in Chernihiv region) and considered a representative of the dissident movement. He was arrested, like many other members of the nationally conscious intelligentsia, for anti-Soviet propaganda and agitation, and all manuscripts were confiscated by the KGB

(Committee for State Security). His works have long been banned by Soviet censors because of their opposition to official ideology, and in the 1960s spread only through samisdat and brought the author popularity. In 1969, his first collection of poems "*Крик з могили*" ("Cry from the Grave") was published (anonymously) only abroad, followed by the collection "*Сутеніє в душі*" ("Twilight in the Soul") and the journalistic essay "*Про душу в пісні та про пісню в душі*" ("On the Soul in the Song and the Song in the Soul").

After the arrests, he remained *persona non grata* for any publication, so he continued (like most writers of the time) to write "in the table". During his lifetime, several more collections were published, but already in independent Ukraine – "*Дорога до матері*" ("Road to the Mother", 1993), "*Усмішка Джоконди*" ("Smile of the Mona Lisa", 1995) and "*Сто перший кілометр*" ("One Hundred and First Kilometer", 2004). The collection "*Повернення*" ("Return") was published in 2009, after the author's death [4, p. 138].

M. Kholodnyi's nonconformist poetry, full of allegory, at that time struck with audacity, rejection of stagnation and humility in public life, encouraged reflection. Among the motifs of his poetry are socio-political, patriotic, philosophical, that related to thanatological that close to Schopenhauer's philosophical concept. Death is seen as liberation from suffering, the attainment of absolute freedom, and various variations of dying are seen as an opportunity to get out of the trap of life. L.Demska-Budzuliak states "саме феномен смерті створює таку межову ситуацію, в дискурсі якої можна побачити зміни у системі цінностей як окремої людини, так і цілої епохи"<sup>1</sup> [1, p. 26].

Death is a common constant in human life. No more and no less. In M. Kholodnyi's poetry, the accents shift from the sacred understanding of death to its everyday meaning. This is only a temporary end, which destroys only the biological organism and consciousness, and instead gives relief from suffering. Death appears in the works as something ordinary, mundane, sometimes even without too much tragedy or sacredness. Symbols and images with the usual connotations of the theme of death are not uncommon ("*Ми малюємо/крематорій піч*"<sup>2</sup> [3, p. 163], "*Війна вечеряла серцями, що жито сіяли*"<sup>3</sup>, "*Повз тебе бігли байдуже мерці колонами*"<sup>4</sup> [3, p. 21], etc.).

It is noteworthy that this death is not followed by grief, sorrow or pain – the usual and characteristic of this phenomenon companions, only its

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<sup>1</sup> "the phenomenon of death creates such a borderline situation, in the discourse of which one can see changes in the value system of both the individual and the whole epoch"

<sup>2</sup> "We paint / crematorium oven".

<sup>3</sup> "War dined with hearts that sowed rye".

<sup>4</sup> "Indifferently the dead ran past you in columns"

statement. The author "kills" the lyrical hero or characters physically, that is, only the body dies, because it restricts the freedom of the individual. In this way, he levels the value of life to show all the absurdity of a world that deepens existential meanings. Death is a kind of challenge to the spirituality of society, the desire for absolute freedom, the ability to go beyond the established limits.

According to I. Dziuba, M. Kholodnyi always had a dialogue with death, sometimes flirting with it, sometimes teasing, so the works have a lot of vocabulary on this topic, relevant motifs and images. The scientist says: "Він (тобто М. Холодний – авт.) ще за життя то «промовля», то «кричить» з труни, намагаючись бодай звідти достукатися до сучасників (чи до нащадків?)<sup>5</sup> [2, p. 700].

In the poem "*Ви все ті самі*" ("You are all the same"), lyrical hero because of feelings of despair and fatigue so that even "Хочеться кінчик ножа покохати / Серцем, яке замучив"<sup>6</sup>, wants to die, and therefore turns to Death as an old friend with a request to come to him: "Смерте, завітай до моєї хати, / Я за тобою скучив"<sup>7</sup> [3, p. 151].

It should be noted that thanatological motifs are intertwined with civic and patriotic motifs in the work of M. Kholodnyi. We find about devotion to the Homeland and punishment for it in the poem "*Межа*" ("Border"). The lyrical hero is accused of "crossing the border...", and those who "aimed at the Fatherland in the chest", "shot" him in the back. The lyrical hero feels that physically, as if lying "buried in a coffin", but his "spirit went among the people", he lies "in the ground like a mine", "like a sickle on the throat" of those "killers", he "poured their hands" "blood wound" [3, p. 162]. And the last lines of the poem "В труні забитий, та не вибий/за Бугом-річкою лежу"<sup>8</sup> clearly appeal to the life of the author himself, who after his arrest in 1972 was deported to Vinnytsia, where he wrote this text. In the constructions of the sentences used by the author there is a contrast: "Лежу забитий у труні/Та дух пішов мій поміж люди", "Перемовлялися миряни:/ не стало прапора, мовляв. / Та кров'ю завданої рани/ я їхні руки обілляв", "В труні забитий, та не вибий / за Бугом-річкою лежу"<sup>9</sup> [3, p. 162], which indicates resistance, opposition to the existing order, inviolability even in such conditions. The image of the coffin symbolizes rigidity, inaction, or rather the

<sup>5</sup> He [M. Kholodnyi] still in his life sometimes "speaks", then "shouts" from the coffin, trying to reach out at least to contemporaries (or descendants?).

<sup>6</sup> "I want to love the tip of a knife / With a tormented heart"

<sup>7</sup> "Death, come to my house, / I missed you"

<sup>8</sup> "Hammered in the coffin, but not killed / I lie behind the river Bug"

<sup>9</sup> "I lie buried in a coffin / But my spirit went among the people", "The laity were talking: / the flag disappeared, they say./ And I covered their hands / with blood of inflicted wound", "Hammered in the coffin, but not killed / I lie behind the river Bug"

inability to act due to the circumstances in which he found himself. But the author emphasizes "hammered in the coffin, but not killed" [3, p. 162], that is, although limited in his activities, but still alive and waiting for the time when he will be freed from this state and restore strength.

In another poem "*Деся мій канат перетягнутий трісне...*" ("Somewhere My Rope Pulled Will Crack..."), although there is not a word about death, the picture before us makes it clear what the author is talking about: the "pulled rope", which is about to crack, symbolizes the end of life; "something red will flow down the temple" – therefore, he will die from a shot to the head and blood will flow from the temple; the image of the "stone" is the tombstone on the tomb of the lyrical hero, on which his "unfinished song" (unfulfilled love) "will lay a flower" [3, p. 173].

Another eloquent poem "*Хто ми?*" ("Who are we?") reveals the essence of life at a time when a clear line between the worlds of the living and the dead was blurred, and people themselves ceased to realize: are they "alive who are supposed to pretend to be dead?" or "the dead who deftly play the role of the living with two hearts?". But there is one conclusion: "До сирі всі з нас ляжуть..."<sup>10</sup> [3, p. 138]. Images-companions of death, constantly appear in the texts: the dead, "raw" (meaning the earth), worms (that eating the bodies of the dead in the earth).

Thus, the image of death in M. Kholodnyi on the one hand is a kind of illustration of the negative features of the socio-political system, a statement of evil that deliberately destroyed people both morally and physically, and on the other – as a symbol of freedom, liberation from life's suffering and immanent category for nature.

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<sup>10</sup> "All of us will lie down to the raw"