

# Ukrainian Poetic Sixties: Mykola Kholodnyi's Creative Individuality

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**Abstract.** The article is devoted to the little-studied Ukrainian poet of the sixties, dissident M. Kholodnyi, his creative style, analysis of motifs, images, and symbols of lyrical heritage, and the phenomenon of creative individuality. Socio-political reflection of Ukrainian tragedies, the role of the artist and his work singled out among the motifs of his poetry. There are images of famous Ukrainian writers who are carriers of the code of national memory and help to shape the national consciousness of future generations. A separate block constitutes his intimate lyric poetry reflecting the various facets of the spiritual and corporeal together with emotions ranging from romantic to deeply sensual. It is noted that among the writers of the 60s generation, his poetry is distinguished by the presence of sharp satire and tragedy in depicting paradoxical and absurd Soviet reality.

**Keywords:** the Sixtiers; Mykola Kholodnyi; Ukrainian poetry; motifs; imagery.

## Introduction

The second half of the twentieth century in Soviet Ukraine was a complex and controversial time, accompanied by repression of all who disagreed with official policy. The cultural figures, writers, artists, and scientists, whose works were associated with the desire to see their country independent, were faced with fabricated cases and trials that ended not only with long-term imprisonment, deportation to Siberia and concentration camps but also with executions. During the late 1950s and 1960s, a literary, artistic, and socio-political movement emerged among the Ukrainian intellectual elite who denounced and condemned these mass repressions – the Sixtiers. The dissidents were among them. This radical movement against the anti-Soviet system combined various forms of civil protest: from intellectual resistance to the creation of special organisational structures to combat the existing state and social order. Kholodnyi is considered a representative of the dissident movement. His fate (as well as the fates of many others) was destroyed by the Soviet totalitarian machine.

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Soviet censors have long banned Kholodnyi's works because of their opposition to the official ideology, and in the 1960s, they spread only through samizdat 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 book *Про душу в пісні та про пісню в душі (On the Soul in the Song and the Song of the Soul)*, for which he received V. Nefelin Literary Award and the Vatican Honorary Prize (1979). He is a poet from Ukrainian Polissya (born in the Chernihiv region), whose talent awoke early. In his fifth year of study at the university, he was expelled for his position and the sharp content of his poetry, speeches, essays, etc. Kholodnyi's nonconformist poetry, full of allegory, at that time struck with audacity, rejection of stagnation, and humility in public life encouraged reflection. Therefore, it is not surprising that 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. Later, after publishing the so-called letter of repentance, he was released and sent 100 km from Kyiv. He was an internal emigrant who settled in Oster in the Chernihiv region and was under surveillance for the rest of his life. He remained *persona non grata* for any publication, so he continued (like most writers of the time) to write without the slightest hope of publishing these works. 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 Kilometre, 2004)*. The collection *Повернення (Return, 2009)* appeared after the author's death.

The artist's personality is controversial, but his talent as a poet is beyond doubt; moreover – Kholodnyi is called one of the brightest Ukrainian poets of the 60s of the XX century (Baran, Dziuba, Horobets). However, he became the subject of discussion between Maliuta (2019) and Marchenko (2019) about what he was: a traitor collaborator who worked for the KGB or a patriot of his country. Maliuta (2019, p. 5) emphasises that having made a “thorough review of the criminal case of Kholodnyi №58095-FP, stored in the SBU”, “testified” that the poet himself wrote a penitential statement “On the scales of conscience”, published in the newspaper *Літературна Україна (Literary Ukraine)* 07.07.1972. He summed up that Kholodnyi lost honour and truth in his life because he was guided by “an uncontrollable thirst for glory and comfort”.

Knowing the conditions in which writers lived and tried to create at that time, you realise today it is difficult to separate at least something “white” from that “blackness”. Many of them either fell silent or, fearing repression (or death), wrote the so-called letters of repentance. But can Kholodnyi be accused of treason, dishonour, and lies because of this? Marchenko (2019, p. 4), an opponent of Maliuta (2019), denies such unequivocal conclusions, mentioning Kholodnyi's four arrests, his stay in Lukyanivska Prison, five months in the KGB detention centre, his health undermined, eviction from Kyiv, relocation to Vinnytsia, and being there under close supervision of the authorities. He emphasises that it is not necessary to “move the bones of Kholodnyi, who has passed away” (Marchenko, 2019, p. 4), and it is still unknown precisely whether or not without someone's help.

We find out what Kholodnyi was, or more precisely, how his contemporaries remember him, in the works of Bursov, Hryzun, Mushketyk, and others. However, there is still no comprehensive analysis of his literary work and the peculiarities of his individual style – the research of Dziuba (2006), Harachkovska (2014), and a few others are devoted to analysing certain motifs and images or to some features of the author's creative manner.

The aim of the article is to analyse the phenomenon of the creative personality of the dissident poet Kholodnyi as a representative of one of the difficult periods in the history of Ukraine, the artistic system of motifs and imagery of his poetry, their semantic content; to return him from oblivion to the cohort of poets representing the period of the 60s and thus to restoring historical justice.

The methodology of the present research is based on the interpretation of a literary text and the synthesis of hermeneutics and contextual approach, cultural-historical and biographical methods. Due to the hermeneutic approach, the elements of the content organisation of lyrical poetry were treated, and images and symbols were interpreted. The biographical method helped study the history of the development of Kholodnyi's creative individuality, worldview, and patterns of choice of motifs and images. Using the contextual approach and cultural-historical method contributed to the discovery of the regularities of the influence of the environment and the era in which the poet lived on the specificity of his poetic texts.

## 1. Ukrainian Literary Sixties: a brief review

During the USSR's totalitarian communist regime in the 60s of the XX century, a cohort of artists called *shistdesiatnyky* (the Sixtiers) emerged as a flash of national self-consciousness. Among them were writers I. Drach, M. Vinhranovskyi, V. Symonenko, L. Kostenko; literary critics I. Dziuba, E. Sverstiuk; directors S. Paradzhanov and Les' Taniuk; artists A. Horska and V. Zaretskyi, and many others. It was a transitional period because of changes in sociocultural vectors in the public consciousness in the national context, a stage of social transformation. Ukrainian literary critic and writer of the sixties Shevchuk (Tarnashynska, 2020, p. 18) considers the Sixtiers those whose work denied the aesthetics of socialist realism and went beyond socialist realist precepts and taboos. Another literary critic and member of the Sixties movement, Sverstyuk (Tarnashynska, 2020, p. 18), names only those whose works were published by *samizdat* – the majority of dissidents. Tarnashynska (2020, p. 18), a researcher of this phenomenon and period in the history of literature, believes that it is necessary to find a “golden mean” between these two approaches. Writers (as, after all, other artists of the time) had to choose: they were on the side of Soviet power or the desired independent Ukraine. Some cooperated with the totalitarian regime, while others remained nonconformists and, in opposition to the official ideology, formed a dissident movement whose members were persecuted, imprisoned, and encamped. Burianyk (1997, p. 3) writes:

The creators of the literature of the 1960s and 1970s might be divided between those who remained on the “outside” (e.g., V. Symonenko, V. Holoborod’ko, I. Drach, L. Kostenko) and those who found themselves incarcerated for political reasons (e.g., I. Kalynets’, M. Osadchyi, etc.). The boundaries between the two groups are often fluid because many writers who avoided arrest were treated as outcasts, their ability to publish severely restricted.

The Sixtiers were operating at a time when they had to create an alternative reality to the objective reality, in which there was only a big bubble of lies and total terror, where the deaths of millions became mere statistics. Instead, they tried to emphasise the self-sufficiency of human life. Among the internal literary tendencies of this period, literary critic Donchyk (1998, p. 45) singled out associative metaphors in poetry, opposition to illustrative and opportunistic book publishing, and the right to own opinion for asserting the role of the individual in life, as well as the formulation of such important national issues as the distortion of the history of the Ukrainian people, the backwardness of the language, and their transfer from the political to the plane of literary texts.

The Ukrainian Sixtiers were united by one essential circumstance – defending the Ukrainian identity. National characteristic is important for life in the world and a person’s spiritual growth, so the government tried to break everyone primarily through denationalisation. The Sixtiers were concerned about the national question. They expressed ethical protest against the Russification and marginalisation of Ukrainian culture. They sought to cultivate the native language, culture, a sense of national identity, and the establishment of symbols and codes of the Ukrainian mentality as national values.

This cohort of artists professed freedom of creative expression. They realised their ideas, emphasising the supremacy of universal values over class and cultural pluralism, which did not fit into the canons of socialist realism and was opposed to official dogmatism. Pylypiuk (2002, p. 213) notes:

The *shistdesiatnyky* took the meagre opportunities that the post-Stalinist thaw availed them to create a remarkable legacy. While they did not avoid experimentation, they strove to recuperate what was forgotten, unstudied, or forbidden.

The political, socio-historical, and cultural situation of this period, in particular, the activities of the Sixtiers and other dissidents, their interrogations, and imprisonment are found in the books by Kas’ianov (1995), Obertas (2010), Zahoruiko (2018), Tarnashynska (2019), and others. Ukrainian culture of the sixties became the subject of many scientific studies published abroad. Yurchak (2006), involving ethnographic material of the relevant period, explored the last Soviet generation’s life (the 1960s-1980s) and described the model of Soviet socialism as a system of the dichotomy of official and unofficial culture. Risch (2011) talked about the culture of the Soviet period in the western Ukraine town of Lviv and emphasised attention on forged alternative social spaces and opportunities to share high culture, music, and art among Lviv’s post-Stalin-generation youth. Yekelchik (2018) analysed the early stage of the Ukrainian Sixtiers movement. Bellezza (2019) researched

the origins of the Shistdesiatnyky, the peculiarity of shistdesiatnytstvo as a new cultural course, and the repressions and dissent of A. Horska, V. Moroz, Dziuba, L. Pliushch, etc.

Scientists also turned to the artwork of individual representatives of this period: Burianyk (1997) devoted her dissertation to Stus's poetry, his incarceration, and death; Pylypiuk (2002) considered the poetry of Kalynets and Stus; Achilli (2016) researched the reception of Shevchenko's poetry in the works of Stus; Savchyn (2021) analysed the literary translation of Stus and Svitlychnyi, etc.

The literature of the 1960s, in a special way, became a projective reflection of the processes and ideological transformations of this period, and the word was used as a tuning fork of social life, which appealed to historical memory and could resist injustice, emphasising human self-esteem and awareness of the need to preserve national values. Kholodnyi is a bright representative of this period, but undeservedly forgotten and almost unexplored.

## 2. Mykola Kholodnyi's creative style. Motifs, images and symbols of his lyric poetry

Among the features of Kholodnyi's poetry, researchers distinguish sharp satire, irony, outrage, paradox, unexpected ending, tragic absurdity (Dziuba (2006), Harachkovska (2014)), allegory, powerful patriotic pathos (Horobets (2016)), a paradoxical combination of wit with pain, laughter with tears, and lyricism with satire (Pavlenko (2010)). He has an extraordinary ability to convey in words his sense of time and explicate the problems of Ukrainian life. This is a critique of socialist realism, veiled opposition to the official ideology, and resistance to negative phenomena occurring in society. The author depicts a country where tragic absurdity reigns. According to Panchenko (2010, p. 43), "трагічний сарказм М. Холодного влучав у серцевину нелюдської тоталітарної системи" ["Kholodnyi's tragic sarcasm hit the heart of the inhuman totalitarian system"].

In his works, Kholodnyi depicted the country of absurdity in which he lived and the empire of evil, which either physically or morally killed a nationally conscious individual, forcing the rest of the people to remain silent. The writer protested against this, according to literary critic Dziuba (2006, p. 704), he wanted "рутину абсурду коронувати колючками свого сарказму" ["crowning the routine of the absurd with the thorns of his sarcasm"].

One of the characteristic features of his poetry – satire – noted Harachkovska (2014), who emphasised the predominance of the grotesque-generalised picture in the image of the author of totalitarian reality, the pathological world of the Soviet period on the example of travesties and satirical miniatures of his lifetime poetry collections. The literary critic claims that his poetic satire is characterised by exposing the character, hyperbole, and the grotesqueness of artistic images; moreover, "смій Холодного витікає не із прагнення митця до комічного як до самоцілі, а із зображення реальних людських вад, із типових обставин життя" ["Kholodnyi's laughter stems not from the artist's desire for the comic as an end in itself, but the image of real human defects, from the typical circumstances of life"] (Harachkovska, 2014, p. 15). The scientist noted that since his school years, he did

not accept this totalitarian, command-administrative style of management in his native land. He carried this rejection throughout his life. Due to such “audacity,” his works were distributed among the people, mainly in samizdat.

## 2.1 Sociopolitical motifs in Kholodnyi’s poetry

Poetic creativity for Kholodnyi was a kind of manifestation of human rights activities in which he defended the social and national rights of the Ukrainian people. His civic lyrics are dominated by sociopolitical motifs, where politicians are ridiculed for immorality, covetousness, and greed. In the poem “Іноземець” (“The Foreigner”, 1966), the author condemns the authorities for “розвела проституцію біля державного керма” [“dissolving prostitution at the helm of the state”] (Kholodnyi, 2008, p. 117). The author debunks the promising communism to which society allegedly went because “податі ті самі” [“taxes are the same”], “в тюрмі тій самій сидимо” [“we are in the same prison”]. Thus, where is the improvement? In his poems, the poet often defends the right of the Ukrainian nation to its native language and state independence:

Є мова піль, озер і неба –  
та ходить мова та німа.  
Є українців більш, ніж треба,  
а України-то нема.<sup>1</sup> (Kholodnyi, 2008, p. 117)

The statement about the tragedy of the history of Soviet totalitarian Ukraine, resistance to social injustice, and national oppression are not uncommon in his poetry. In fact, about the first collection of poems *Крик з могили* (*Scream from the Grave*), Kholodnyi himself said in an interview with Ovsienko (2010, p. 137):

Це була книжка, спрямована проти національної політики КПРС. Це був прямий виклик... За цю збірку та за інші вірші, які ходили по руках, мене взимку 1972 року й заарештував КДБ [It was a book directed against the national policy of the CPSU. It was a direct challenge... For this collection and for other poems that passed from hand to hand, I was arrested in the winter of 1972 by the KGB].

And the title of the author’s last collection in his lifetime *Сто перший кілометр* (*One Hundred and First Kilometres*) demonstrates the totalitarian regime’s attitude towards dissidents: “У поезії ти метр? / На 101-й кілометр”<sup>2</sup> (poem “Non com’s”, 2000) (Kholodnyi, 2004, p. 115). It is a question of eviction of writers who oppose the

<sup>1</sup> There is a language of fields, lakes and the sky –  
and that language is a dumb.  
There are more Ukrainians than necessary,  
and there is no Ukraine.

<sup>2</sup> “In poetry, are you a meter?/On the 101st kilometre”.

official ideology outside the capital. Such was Kholodnyi, and such a fate befell him as well. Poetry is full of resistance to the Soviet system because of sharp and defiant words that “dissected” and “twisted” Soviet reality. In the end, living in such a society was not easy. In the poem “Дорога до матері” (“The Road to the Mother”, 1968), the lyrical hero complains that he could not come to his dearest person – his mother. Such was the life of a writer who was constantly watched, persecuted, and always waiting to be arrested. However, in his address to his mother, he speaks of the subtle presence in his life of both her and his home, which, despite various disagreements, gave him the strength not to give up but to live and write further:

Світ мені був гірший за вітчима,  
І вітри згинали, мов лозу.  
Та сміявся я Вашими очима  
І вмочав перо у їх сльозу.  
А коли зчинялись хуртовини  
І гукали сови у дупло –  
Нашої старенької хатини  
Скрізь мене знаходило тепло.<sup>3</sup> (Kholodnyi, 2008, p. 130)

The poet expressed his devotion to the Homeland in many works. The lyrical hero of the poem “Повернення” (“Return”, 1958), who was being “знищувався планово” [“deliberately destroyed”], addresses his nation, noting that he is a “branch” in his stem (Kholodnyi, 2008, p. 17), integral part. In the poem “Україні” (“To Ukraine”, 1962), he calls it the engine, which is the impetus that motivates him to action, and all the wires from which “впаяні свідомістю мети” [“soldered by the consciousness of purpose”] in his work and hope. In “Притча про Дуба” (“The Parable of the Oak”, 1972), he emphasises that it is extremely difficult to live without one’s kind and the national basis from which you come: “Як дуб міцний без кореня всиха,/Так усиха людина без народу” (Kholodnyi, 2008, p. 45). National affiliation is one of a person’s basic needs, psychological balance in the community, and socialisation.

## ***2.2 Reflection of Ukrainian tragedies in poetry***

We also find responses to the tragedies of the Ukrainian people in Kholodnyi’s lyric poetry.

<sup>3</sup> The world was worse for me than my stepfather,  
And the winds bent like a vine.  
And I laughed with your eyes  
And dipped my pen into their tear.  
And when the blizzards were coming  
And the owls cried out in the hollow –  
Our old hut’s warm  
Found me everywhere.

The Holodomor of 1932-1933 is a tragic page in the history of Ukraine. The author tells about it in “Балада про Чорну птицю” (“The Ballad of the Black Bird”, 1963), a kind of requiem for the dead, where Kholodnyi recreates terrible pictures: “Групи клав на вози/тридцять третій рочок”<sup>4</sup>, then unfolds a horrible picture of that time on the example of one family. The wife left the family searching for food:

Жінка кинула чоловіка  
І торби на горба.  
Подаруй їй, владико,  
колосочок з герба.<sup>5</sup> (Kholodnyi, 2008, p. 76)

The coat of arms of the USSR depicted ears of wheat framing the globe that people had only dreamed of because, in 1932, they were imprisoned for at least ten years or punished by execution (“The Law of Five Ears”) for them. People were forbidden to have food. Ears of wheat became a symbol of the Holodomor.

Meanwhile, “Чоловік збожеволів/і пожежу вчинив.//До собачої будки/Він дітей зачинив”<sup>6</sup>. Days passed and now “над обійстям” [“over the yard”] is “чорна птиця повисла” [“black bird hung”] and “людським голосом запитала: Чи ви тут живі ще?” [“in a human voice asked: Are you still alive here?”]. Husband killed her, and “до дітей приволік” [“brought her to the children”], “наказав їм її зварити” [“ordered them to cook it”], “на вечерю запросив півсела” [“invited half a village to dinner”] (Kholodnyi, 2008, p. 76). That bird was the mother of the children and the wife of the murderer-husband. In such a veiled poetic form, Kholodnyi showed the terrible truth because the situations of driving to madness and cannibalism at that time were common.

The poem “Лелеки з Чорнобиля” (“Storks from Chernobyl”, 1986) distinguishes an extraordinary depth of philosophical reflection that is in response to the terrible event of 1986, which polluted the environment, caused an ecological catastrophe and claimed the lives of tens of thousands of people, harmed the health even more people. The poet does not write about the tragedy itself. He puts on the scales, on the one hand, science, inventions, and their creators (“Славте, поети, Ейнштейна і Нобеля./Поставте Марію Кюрі в узголов’ю”), and on the other – a tragedy for nature and the society to which they can lead (“Чорні лелеки летять із Чорнобиля./Чорні лелеки з білою кров’ю” (Kholodnyi, 2008, p. 178)). The image of a black stork with white blood is an expressive personification of the tragedy. The contrast of colours is used for the effect of psychological influence; it forms a visual picture and helps to understand the idea of a poetic work better. The author’s approach to the symbolism of colours is unconventional. White is usually associated with purity, joy, and truth, and black, as a rule, represents unhappiness, grief,

<sup>4</sup> “Thirty-three year/put corpses on carts”

<sup>5</sup> The woman threw her husband  
And bags on the humpback.  
Give her, my lord,  
a spikelet from the coat of arms.

<sup>6</sup> “The man went crazy/and set fire//To the doghouse /He closed the children”.



and death. In Kholodnyi, it is the other way around. The black stork is a symbol of the Chernobyl region, a part of living nature, and the white blood hints at the bird's exposure to radiation (the occurrence, perhaps, of leukaemia – the accumulation of white blood cells in the body). The lines of this poetry are engraved on the bas-relief of a bell in Kyiv in memory of the victims of the Chernobyl Disaster. They make think that nuclear energy provides society with electricity and brings significant benefits but is it worth the potential victims who will suffer from it because the force of destruction it causes is enormous?

The fate of the Ukrainian people has been subjected to many trials. Kholodnyi emphasised this in his poetry, recalling, in particular, two of the most terrible tragedies of the 20th century, which claimed millions of lives.

### 2.3 *The role of the artist and his work in Kholodnyi's lyric poetry*

The motif of the artist and art in Kholodnyi's poetry is embodied through the images of famous Ukrainian writers, such as Shevchenko, Franko, Tychna, Stus, and Sosiura.

Shevchenko is a world-famous poet and an example symbol of struggle because his liberation ideas grew from the depths of national pain. The poem “На Шевченковій могилі 1914 року” (“On Shevchenko's Tomb of 1914”, 1964) is eloquent. It is worth mentioning that 100 years after his birth, a circular of the tsarist government banned the celebration of the anniversary and closed access to Tarasova Mountain in Kaniv, Cherkasy region. Gendarmes with rifles surrounded the grave. Therefore, it is not surprising that addressing God, Kholodnyi satirically writes: “Як його шанувати й любити/з вказівками жандармськими згідно?”<sup>7</sup>. Then, like Shevchenko, he reproaches his compatriots: “На вогні нас приспали лінощі./Довкіл день, та не встали ми ще”<sup>8</sup>, and *шабля* [the sabre] – a symbol of military victory, an invariable attribute of the Ukrainian Cossack, a knight-fighter for freedom – already “заржавіла” [“rusted”] and “не свище” [“not a whistle”]. He mentioned the state of sleep in which Ukrainian society finds itself in a rhetorical question at the end: “Та коли ж наше слово, люде,/Заговорить над сонним містом?”<sup>9</sup> (Kholodnyi, 2008, p. 88).

Kholodnyi actualises the image of the poet-singer in the poem “Моринці. Уроки історії” (“Moryntsi. The Lessons of History”, 1979). According to the title, the author's main point is that valuable history lessons are not learned; therefore, events keep repeating. The applied metonymy expresses the emperor's attitude to Shevchenko: “О, як те Царське мріяло Село,/Аби замовкли в Моринцях поети”<sup>10</sup>. *Tsarske Selo* is the imperial residence; *Moryntsi* is the *Kobzar's* birthplace. And “хоч народу шлях перемело/він не віддав душі за еполети”<sup>11</sup> (Kholodnyi, 2008, p. 181) – again uses metonymy to

<sup>7</sup> “How to honour and love him [Shevchenko – Author] / with the instructions of the gendarmerie according to?”

<sup>8</sup> “Laziness put us to sleep on the fire. / Daytime, but we haven't got up yet”

<sup>9</sup> “But when will our word, people, / Speak over the sleepy city?”

<sup>10</sup> “Oh, how that Tsarskoe Selo dreamed, / That the poets would be silent in Moryntsi”

<sup>11</sup> “although the path of the people was swept away / he did not give his soul for epaulettes”

describe Shevchenko as a poet who remained loyal to the nation. Although challenging, he did not betray the interests of his state and did not turn to the side of autocratic power for the sake of benefits and privileges.

The lyrical hero exclaims: “Я кличу Вас, Тарасе, на пораду,/коли по шию в полум”ї стою”<sup>12</sup>, because he feels the kinship of the soul and similar events:

Ми з Вами переносили блокаду  
і падали за Київ у бою.  
Тікали з покріпаченого степу ми.  
Та снилося не Царське нам Село.  
І звали нас перевертні Мазепами,  
Бо ще тоді Бандери не було.  
Нам цар велів “відмовитись від пози”,  
І простягав лавровий він листок.  
А нам, упертим, нерчинські морози  
Пронизували душу до кісток.<sup>13</sup> (Kholodnyi, 2008, p. 181)

Just like the gendarmes of the Third Division arrested Shevchenko after he was under constant police surveillance, the author with whom we can relate the lyrical hero was arrested by the KGB, forcibly deported to Oster, Chernihiv region, and then watched over for the most part of his life. The lyrical hero mentions the Nerchinsk frosts, which “пронизували душу” [“pierced the soul”], alluding to the place of those who were sent to hard labour in the mountainous region of Transbaikalia (Eastern Siberia).

Relevant lines both for the time of Shevchenko and for the time of Kholodnyi’s activity: “Наказував тримати імператор/по батогу на кожного співця”<sup>14</sup>, and what was more important in interrogations: “першим фіксували в протоколі, поет чи не поет, а потім стать”<sup>15</sup> (Kholodnyi, 2008, p. 181). Finally, he satirically addresses St. Petersburg (Shevchenko was there at his time) with the words: “Пишайся, Петербург, за Косарали/і перший за халявою рядок”<sup>16</sup> (Kholodnyi, 2008, p. 182).

<sup>12</sup> “I call you, Taras, for advice / when I stand on my neck in the flames”

<sup>13</sup> We and you endured the blockade  
and fell for Kyiv in battle.  
We fled from the serf steppe.  
But we did not dream of Tsarskoe Selo.  
And the werewolves called us Mazepa,  
Because even then Bandera was not there.  
The king told us to “give up the pose”,  
And he held out a bay leaf.  
And for us, stubborn, Nerchinsk frosts  
Penetrated the soul to the bone

<sup>14</sup> “The emperor ordered to keep/whip on each singer”

<sup>15</sup> “first recorded in the protocol poet or not poet, and then sex”

<sup>16</sup> “Be proud, St. Petersburg, for Kosaral/and the first line for a freebie”

In the poem “Вмирають поети” (“Poets Die”, 1965), written on the death of Sosiura, Kholodnyi ironically stated: “Поетів не стане завтра/залишаться члени Спілки”<sup>17</sup>, that is, only a formal organisation – the Writers’ Union. The fate of real poets in a totalitarian state was known: arrests, interrogations, imprisonment, and years of silence or even death. Such a fate befell Stus, Iryna and Ihor Kalynets, Svitlychnyi, and many others, including Kholodnyi. The authorities’ goal was to leave only supporters of the official ideology and pseudo-patriots who wrote not for society but for the government. Then the author leads the thought by continuing with rhetorical questions “І як нам з-під криг тоді виплисти?/І хто нас [народ – Авт.] запалить, хто?”<sup>18</sup> (Kholodnyi, 2008, p. 106). Ukrainian poet Sosiura also felt the contradictions of that time, and despite all the existing bans “above”, the motif of Ukrainian patriotism breaks through his works. Against the background of the Holodomor of 1932-33, repressions and executions of Ukrainian cultural figures, he was brought to mental disorders, suffered two heart attacks and, finally, passed away on January 8, 1965. At the beginning of the poem, writer hinted at what the system was doing with artists at the time: “Вмирають поети в душі,/а потім в лікарні вмирають./Ховають спочатку вірші,/ а потім поетів ховають”; “Поетів вивчають діти./І слідчі десь цілу ніч”; “На цвинтар за місто, як сніг,/вивозять на п’ятій швидкості”<sup>19</sup> (Kholodnyi, 2008, p. 105).

In addition, we find a similar theme in the poem “Роздуми на цвинтарі” (“Reflections in the Cemetery”, 1991) dedicated to Chubai who was posthumously admitted to the Writers’ Union of Ukraine, and only after that his works were allowed to publish. He experienced the same fate as many artists of that period: searches, detention in the KGB remand prison and then their constant persecution, difficulties with work and family support, writing without hope of being published, and disseminating already written only through samizdat. “Заспіває у Сибірі пилка,/і замовкне ще одне перо”<sup>20</sup> (Kholodnyi, 2008, p. 189) – this was the end of many dissident writers.

For centuries Ukrainian writers (it happened historically) expressed the thoughts and aspirations of their native people, called for an uprising, and inspired them in the struggle for freedom, despite persecution by the authorities, bans on writing and publishing, arrests, exile, etc. Kholodnyi, one of these poets, mentioned in his works the same writers, emphasising once again that a real artist has a special mission in the life of society.

## 2.4 *The intimate lyric poetry*

Kholodnyi is also a unique author of intimate lyrics. In the poem “Маки” (“Poppies”, 1975), we meet a lyrical hero who falls in love passionately with a chaste young girl. He is fascinated by her beauty and charm:

<sup>17</sup> “There will be no poets tomorrow/ members of the Union will remain”

<sup>18</sup> “And how do we get out from under the ice then?/And who will ignite us [nation – Author], who?”

<sup>19</sup> “Poets die in the soul,/and then die in the hospital./Poems are buried first,/and then poets are buried”, “Children study poets./And investigators somewhere all night”, “To the cemetery outside the city, like snow,/taken to fifth speed”

<sup>20</sup> “The saw will sing in Siberia,/and another pen of the writer will be silent”

Врода твоя, юнко, молода  
До зорі ранкової подібна.  
Я ходжу в солодкому тумані.  
Голова в солодкім тумані.<sup>21</sup> (Kholodnyi, 2008, p. 169)

The image of a female body takes possession of both his heart and mind. He desires carnal love. This feeling pulsates at the heart of the lyrical hero. After reading, you are amazed by the beauty of love, which represents the poppy flower – a symbol of lush beauty. Such love inspires. The soul of the hero is so fascinated by this feeling that he openly reveals to the reader his most intimate desires: “Радість ту, що раз нам подарована,/ дай відчути”<sup>22</sup>. His beloved is vital to him “like water”, “like air for the bird”, and he dreams of a time when “Ми колись осиплемось, як маки./Як червоні маки, згоримо”<sup>23</sup> (Kholodnyi, 2008, p. 169).

In the poem “Медитація” (“Meditation”, 1972), the lyrical hero manifests himself as a romantic lyricist, recalling the subtlest movements of eternal feeling – youthful love. He reflects on the course of life and on how time affects love. Separated lovers in their youth change over time, and therefore the feelings themselves change:

Неначе мєво на толоці,  
Десяток років промине –  
І вже у вуличнім потоці  
Не упізнаєш ти мене ...  
Бо буду вже не той тоді я,  
І будеш ти уже не та.<sup>24</sup> (Kholodnyi, 2008, p. 164)

Unfortunately, the feelings that arose in the beautiful days of youth did not blossom. That is why sad moods are learned in the lyrical hero’s story about how the paths diverged with his beloved. The lyrical hero’s memory of an unforgettable youthful feeling evokes a state of sadness, longing for a beautiful time that has sunk irrevocably into the past.

Kholodnyi’s love rises to the highest peaks of spirituality, then falls and becomes earthly. He writes about earthly and heavenly (spiritualised) love in the poem “...А в мене Рафаєлева картина” (“...And I have Raphael’s picture”, 1978). The Danish

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<sup>21</sup> Your beauty, young girl,  
It is similar to the morning dawn.  
I walk in the sweet mist.  
Head in a sweet mist.

<sup>22</sup> “The joy that was once given to us,/let me feel...”

<sup>23</sup> “We will one day crumble like poppies./Like red poppies, we will burn”

<sup>24</sup> Like mevo (mirage – Author) on the communal work,  
Ten years will pass –  
And already in the street flow  
You don't recognize me...  
Because I won't be the one then,  
And you will no longer be the one.

philosopher and theologian, the founder of existentialism, Søren Kierkegaard, fell in love and got engaged to Regina Olsen. After some time, he became disillusioned with her, and they separated within a year. Regina married Frederic Schlegel, who later became the Danish governor of the Antilles. In a letter to Schlegel, an excerpt of which became the epigraph and the basis of the poem, Søren responded by saying that Regina would go down in history as the woman next to him. The lyrical hero condemns his beloved, who exchanged a high spiritual feeling of love, embodied in the image of Raphael's painting of Madonna and Child that "душу закликає в небеса" ["calling the soul to heaven"], to a stable, corporeal and earthly life – a man, a child and "у льодовні свіжу ковбасу" ["fresh sausage in the icebox"] (Kholodnyi, 2008, p. 179). He is aware that "їй незрозуміла ця картина" ["she does not understand this picture"] and "не треба" його "небеса" ["she does not need" his "heaven"] (Kholodnyi, 2008, p. 180).

The poet expresses intimate feelings with extreme sincerity and insight, full of extraordinary emotionality. His poetry "breathes" these living human feelings, full of intimate motifs, reflecting the various facets of the spiritual and corporeal in love. However, there is no idealisation of love, which is reflected as it is in everyday life.

## Conclusion

Kholodnyi is a representative of the branch of the Sixties, which is defined as dissent due to the political views of its representatives that differ significantly from those officially established. They were subject to repression and persecution by the authorities. He also suffered such persecution. Nevertheless, the poet did not petrify but remained a subtle lyricist in his soul, confirmed by his intimate poetry.

In his works, he also raises pressing socio-historical, political, moral and ethical, economic, and environmental issues dictated by the reality of the time. His poetry attempts to understand the events that reproduce the historical truth of the life of Soviet society, in particular, the Ukrainian intelligentsia, which was not indifferent to the fate of their Homeland. It is full of satire and indignation against the oppression of society and the destruction of a self-sufficient nation, special tragedy in the depiction of paradoxical and absurd Soviet reality, deep feelings and worries about the fate of Ukraine and its people, the struggle for the right and necessity of independence of the Ukrainian nation, calls to awaken national consciousness.

A more detailed study of the artistic system of motifs, imagery, and symbols, features of Kholodnyi's individual style compared with other dissident poets is a promising line of further exploration and even deeper analysis.

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