

ISCKMC 2020**International Scientific Congress «KNOWLEDGE, MAN AND CIVILIZATION»****MOTIVE OF DEATH AS AN INDICATOR OF HUMAN VALUES IN
RUSSIAN LITERATURE**

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Abstract

The relevance of the studied subject is connected with the fact that changes in modern public consciousness manifest themselves in the death phenomenon reconsideration more obviously. The article is aimed at identifying the way the ideas of the death as that of the "quietus", traditional for the Russian medieval mentality, are transformed in literature of the XX century. The leading approach to research of the subject is a cultural and historical approach, connecting the functioning of the death-quietus image in the literature with its public consciousness perception of the different historical periods in attempt to reveal both – a certain national and cultural invariant, and historical and cultural options. The main results of the article assume the solution of the following research objectives: to give the characteristics and the analysis of the death-quietus ideas evolution in the Russian literature, beginning with its origins to the extent of the XXI century. Understanding the situation of death by the heroes of Russian literature allows us to identify the nature of their life values. Materials of the paper can be useful in terms of its theoretical aspect: in terms of further methods development of the interdisciplinary analysis of human life essential phenomena. The attempts to outline the picture of death-quietus image evolution in the historical and cultural aspect also appear significant.

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1. Introduction

Among the reasons having impact on the process of reconsideration of the death phenomenon today it is possible to designate the transformation of religiousness nature which develops into the mystical mood, defining no thinking and behavior of an individual; the change of generations' quantitative ratio reflected in the Earth population's "greying"; complicated relationship between individual and mass consciousness of a person. At the same time, the attributes of death are widespread in modern mass culture, especially in the youth subculture.

The interest in the phenomenon of death is evidenced by the publication of monographs devoted to this topic (Khapaeva, 2017; Penfold-Mounce, 2018), articles in specialized magazines (Foltyn, 2008) and thematic blocks in literary magazines.

The idea of the death evolution in public consciousness finds reflection in literature as well. One of the modern researchers, Krasilnikov (2011), whose thesis, articles and monograph examine this aspect in a versatile way, reasonably specifies, "the fiction is one of the main sources of thanatological information. Based on the author's inspiration and revelation, it enables to hear echoes of thanatological experience of the last generations, to try various models of the attitude towards death and the other world" (p. 163).

2. Problem Statement

In Krasilnikov's (2011) thesis the experience of the death issue research accumulated by literary criticism is generalized and issues of "semantics, representation and thanatological motives functioning in fiction" are considered in the interdisciplinary aspect. The researcher characterizes the formation of humanitarian thanatology as a scientific discipline, designating literary thanatology as its part. Considering the way of the thanatological motives' functioning, based on wide material of the Russian literature, it certainly raises a problem of their evolution. However, the works of the second part of the XX century have not been examined.

The motive for death in Russian literature is becoming an object of study in the articles of Lipovetskiy (2000) and Kim (2015). However, they also turn to works written in the first half of the twentieth century. We believe that it is necessary to expand the research material by attracting works of Russian literature of the second half of the twentieth century.

Throughout ten centuries of the Russian literature existence the appeal to the death scenario allowed authors to see the true human nature and estimate the importance of its existence. Consequently, in the literature of the twentieth century, the attitude of heroes to death (one's own and another's) also allows revealing their spiritual potential.

3. Research Questions

The study is based on the works of Russian literature of the second half of the twentieth century. It is important that the works of writers with different philosophical and aesthetic positions were studied. The material of the study was the work of writers of the "thaw" period (Y. Kazakov), "village prose"

(V. Shukshin) and the “urban story” of the 1980s, “naturalistic realism” (O. Ermakov, O. Pavlov) and post-realism (M. Paley, A. Dmitriev, Yu. Ryashentsev, A. Melikhov) at the end of the 20th century.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the work is to identify how the ideas of death, traditional for the Russian medieval mentality, are transformed in the literature of the 20th century. This will lead to the conclusion about the evolution of moral values of modern society.

5. Research Methods

The semantic method, which is at issue in Krasilnikov's (2011) work, enables to elicit thanatological images' meanings in the works. The historical and genetic method assumes the consideration of the background and evolution of the death image in the Russian literature. The cultural and historical method allows one to show the evolution as the reflection of specifics of the death-quietus image functioning and transformation in public consciousness.

6. Findings

The description of death or the person's behavior at the death moment was one of the most important principles of the person's image due to the attitude towards it being a criterion of the human personality in Old Russian literature. That is why we practically do not encounter the person's birth description in Old Russian texts but we observe an extremely detailed description of death. In the description of the person's death we can see a complete text fragment with its plot – a peculiar plot within a plot with all its elements present (introduction, action development, climax and denouement).

Old Russian literature gives us the idea of the three main forms of the person's quietus. The most representative one in the aspect of the problem studied is the genre of life where these forms are found: quietus, sudden death from an illness, murder. Despite the causes of death polarity, it is, at all accounts, defined by religious consciousness of an Old Russian person and is not understood as the end but as the beginning – the beginning of eternal life, which is the reason for the worldly life to be spent. But the main thing about it is quiet and joyful acceptance of the death by the person who has executed his worldly mission.

The understanding of the death as a natural phenomenon is a characteristic feature of a personal outlook in Ancient Russia determined by religious consciousness. Old Russian literature shows the decreasing pathos of a situation throughout all the development, but mental bases of the death concept understanding remain the same.

Two types of the attitude towards death existed in the Russian cultural tradition. The first type is deeply established in Orthodox Christianity defending the idea of revival of a person after the Last Judgement. It assumed not only the idea of a Christian's true life being ahead, in the next world, but also religious consecration of the carnal life. In literary criticism, it was repeatedly noted that “one of the important features of Russian literature of different periods is a religious idea” (Shchepacheva et al.,

2017, p. 651). The second line of reflections on the death issue is the emphasis on its tragic principle, connected with the searches for the reason for worldly existence of a unique human life. Its extinction isn't compensated with immortality of an impersonal soul. In Isupov's (1994) work "The Russian philosophical thanatology" the first type of the attitude towards death, which is death-quietus type, is associated with A.S. Pushkin and L.N. Tolstoy's works reflecting on the "death religion", which is a necessary condition for moral life. According to Isupov (1994), the implementation of the death idea as a fatality is reflected in F.I. Tyutchev and F.M. Dostoyevsky's works.

In Russian literature of the first half of the twentieth century, the tragedy of death is often overcome by mythologizing the idea of renouncing everything individual in the name of a great idea (Shevchenko et al., 2017). In the second half of the twentieth century when "the space of death was distinctly and inevitably transformed into the tragedy of the universal suicide" (Isupov, 1994, p. 62), the tragic accent in its conceptualization is being deepened. The perception of the death phenomenon includes the association of the death-quietus and the death-fatality images.

Such association is shown, for example, in the works of one of the writers – Yu.P. Kazakov – of the second half of the XX century. It is necessary to highlight that the evolution of the writer's world outlook reflects the processes happening in the consciousness of the Soviet people in the 1960 – 70s lineage. They included aspiration to comprehend the world in terms of beyond personal factors defining the life, i.e. something that can be defined as the so-called "internal religiousness" formation.

The war period childhood, apparently, was supposed to create the inclination of the writer to the conceptualization of the death phenomenon, first of all, in its catastrophic sense. And actually this is the way the image was interpreted in the early incomplete story of the end of the 1950s with the symbolical name "The Abyss" where the happiness of a sudden infatuation has to be destroyed by the interference of death. However, in the other early work of Yu. Kazakov, "Death, where is your sting?" the death sick hero thinks of the true sense of the human life from the prospective of the general existence of people. The fabulous situation of the story is, on the one hand, in many respects focused on orthodox and ethical nature of human life understanding as "the schools of death", traditional for the Russian mentality. However, the name – a changed line from the Old Testament book of the Prophet Hosea which narrates the overcoming of the death – testifies that the writer designates the vector of reflections about the death which became characteristic for a certain part of society during this period. This is the perception of the death phenomenon in terms of the humanity existence in general.

And in later works, for example, in the incomplete story "Two Nights" which was being worked on throughout the 1960 – 70s, the character who witnesses a terrible death of a young girl in his war period youth also spends his life trying to overcome the condition of commotion in finding the higher sense comprehension defining human existence.

In the story "You Cried So Bitterly in Your Sleep", in many respects the resulting work of the writer, a direct correlation of the childhood and death as closely interconnected beginnings emerges. In his tragic thoughts about the last limit of the human existence, he discovers the reasons for the occasional "breakdowns" (the sense of impending doom and senselessness of life incipience) in his initial consciousness shattering in the time of his affectional infancy. There are two contrasting themes in the story: harmony of the infancy and disharmony of the adulthood, which have complicated interaction,

stating a peculiar "equality" of the life and the death. Memories of the friend's suicide are altered with descriptions of the father and his little son's walk episodes. And only in the denouement causeless weeping of the child in his sleep "connects" these two principles. Thus, the personal experience of death as the preparation for a certain level of existence is not as deeply emphasized as the idea of the necessity of reflection on it.

It is also important to highlight the fact that the conscious, "respect" for one's own death, and for the other person's as well, is found first of all in the works of "rural" writers: V.P. Astafyeva, V.G. Rasputin, F.A. Abramov, V.I. Belov, V.M. Shukshin and others.

In this respect, in V. M. Shukshin's story "How the Old Man Died" the moribund, although rejecting to be anointed but having a presentiment of his death approaching, is trying to be properly prepared, thus to face it with dignity, as well as to relieve his close people of unnecessary anxiety. He asks his wife to bring the neighbor to help him move from the furnace onto the bench so that to make it "easier" to wash and bring his body out, refuses chicken broth as it will not help him anymore, and he could not let a hen die in vain. Besides, this chicken could serve as a payment to the one who will agree to dig a grave in severe cold. The old man worries that the death has found him at the wrong time for his old woman to find a grave-digger: "who is eager to hollow in such a freezing weather". He also worries about his wife's "living out her life" without him, and therefore advises "to sue Mishka for child support", and leave Petka alone as he can hardly make ends meet. He worries about his clever grandson's future, instructing his wife to pass along the father's last preception to their daughter "to educate the fellow".

Generally, in V.M. Shukshin's stories the death appears as a certain uniting and purifying force. Even if a moribund dies painfully like Efim, the character of the story "The Gleam Rain", the death as if erases all former offenses, social and political contradictions. Thus having learned about the fellow villager's illness, Kirka appears under Efim's chamber window, whom restless Efim once dispossessed and expelled from native places. It is exemplary that Kirka comes not to gloat; he wants to understand the person, whose acts and their motives have always been a mystery. And, with surprise, he notes that if once he also dreamed to revenge for the broken life, now there is only a compassion and regret that he is not supposed to understand and know Efim better. These feelings force the former class enemy to watch outside under the window of the dying all night long, to respond to each call, doing it, he immensely surprises his daughter and the young doctor. It is also exemplary that after Efim's death Kirka leaves the hospital, having forgotten to put on the taken-off cap back that symbolically emphasizes the sacrality of the event. Moreover, warm, abundant rain started unexpectedly as if the nature mourned the deceased. However, the rain was long wished for, the first one that year. Besides the rain at crucial points of human existence is considered a good sign.

In contrast to the "rural prose", in the "city stories" written in the same period, in the 1970–1980s, the death loses its sacrality. For instance, the character of Yu.V. Trifonov's "The Exchange", Dmitriyev, being present at the memorial service, unexpectedly finds out that it is incapable to completely enter the spirit of the event: his thoughts keep returning to the briefcase left in the cloak room, where there was scarce tinned food. It is significant that he is worried about the preserves' safety, standing at the coffin of his grandfather who did a lot to educate the respectable person and whom Dmitriyev loved sincerely according to his own words.

Similar episodes allow one to draw a conclusion not only on the dehumanization of the public consciousness by the end of the 20th century, but also on the transformation of the attitude towards death and semantic content of this event. In the prose of the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century – the death completely loses the aura of the sacrality loses and often appears as an ordinary event, almost like an entertainment show.

For example, in A.M. Melikhov's "Saburov's Trilogy" two situations are depicted, when the death of a certain person is occasionally put to the public review. In the novel "Saburov said so" the tragic death of a lonely old man, taking a bath while his extensive library inflamed, obtains great public reaction. And if Andrey Saburov comes to the site of the fire as he perceives the event as something medieval and reflects on what a person could have been like in his lifetime to be "honored" to burn in the fire of his own books, the majority of the curious was attracted to the site of the fire by the thirst for profit and rumors of the about antiques the eccentric man decorated his apartment with.

In the other novel of the trilogy, "The Humpbacked Atlanteans", the attention of the curious is drawn by the death of the person who forgets his keys and, while trying to get into the apartment through the balcony, falls down. Having witnessed the death episode, Natalya Saburova is not as astonished at the sight of the death as she is shocked by the public indifference. It's obvious that the situations when people conceive someone else's death as an opportunity to indulge their need for entertainment are frequent in the Russian classical literature as well. Let us recall, for instance, the death episode of Marmeladov and Katerina Ivanovna in F.M. Dostoyevsky's novel "Crime and punishment". Both of these events also happen on the lively streets, in the face of throngs of gapers, amusing themselves with the woman mad with grief as in the case of Katerina Ivanovna. However, in the context of the author's position these situations appear as deeply tragic, as for the modern prose, mental entropy appears as the norm of human existence. And in A.M. Melikhov's novel the teenage girl, tenderly rubbing her cheek on the head of the Siamese kitten, sitting on her shoulder, and looking at the brains splashed on the manhole cover, becomes a peculiar portrait of this heartless world.

The similar situation can also be found in the works of the other modern writer, A.V. Dmitriyev. Eventually, in the story "Voskoboyev and Elizabeth" the main heroine, after the tragic death of her husband, hoisted by the fish stunning explosive cartridge, which he used to open his own apartment door where the wife had replaced the locks, is much more concerned by the urgent need to repair the door, than by the funeral management. In the other story by A.V. Dmitriyev, "The Peasant and the Teenager", the soap, recently used for washing a deceased body as a remarkable remedy for foot ulceration treatment is mentioned.

Thus, in the modern prose the death does not simply turn into ordinary, but into a utilitarian event. In this regard it is pertinently to note what way the reflection on the housing issue in the family is wordified by the narrator in the story "Evgesha and Annushka" by M.A. Paley: "The natural order of generations exchange is disordered, old trees ruin an undergrowth, the undergrowth ruins the old trees; they mutually accelerate their short life as it is in the hard soil. Someone has to be dismissed from this unnatural symbiosis – to be dismissed in the physical sense because we are not capable to change the habitat". The dry, the natural-science lexicon emphasizes the routine attitude towards the death. In Yu.E. Ryashentsev's novel "In Makovniki. And Nowhere Else" the fact that the old women, sitting at the

communal entrance hallway, discuss neighbors no more but the way whether it is better: "to get buried or cremated" does not cause bewilderment.

Perhaps, the actualization of the naturalistic tendencies in literature and, more widely, in the art of the end of the 20th century becomes the reason for desacralization of the human life boundary situations. As in the context of physiological approach to human existence, the death appears not as an exclusive event but as one of any live organism's activity demonstration.

It is significant, that there are quite many "natural realism" writers, who participated in military operations in Afghanistan and Chechnya. The mass destruction episodes appeared extremely traumatic for a young, incompletely developed consciousness in terms of the values, which influenced the world view and ideology of these authors.

Lipovetskiy (1991) in the study "Menial job of the freedom..." comments on the works of "naturalistic realism" writers in the following way: "Terrible scenes. The described naturally depicted dismay is not as astonishing as the human immunity to it. The way the blasphemy's quiet appearance is pictured, the way the death is depreciated, and, therefore, the human life. But, is it surprising in the end? It is the war that matters ..." (p. 79).

For instance, in O.N. Ermakov's novel "The Sign of the Animal" the hero, owing to the outstanding mathematical abilities, has become the spotter of artillery piece during the war and finds the fact that other people's lives and deaths of depend on him sophisticatedly pleasant. It is symbolical that his call sign, initially, was the reduced derivative from his surname Cherepanov – "Cherep" ("Skull"), gradually becomes the reflection of his nature. At the final episode of the novel, the character, standing behind the barrier is capable without hesitation to shoot at the recruits, running from the battlefield in horror. Moreover, he also kills his playfellow, the sworn brother only because he considers this situation unnatural.

The blasphemous attitude towards the death is particularly obvious in the works referred to the research on the life out of war. Thus, O.O. Pavlov's novel "The Bureacrat Fairy-Tale" reaches its climax the death of Khabarov, the commandant, who was forced to go to the next town in the strong snow-storm by his inferiors, expecting the money allowance: "He sank in loose snow deeply, so that the snow-storm blasts were not even heard. He fell asleep in the snow calm and warmth, and then, in his sleep, he died without pain, being properly unaware of his death. In this case the senseless death is not as terrible, as the attitude towards it: nobody also noticed the long absence of Khabarov, they came to their sense only when the payment was, nevertheless, brought but the commandant never appeared. And the inferiors did not fear for Khabarov, but for the money they could not obtain without him. The scene of the dead body transportation becomes the apotheosis of cruelty: it was put in a wooden barrel and rolled along the ground as it was easier that way than to carry it, and the vehicle would not pass the snow drifts. Reflecting on this situation, the author notes that the human life is similar to a straw which completely burns down and does not leave any memory behind.

Another reason for desacralization of the death image in the prose of the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century is the fact that the modern art exists in conditions of postmodern with its characteristic features, which are, the relativity, doubts about any values' existence on the one hand and the proclamation of a hero's (and an author's) death, on the other hand, removes existence and non-

existence issues proper. At the same time, today it is possible to consider conventional the concept that the Russian postmodernism is distant from its orthodox variant, and therefore, the appeal to perennial philosophical problems, including, to death issue is nevertheless characteristic.

It is notable that the border between the life and the death is "vanished" in the modern prose. First, characters, having obtained no worthy purpose of existence, quite often reflect on possibility of suicide or even commit it, the way the successor of Saburov the elder did in A.M. Melikhov's novel "Saburov Said So". Second, the senseless existence turns into the spiritual and intellectual death, turn into a certain "eternal rest", into ritualized existence; it, for instance, happens to Saburov junior. in A.M. Melikhov's novel "The Humpbacked Atlanteans". Third, the situations when the no more alive characters come back to the world of the living are quite frequent in the modern prose.

As a result, the death scenario loses its determinity and unambiguity, its manifestations are even seen in the most harmless vital realities. In this connection, according to the narrator's opinion in M.A. Paley's story "The Commemoration", it becomes visible through new wrinkles you find on your face and know that they do not appear because "today you are not in good shape", but because the constitution is infected with time as though with radiation. In addition, it will decay in your very eyes, and that appearance of its Aill flashes in the four-year-old son's question, "Mother, can the dead be cured?" We note that, despite the everyday and cynical attitude towards the death proper, the possibility of one's own "quietus" nevertheless frightens the characters of the modern prose. And the fear of the death sometimes takes queer forms, such, as, for instance, the enmity against the name Klava, which Irina, the heroine of M.A. Paley's story "The Commemoration", had interpreted as the "croaking yawn of a skull".

At the same time modern writers bring heroes on to the pages of their works peculiar pacified, Christian relation to their own quietus. Thus, in the story of M.A. Paley "Evgesha and Annushka" one of the communal apartment neighbors of the main character starts gradually avoiding the vanity of ordinary life long before the death. Annushka, in contrast to Evgesha, has never been especially anxious about the issues of cleanness or "daily bread". And having felt the death approaching, she restricted her vitally essential interests to the jug with clean water. Irina, the narrator, calls similar existence "the rest from life" and "a special case of hydrological cycle". However, it is important for Annushka not to sadden the last days of her life course with petty cares of herself and her body. She diligently thinks about her purposeless nephew named Kolka – the only close person of hers. Thus, Annushka, coming nearer to her quietus, not only as though dissolves in the nature, in its timeless cycle but in certain degree comes nearer to the behavioral model, characteristic for the characters of Old Russian literature, to their conscious asceticism. It is significant that after the death of Annushka, the narrator calls her the righteous woman.

The axiological with narrative and motive structures interchange in the hagiographic works in the description of the heroes' existence in A.M. Melikhov's novel "Saburov Said So" and in that of A.V. Dmitriyev's "The Peasant and the Teenager". Conscious detachment from the way of life, typical of their time, is characteristic for both of the heroes. Thus, Saburov, being a nobleman by birth, devotes his life to the arrangement of former convicts' existence. As for Panyukov, villagers consider him nearly a "God's fool" as he does not drink and does not smoke, does not seek for material enrichment; the only luxury he affords is the color TV brought by his playfellow during the last visit. Peculiar asceticism is characteristic for both characters: Panyukov has lived far away all his life, without suffering loneliness,

and Saburov is constructing his utopian world on the island in the middle of the ocean. It is also significant that Panyukov is educated by his mother on canons of the Old Believers and this, altogether with the intolerable itch tormenting his feet, forces him to remember the protopope Avvakum. The resemblance with the disgraced archpriest can be found in the novel "Saburov Said So" as well: the main character, being occupied with work, sitting at the ocean, often did not notice the small crustaceans biting his feet. The peculiarity of these characters is shown in their clear consciousness of what their purport of existence is, and therefore, they are ready to accept the death without fear and grumble.

7. Conclusion

In modern domestic prose the death image still remains one of the "ordeals" (alongside with love, the attitude to work and to the nature) which can traditionally "test" the spiritual potential of a realistic character.

The possibility for art as the representation of the public consciousness consideration allows one to claim that the transformation of the death motive is associated not only with the loss of Christian values, but also with the mankind dehumanization in general and the misunderstanding of the true purport of human existence.

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