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THE CONCEPT OF “THE OTHER WORLD” IN PANTELEYMON KULISH’S FOLKLORISTIC DISCOURSE

1. PANTELEYMON KULISH’S FOLKLORISTIC INTERESTS: INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Throughout his long literary career a Ukrainian Romanticism writer and folklorist Panteleymon Kulish (1819–1897) paid special attention to oral Ukrainian folklore. The peak of his interest dates back to the 1840s and 1850s when he took several folklore and ethnographic trips around various regions of Ukraine. At that time Kulish recorded many valuable texts and actively used folklore plots and motifs in his literary works.¹ Such an activity resulted in publishing a two-volume folklore, history and literary collection *Zapysky o Yuzhnoy Rusy* (The Notes on Southern Rus’ [St. Petersburg, 1856–1857]). This collection was destined to play a considerable part in the socio-cultural development of Ukraine, since it was the first printed book that used elements of phonetic spelling (otherwise

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¹ On the specificity of Kulish’s folkloristic activity and the role of folklore in his activity in the 1840–1850s, see Vasyl Ivashkiv, “Folklor u naukovomu ta pysmennytskomu dyskursi Panteleymona Kulisha (1840–1850-ti roky),” *Byuleten Naukovoho Tovarystva im. Shevchenka v Amerytsi*, no. 48 (2019): 10-15.

called “kulishivka”). Modern Ukrainian orthography is based on its principles. In *Zapysky* Kulish used an innovative method of demonstrating ethnographic material. For instance, he wove interesting descriptions of kobzars, lyrists and narrators into his book, and by doing so he changed the perception of folk dumas, songs or stories. Aleksandr Pypin² and Vatroslav Yagich³ underlined this specificity in their analysis of Kulish’s work. A German scholar Friedrich Scholz also made a logical conclusion about *Zapysky*:

Kulišs Werk über die südliche Rus’, die Ukraine, stellt dem heutigen Forscher reichhaltiges Material zur ukrainischen Folklore und Kulturgeschichte zur Verfügung und vermittelt gleichzeitig ein anschauliches Bild von kulturellen, geistigen Leben der Ukraine um die Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts.⁴

Folklore texts in *Zapysky* are based on Kulish’s recordings of folklore that he made during his expedition to Kyiv region in the summer of 1843. The young folklorist was most interested in folklore prose, namely legends and stories which would give people’s evaluation of the past events, in particular haydamak movement and Koliivshchyna rebellion of 1768 as their most vivid and most tragic examples. Such attention to this layer of folklore could be explained by the fact that there were no similar collections, as Ukrainian folklorists predominantly explored dumas, historical and lyrical songs. At the same time Kulish recorded everything associated with folk oral literature, including dumas, historical and lyrical songs, folk aphorisms, and even tall tales. Kulish was the first folklorist who was able to feel a poetic nature of an ordinary conversation between peasants. That was why in his manuscript article on the importance of studying folklore prose, *Malorossiyskiye predaniya i raznyye zametki, kasayushchiesya mestnykh primechatelnostey, obychayev i t.p.* (Malorussian stories and various notes on local sights, customs, etc.) Kulish wrote: “We can learn only by recording what people say, and these are often inspirational and eloquent speeches.”⁵ Many years later, Ivan Franko laid special emphasis on the uniqueness of Kulish’s

² Aleksandr Pypin, *Istoriya russkoy etnografii*, vol. 3, *Etnografiya malorusskaya* (Sankt-Peterburg, 1891), 194.

³ Vatroslav Yagich, *Istoriya slavyanskoy filologii* (Sankt-Peterburg: Izdaniye otdeleniya russkogo yazyka i slovesnosti Imperskoy akademii nauk, 1910), 496.

⁴ Friedrich Scholz, “Ein ukrainischer Schriftsteller, Dichter und Forscher zwischen Romantik und Realismus,” in *Zapiski o Yuzhnoy Rusi*, ed. Panteleymon Kulish (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1989), 24.

⁵ Panteleymon Kulish, *Malorossiyskiye predaniya i raznyye zametki, kasayushchiesya mestnykh primechatelnostey, obychayev i t.p.*, bk. 1 (Institute for Arts Studies, Folklore and Ethnology, Department of Archives, Scientific Collections of Manuscripts and Phonorecordings), fond 3-2, item 116, 1843, p. 8.

folkloristic activity in the article "Bel parlar gentile" (Sophisticated eloquence) (1906).⁶ However, this way of representing folklore material was criticized by Mykhaylo Maksymovych, probably the most famous Ukrainian folklorist of the first half-early 19th century, who called it "chatter".

Kulish took interest in the whole panorama of people's life, including common people's views on what happens to a person after their physical death. As a result, he wrote a small cycle of short stories by "an extremely old woman", Olena Dubynykha, who "made herself die" (i.e. was in a state of clinical death) "and saw what was happening to the dead in the other world."⁷ The young folklorist planned to include the works from this cycle into the collection *Ukrayinskiye narodnye predaniya* (Ukrainian folk stories), and that was why on August 31–September 1 he wrote a letter to Osyp Bodianskyi. There he asked him to find a secular or religious censor "for the article *Stransstvovaniye po tomu svetu* (Wandering around the other world) which was remarkably similar to the legends in *The Divine Comedy* by Dante".⁸ We know that *Stransstvovaniye* was not eventually a part of *Ukrayinskiye narodnye predaniya*, but was published in 1847. However, readers got access to it only in 1893. In 1847, Kulish, like other members of the Brotherhood of Saints Cyril and Methodius was arrested, and their printed works were confiscated. Therefore, Kulish managed to publish these materials under the title *Stransstvovaniye* in 1856 in the first book of *Zapysky*.

Meanwhile, the text of *Stransstvovaniye* partially went public in 1845. Kulish's friend, the Polish Romanticist writer Michał Grabowski published his own abridged translation of *Stransstvovaniye* under the title *Powieść o duszach zmarłych* (*A story of dead souls*).⁹ It was Grabowski who called this material "a Ukrainian Divine Comedy". A Russian translation of *Powieść o duszach zmarłych* from Polish was issued in the magazine *Moskvityanin* in 1846.¹⁰

We will leave the textological aspect and the analysis of sources of *Stransstvovaniye* for our further studies, but here we would like to stress Kulish's definition of these visions included in *Zapysky* as some compilation, though their folklore foundations are beyond any doubt. Obviously, that was the reason why the writer

⁶ See Ivan Franko, *Zibrannia tvoriv u 50 t.*, vol. 37, *Literaturno-krytychni pratsi (1906–1908)*, ed. Ihor Dzeverin (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1982), 10.

⁷ Panteleymon Kulish, *Povne zibrannya tvoriv. Naukovi pratsi; Publitsystyka*, vol. 3, *Zapysky o Yuzhnoy Rusy*, bk. 1, compiled and commented by Vasyl Ivashkiv, ed. Oles Fedoruk and Stepan Zakharkin (Kyiv: Krytyka, 2015), 204.

⁸ Panteleymon Kulish, *Povne zibrannia tvoriv. Lysty*, vol. 1, *1841–1850*, compiled and annotated by Oles Fedoruk, ed. Stepan Zakharkin (Kyiv: Krytyka, 2005), 110.

⁹ Michał Grabowski, "O gminnych ukraińskich podaniach," *Rubon. Pismo zbiorowe, poświęcone pożytecznej rozrywce* 6 (1845): 145-206.

¹⁰ "Ob ukrainskikh narodnykh predaniyakh," *Moskvityanin*, no. 11-12 (1846): 140-58.

published this collection several times in his lifetime as a separate literary work.¹¹ Here is what the writer wrote himself:

Поверья о *померших душах* слышал я в разные времена от разных лиц. Они обыкновенно сходны между собою в общем и варьируются только в частностях. Я собрал грациознейшие черты этих рассказов в последовательную повесть о загробной жизни, и таким образом предлагаемая статья получила некоторую обработку, которой обыкновенно нет в нерифмованных созданиях народной фантазии. Надеюсь, однако ж, что моя компиляция сделана в духе народной поэзии и не уменьшила цены игре необразованного воображения.¹²

The narrator Olena Dubynykha is an interesting character. Kulish called her “a renowned umbilical cord cutter in Ukraine, from small Voronizh to Krolevets and Hlukhiv”.¹³ In the introduction to the poem *Kulish u pekli* (*Kulish in Hell*) at the end of his life the author writing about himself in the third person did not only mention *Stransstvovaniye* and its separate plots, but also the narrator Olena Dubynykha herself:

Знана письменним людям річ, як Олелькович Панько, на прізвище Куліш, оповідував у „Записках о Южной Руси” про стару Дубиниху, свою ж таки сповитуху-бабу. Ся так само, як і він, бідолашний, з великого жалю на лихих людей обмерла була і також побувала на тому світі, та ще й у Божий рай провів її старесенький дідусь якийся, троха чи не сам Петро Святий, і що вона таменьки бачила, пропечатав усе стеменими словами Дубинишиними.¹⁴

This description of the narrator can testify to the fact that such stories originate from Kulish’s hometown Voronizh, now in Sumy region, although in his separate publication the writer himself mentioned that he had recorded them near Kyiv.¹⁵

¹¹ See, e.g., *Babusia z toho svitu. Opovydannia pro pomershu dushu*, recorded by Panteleymon Kulish (Kyiv: Typohrafiya H. T. Korchak-Novytskoho, 1883).

¹² Kulish, *Povne zibrannya tvoriv. Naukovi pratsi*, vol. 3, bk. 1, 205.

¹³ Panteleymon Kulish, *Tvory u 2 t.*, vol. 2, *Poemy. Dramatychni tvory*, compiled and annotated by Vasyl Ivashkiv, ed. Mychaylo Bernshteyn (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1994), 645.

¹⁴ Kulish, 644-45.

¹⁵ See his *Babusia z toho svitu. Opovydannia pro pomershu dushu*, recorded by Panteleymon A. Kulish (Kyiv, 1883).

2. UKRAINIAN VIEWS ON AFTERLIFE: INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Like other people, the Ukrainians have taken interest in afterlife since ancient times. It accounts for the fact that they wanted to know what happened to a person's body after death and where the soul "went" – to Hell or Paradise, and what the other world "looked like".

The Ukrainian philologist and ethnographer Oleksandr Kotliarevskyi, who was also Osyp Bodianskyi's disciple, outlined his reflections on old Slavonic views on the other world in his work *O pogrebalnykh obychayakh yazycheskikh slavyan* (*On burial traditions of the Slavonic people*) (1868). He wrote the following:

понятіє языческихъ Славянь о жизни в загробномъ мірѣ было отраженіємъ земнаго быта и его условій: какъ здѣсь одни были свободны отъ тягостей и заботъ, другіе были рабами, такъ и въ жизни посмертной; въ періодъ юности народовъ понятіє добра определяется отношеніями родственными или племенными и не выходитъ за черту ихъ; потому и въ томъ мірѣ, по понятіямъ языческихъ славянь, враги и чужіе были рабами или вовсе исключались изъ блаженной жизни: народная мысль еще не доросла до признанія достоинствъ въ человѣкѣ, если онъ не принадлежалъ къ своему роду-племени, подвиговъ не цѣнилъ въ врагѣ или рабѣ; какъ врагъ – онъ вель злую жизнь и терпѣлъ муки за гробомъ, какъ рабъ – онъ оставался рабомъ. Языческіе славяне были совершенно чужды понятія о загробной наградѣ за земныя горести и страданія: язычникъ уносилъ съ собою въ могилу твердую веру о продолженіи матерьяльной жизни, именно той, которую онъ оставлялъ на землѣ; а какъ нужды были всегда удѣломъ человѣчества, то и загробная жизнь представлялась не свободною и не въ равной степени несвободною отъ нихъ; ибо одни имѣли достатокъ и слугъ, другіе ихъ не имѣли: это сирые души; наконецъ, третьи сами несли рабскую повинность. Нуждамъ усопшихъ помогало благочестивое чувство живыхъ, оно начинало свою благотворительность у постели больнаго и продолжало ее до той поры, пока, по вѣчному закону природы, и само потребовало посмертной услуги.¹⁶

In the early 19th century, when new Ukrainian literature was established, Ivan Kotliarevskyi was among the first writers who described the other world. Anchises, the late father of the main character of his "burlesque and travesty" poem *Aeneid*, "invited" Aeneas to a meeting in Hell. The writer pointed out that in his description of Hell he might have relied on the story by his distant predecessor Virgil. However,

Kotliarevskyi rejected the idea because despite the fact that the Roman poet was "a clever man", but "he, after all, lived long ago. / Now, things are different in Hell, – /

¹⁶ Aleksandr Kotliarevskiy, *O pogrebalnykh obychayakh yazycheskikh slavyan* (Moskva, 1868), 203.

Both personnel and clientele, – / From those that he used to describe.”¹⁷ Since Kotliarevskyi admits that he has no idea what is going on in Hell, he decides “I’m going to consult some seniors/About the Hell, what kind of place / It is, its populace, / As told by their progenitors.”¹⁸ After all, as the contemporary researcher of Kotliarevskyi Yevhen Nakhlik points out, the author of the Ukrainian *Aeneid*

самостійно творив трагедійний образ підземного царства мертвих, спираючись на українські писемні джерела, християнсько-фольклорні оповіді, образи та власну уяву. Внаслідок цього в його вербалізації потойбічного світу змішалися поганські та християнські сенси, через що слово *пекло* він уживає в різних значеннях.¹⁹

Kotliarevskyi extended his own description of the other world into a whole chapter, and his characteristics has been a subject of many papers by Ukrainian scholars.²⁰

Furthermore, some Ukrainian folklorists explored “visions” some people had while going through clinical death, to whom Kotliarevskyi hinted in the abovementioned fragment from *Aeneid*. Here we can mention an interesting publication of folklore texts by Sophia Tereshchenkova.²¹ Furthermore, in the same issue of *Etnohrafichnyi visnyk (The Ethnographical Journal)* one can see a large scholarly paper on the topic by Volodymyr Bilyi.²²

3. STORIES ABOUT LIFE IN “THE OTHER WORLD”: ETHICAL AND AESTHETIC ASPECTS

Kulish’s description of “the other world” begins with the writer’s remark about the reasons why such folk stories appeared:

Желание народа проникнуть в тайны загробной жизни удовлетворяется у нас в Малороссии рассказами стариков и старух, которые *обмирал*, т. е. лишились

¹⁷ Ivan Kotliarevsky, *Aeneid*, trans. Bohdan Melnyk (Toronto: The Basilisan Press, 2004), 85.

¹⁸ Kotliarevsky, 85.

¹⁹ Yevhen Nakhlik, *Perelytsiovanyi svit Ivana Kotliarevskoho: tekst – intertekst – kontekst* (Lviv: Derzhavna ustanova “Instytut Ivana Franka”, 2015), 232.

²⁰ Among others we will mention a monograph by a Ukrainian literary critic and folklorist, Mykhaylo Yatsenko: *Na rubezhi literaturnykh epokh. “Eneyida” Kotliarevskoho i khudozhniy prohras v ukraïnskiy literaturi* (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1977), 169-72.

²¹ Sofiya Tereshchenkova, “Perekazy pro zavmyrannya (Zapysano u Zvenyhorodskomu rayoni),” *Etnohrafichnyi visnyk*, bk. 9 (1930): 97-109.

²² Volodymyr Bilyi, “Opovidannia ukraïnskykh zavmyralnykiv,” *Etnohrafichnyi visnyk* 9 (1930): 53-95.

на время признаков жизни. На расспросы окружающих, что с ними было во время их обмиранья, они, не обинуясь, отвечают, что были на том свете, и рассказывают разные видения, сообразные с понятиями слушателей о наказаниях за злые и наградах за добрые дела. Я полагаю, что эти рассказчики и рассказчицы не совсем ясно сознают свой обман, так как сами они нимало не сомневаются в возможности своих видений. Образы мук и радостей загробных запечатлены у них в воображении с детства; они только приспособляют их к лицам, отшедшим в вечность из их околотка, подобно тому, как Данте в своей поэме сажал в ад и в рай флорентийцев и итальянских героев. Можно представить себе, как сильно действует на простые умы свидетельство старика или старухи, только что возвратившейся с того света. Ужас и удивление не дают места недоверчивости; слушатели на всю жизнь сохраняют убеждение в справедливости фантастического рассказа; и если с кем-нибудь из них случится обмиранье, он в болезненном состоянии мозга легко может выдавать то, что рисовало ему некогда воображение за виденное на том свете.²³

Anonymous narrators started their descriptions of the travels around the other world with the information about the premature death of a local woman's two daughters ("these were very beautiful children, you should have seen them! They were like two God's stars in the sky").²⁴ Of course, the mother was grieving, so in order to console her somehow people brought Olena Dubynykha to see her. Dubynykha was "an extremely old woman who recently made herself die and saw what was happening to the dead in the other world". After hearing Dubynykha's words that the dead children received God's mercy ("God's mother is weaving a sock, and the girls are holding balls of golden yarn for her"²⁵), the sorrowful mother felt better and asked her to say more about afterlife. We have to emphasize that the motif of God's protection of prematurely dead or killed children in the other world is rather common in folklore. It can be proven by an old Ukrainian Christmas carol "Don't cry, Rachel", included in Pochaiv *Bohohlasnyk* (the 1790/1791 edition). Consoling Rachel who is mourning her children killed by the brutal King Herod, the singer addresses her:

Отверзи зѣниці, виждь твоя денниці,
Свѣтящія нынѣ во вышней твердинѣ,
Бисери драгія во вѣнцѣ царствія
Присно перебувають, вовѣки сіяють, вовѣки сіяють!²⁶

²³ Kulish, *Povne zibrannya tvoriv. Naukovi pratsi*, vol. 3, bk. 1, 204-5.

²⁴ Kulish, vol. 3, bk. 1, 204.

²⁵ Kulish, vol. 3, bk. 1, 205. We have to emphasize that Dubynykha never said she had been to paradise – the story about Saint Onysym and his thrifty mother only mentions that Onysym saw from the sky that his mother was suffering in Hell and asked Jesus Christ to take her to paradise with him.

²⁶ *Bogoglasnik. Pěsni blagogovějnyja (1790/1791). Eine Sammlung geistlicher Lieder aus der Ukraine*, vol. 1, *Facsimile*, ed. Hans Rothe and Jurij Medvedyk (facsimile of the Pochayiv 1790/1791 edition)

The material of *Stranstvovaniye* has to be analyzed through similar literary views other peoples had on the afterlife. Old Dubynkha's story about "the things she saw in the other world" has a traditional form:

обычной формой описания загробного мира в средние века был рассказ о человеке, который чудесным образом оказывался в запредельных краях, после чего возвращался к жизни и открывал окружающим виденное им „там”.²⁷

It seems clear enough that such visions demonstrate a connection between the sinners' pain in the afterlife and their activity on Earth, and therefore, in the other world "the devils hurt perjurers' and oath-breakers' tongues, gluttons suffer from hunger, and drunkards are always thirsty."²⁸ In Kulish's *Zapysky* a man on fire is screaming that he feels cold because when he was still alive he did not invite a wanderer into his house in winter and that man froze to death. Another person is suffering from thirst though he is lying next to a well and water is flowing out of his mouth – once he did not let an old person drink some water when it was extremely hot, etc. The rich who had a luxurious life and did not help poor people in the other world turned into skinny oxen despite having access to really good grazing fields. The poor, instead, who "refused themselves their last food and gave it to poor old people,"²⁹ looked like well-fed and satisfied oxen, though there was no grass around them.³⁰

Such plots can be seen in stories of those who could make themselves die in other areas of Ukraine. For instance, a Ukrainian folklorist Petro Ivanov wrote that in the early 20th century people from Kupiansk province (now Kharkiv region) told the following in their stories about the dead:

кто щедро подавалъ милостыню, кормилъ нищихъ и убогихъ, ставилъ поминальные обѣды, тотъ приобрѣлъ для своей души много пищи: душа же человека скупого, отказывавшего нищему въ кускѣ хлѣба и страннику въ кружкѣ воды, будетъ на томъ свѣтѣ алкать и жадать: у нея не будетъ тамъ ни крошки хлѣба, ни капли воды,

(Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2016), 20-21. This Christmas carol and some of its modern variants is analyzed in greater detail in Vasyl Ivashkiv, "Ukrayinski koliady 'Pochayivskoho Bohohlasnyka' (1790/1791) – vid davny ny do suchasnosti," *Slavia Orientalis* 70, no. 4 (2021): 719-21.

²⁷ Aron Gurevich, "Zapadnoyevropeyskiye videniya potustoronnego mira i 'realizm' srednikh vekov," in *K 70-letiyu akademika Dmitriya Sergeevich Likhacheva* (Tartu: Tartu State University, 1977), 4.

²⁸ Gurevich, 6.

²⁹ Kulish, *Povne zibrannya tvoriv. Naukovi pratsi*, vol. 3, bk. 1, 206.

³⁰ The Bible also mentions the fact that well-fed cows symbolized wealth, and skinny ones signified poverty: "After two years Pharaoh had a dream. He thought he stood by the river, out of which came up seven kine, very beautiful and fat: and they fed in marshy places. Other seven also came up out of the river, ill favoured and leanfleshed" (*The Holy Bible* [Rockford: Tan Books and Publishers, 1989], 48).

особенно если и родные скупца, по смерти его, не позаботились устроить для нищей братии за душу его поминальныхъ обѣдовъ.³¹

Stransstvovaniye does not mention the fact that memorial dinners for poor old people were important for normal afterlife of the dead. Kulish vividly describes this aspect of a burial ritual in the other material from the second volume of *Zapysky*. Here we mean the chapter "Funerals described by a peasant in Kharkiv province" where the narrator says that before his death his father "ordered ... to feed the poorest people first".³²

Therefore, such plots cannot seem strange as here we should not see any vivid originality, but the stories had to help people develop a stable idea about laws in afterlife. Fair enough, Dubynykha's story made a huge impact on her listeners and they cried hearing that their landlady's children were in paradise. People knew that those who often visited the other world in their visions "tried to describe what they had seen and in order to do this they used a single possible and available language of traditional images. These images filled the descriptions with lots of sense for themselves and the society, making the described picture convincing and trustworthy."³³

Dubynykha's visions give a detailed description of "dying" and waking up, and the things she saw in the other world were given as a story to her beloved people. The main images of these stories include death that was holding a scythe³⁴ and standing at the narrator's feet,³⁵ and a soul that turned into a bird, left the body and flew out of the window.

Thus, the process of dying is the first stage in a journey to the other world. The narrator describes it as follows:

як прийшла вже міні година вмирати, то смерть і стала з косою в мене в ногах. Як стала, то ноги так і похололи.... Як замахне косою, то душа тільки пурх! Так як пташка вилетіла та й полетіла-полетіла по хаті і сіла в кутку на образі під самою стелею. А гріхи стали на порозі та й не пускають душі з хати.³⁶

³¹ Petr Ivanov, "Ocherk vozzreniy krestianskogo naseleniya Kupyanskogo uyezda na dushu I na zagrobnuyu zhizn," *Sbornik Kharkovskogo istoriko-filologicheskogo obshchestva. Izdan v chest prof. N. F. Sumtsova* 18 (1909): 253.

³² Kulish, *Povne zibrannia tvoriv. Naukovi pratsi*, vol. 3, bk. 2, 205.

³³ Gurevich, "Zapadnoyevropeyskiye videniya," 12.

³⁴ The Ukrainians usually "imagined death as an old skinny woman with a scythe"; Volodymyr Hnatiuk, *Narys ukrayinskoyi mifolohiyi* (Lviv: Instytut narodoznavstva NAN Ukrainy, 2000), 194.

³⁵ Ukrainian folk tradition underlines that if death stands at the ill person's head they will immediately die, but if she stands at their feet they can still get better (see Volodymyr Hnatiuk, *Znadohy do halytsko-ruskoyi demonologiyi* [Lviv: Etnografichna komisyya Naukovoho Tovarystva imeny Shevchenka, 1904], 114). Here it is a hint that the narrator may still return to life.

³⁶ Kulish, *Povne zibrannya tvoriv*, vol. 3, bk. 1, 205.

The motif of a soul leaving a dead person's body is associated with the fact that the Ukrainians believe that the soul of living people (except for witches and ghouls) always remains in the person's body while they are still alive. However, during sleep and clinical death the soul "leaves the body for some time in order to visit and see the accommodation prepared for people in the other world".³⁷ Therefore, everything the narrator "saw" should have a positive impact on her listeners, forcing them to change and live a better life.

It proves logical to compare a dead person's soul with a bird. Many peoples believed that after death the soul could visit its relatives as a bird, and that meant it had obvious connections with the underworld. Even now we often say that a soul "flies away". One of the most convincing proofs of this can be found in the work by a Ukrainian folklorist Philareth Kolessa entitled *Balada pro dochku-ptashku v slovianskiy narodniy poezii* (*A Ballad about a Daughter-Bird in Slavonic Folk Poetry*), published in the Polish journal *Lud słowiański*.³⁸ As the researcher pointed out, illustrating his views with numerous examples from folklore of Western and Eastern Slavs, the motif of a woman turning into a bird, namely a cuckoo, had a long history:

на слов'янському ґрунті піддержувала й давня віра в метемпсихозу, що душа вмираючого виходить із тіла у постаті пташки та що померлі являються живим у виді птиць, особливо зозулі; тому ж і кування зозулі в українській народній поезії завжди сумне й жалісне; поява й кування зозулі толкується не раз, як заповідь нещастя, смерті в родині.³⁹

Sins play an important role in the processes of "dying" and the soul flying away to the other world. Dubynykha's story tells us that the sins were standing on the threshold and did not let the soul leave through the door. We suppose this underlines the fact that the narrator did not go to a confession before her clinical death, and the priest could have freed her soul from the sins. Thus, the "dying" woman's soul decided "to outwit" the sins and flew out of the window which happened to be open.

³⁷ Ivanov, "Ocherk," 248.

³⁸ Filaret Kolessa, "Balada pro dochku-ptashku v slovianskiy narodniy poezii," *Lud słowiański* 3, no. 2 (1934): B147-185; see also Kolessa's continuation of this theme in *Lud słowiański* 4, no. 1 (1938): B1-26; as well as the Kyiv edition of Filaret Kolessa's "Balada pro dochku-ptashku v slovianskiy narodniy poezii" (reprint), in *Folklorystychni pratsi*, ed. Oleksiy Dey (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1970), 141.

³⁹ Filaret Kolessa, "Balada pro dochku-ptashku v slovianskiy narodniy poezii" (reprint), in *Folklorystychni pratsi*, ed. Oleksiy Dey (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1970), 141. The second book of Kulish's *The Notes* includes a short legend about twins who turned into birds before they could die; the boy turned into a nightingale, and the girl became a cuckoo. See his *Povne zibrannia tvoriv*, vol. 3, bk. 2, p. 33.

The road appears to be another key element in the stories about afterlife. While treading on the road, Dubynykha met sinners who suffered for the sins they had committed in their lifetime. The woman heard a description of these sufferings from her guide who was taking her to the other world as a poor old man.

Through the image of a road Kulish describes the structure of the other world, and in his materials it has at least three planes. First, the soul of the "dead" woman "walks across the field, feeling light and easy as if it has just been born"⁴⁰ (so, it is still on earth). An old man (we have mentioned it before, according to Kulish that could have been Peter the Apostle) and then sees two dogs fighting accompany the soul. The guide explains to Dubynykha that those are two brothers who did not only argue, but "even fought seriously walking in the steppe".⁴¹ Thus, God turned them into dogs, and a mysterious Martyrymian, testimonies of whom Kulish had been trying to find for a long time, was supposed to free those brothers from their mutual hostility. At that time the writer was working on his poem "*Kulish u pekli*", and in his letter to Oleksandr Barvynskyi on July 28, 1889 Kulish wrote:

I've been asking my old time bards about Martyrymian for quite a while, but I wasn't able to find out anything. If we suppose that it was Martyn Rymliany, so maybe it was Martyn from Olkusz, a renowned professor from Kraków academy who was famous for his project of a new calendar, later named Gregorian calendar. From Kraków his fame glorified the Roman union and converted students into it: this might have presented a big obviously traveled to Kyiv, and even before Petro Mohyla there were such people who Byzantine reformer Martyn Rymliany as *spem magnum futuri* to uneducated people. But who knows how it was in reality!⁴²

It has to be noted that Grabowski's translation claims that these merchant brothers turning into dogs will bite each other "until somebody comes to save them."⁴³ In contrast, the Russian text mentions Martyn Rymliany: "Let them turn into dogs and let them bite each other until Martyn Rymliany arrives."⁴⁴

Therefore, having overstepped the locus of border (in our case it was a window), the "dying" woman came to a field which is appropriately called an otherworldly element, though still being located on earth.

⁴⁰ Kulish, *Povne zibrannya tvoriv*, vol. 3, bk. 1, 205.

⁴¹ Kulish, 206.

⁴² Oleksandr Barvynskyi, *Spomyny z moho zhyttia*, compiled by Albina Shatska and Oles Fedoruk (Kyiv: Smoloskyp, 2004), 208.

⁴³ Grabowski, "O gminnykh ukrainskikh podaniach," 197.

⁴⁴ "Ob ukrainskikh narodnykh predaniyakh," 157.

On the one hand, the field is close to a Ukrainian peasant's mindset, and on the other hand, it is connected with the idea of an open, infinite space that is beyond the house and beyond the village. In the binary model of mythological geography that is structured by the principle "one's own vs somebody else's", "the world vs antiworld" and "space vs chaos", the field simultaneously belongs to both worlds, and axiological connotation "somebody else's space", i.e. otherworldly space in its horizontal axis dominates.⁴⁵

Thus, those two brothers who were fighting in the field and eventually turned into dogs testify to the fact that they are still alive and are punished for not living in agreement, and the abovementioned Martyrymian is going to reconcile them. Such metamorphosis of people into dogs goes along with what the Ukrainians believe in. The second volume of *Zapysky* includes a short cycle of folk stories about transformations, e.g. *Prevrashcheniye v vovkulaku* (Turning into a werewolf).⁴⁶ In her fairy drama *Lisova pisnia* (The forest song), Lesia Ukrayinka used a motif of a person turning into a werewolf and back to a human;⁴⁷ Circe, the ruler of the enchanted island Aeaëa, turned people of different nationalities into animals.⁴⁸

The next step of the journey is the other world itself, where Dubynykha's soul found itself after going down a deep hole whose bottom could not be seen from earth. That was the place for the dead people's souls. Kulish's leitmotif for his stories about the afterlife of good and sinful people was a folk saying: "This world is like poppy blossom – it blooms during the day and falls down at night!"

In general, the Ukrainians have different locations for the other world. For instance, in Kotliarevskyi's *Aeneid* Aeneas and Sivilla's journey to Hell lay through a hole in a high mountain, actually on earth: "All of a sudden, they had found / A big hole in the ground. / They promptly jumped down into it. / They walked in darkness and/Aeneas held Sivilla's hand/Lest he should fall down into a pit. / The street, which led to Hell / Was stinking, very muddy, / And in broad day the smell / Was bad, the smoky air looked ruddy."⁴⁹ This road led to the other world, but in order to get there one had to cross the Styx River.

The folklorist Petro Ivanov wrote that common people from Kupiansk province were not always unanimous in their directions to the place where dead people's

⁴⁵ Olesya Naumovska, "'Pole' yak lokus potoybichehya v ukrayinskiy nekazkoviy prozi," *Visnyk Kyivskoho natsionalnoho universytetu imeni T. Shevchenka. Literaturoznavstvo, movoznavstvo, folklorystyka* 1 (2017): 72.

⁴⁶ Kulish, *Povne zibrannya tvoriv. Naukovi pratsi*, vol. 3, bk. 2, 34.

⁴⁷ Lesia Ukrayinka, *Povne akademichne zibrannya tvoriv u 14 t.*, vol. 3, *Dramatychni tvory, 1909–1911*, ed. Tetyana Danylyuk-Tereshchuk (Lutsk: Volynskyy natsionalnyi universytet imeni Lesi Ukrayinky, 2021), 309-10.

⁴⁸ Kotliarevsky, *Aeneid*, 113-14.

⁴⁹ Kotliarevsky, 85-86.

souls were. For instance, some believe that Paradise is located in Heaven, but separately from where God is, others claim that Paradise is on earth and either looks like "a row of lavishly decorated rooms" or "a beautiful garden filled with various fruit trees, aromatic flowers and glittery singing birds".⁵⁰

When it comes to Hell, the Ukrainians from Kupiansk province also have no unanimity. Relying on his field materials, Ivanov wrote the following:

души грѣшниковъ и до страшнаго суда попадають в адъ, который находится на западѣ въ бездонной пропасти съ неугасаемымъ огнемъ, тамъ же будутъ мучиться грѣшники и послѣ страшнаго суда. Впрочемъ нѣкоторые отличаютъ адъ (пекло), мѣсто мученій душъ до страшнаго суда, отъ ада (геенны огненной) мѣста мученій грѣшниковъ послѣ страшнаго суда. Въ первомъ, расположенномъ на югѣ или на западѣ подъ землею и состоящемъ из множества отдѣленій съ различными приспособленіями для мученій грѣшныхъ душъ, послѣднія иногда получаютъ временное облегченіе, именно въ то время, когда на землѣ совершается поминованіе ихъ. Кромѣ того, есть указаніе, что души въ пеклѣ непостоянно голодаютъ; что ихъ тамъ даже кормятъ, правда, кормятъ приличной мѣсту пищей – золою (попиломъ); между тѣмъ в адѣ ждетъ грѣшниковъ мука вѣчная, безконечная.⁵¹

Having descended into a deep hole, Dubynykha saw sinners' pain and told her fellow villagers about it. However, she failed to mention any details on how and when she saw her landlady's deceased children, and Dubynykha learned from her guide to the underworld that their old churchwarden Onysym was in Paradise.

This level might have been hell, although it can be perceived as a purgatory (the narrator still defined it as "the other world") since in that part of the underworld there also are poor people helping the needy, and the dead were staying in special places:

усе по статтям: молодій в молодій статі, а старій в старій, і хто як на сім світі заслужив, те й на тім світі приймає. Хто старцям милостиню подавав, то все те перед їм і лежить: чи шматок хліба, чи кільце ковбаски, чи сала кришеник, то все так на столах перед ними й лежить; а хто не давав, то так сидять.⁵²

As we can understand from Dubynykha's story furthermore, there is another hole, obviously Hell itself ("hell on fire"), which we can read about in Ivanov's material above. The "dying" woman even stepped on an unsteady footbridge over such a deep abyss "having no visible bottom". This part of the other world is only characterized by the words "it is noisy there, as if something is boiling

⁵⁰ Ivanov, "Ocherk," 254.

⁵¹ Ivanov, 254-55.

⁵² Kulish, *Povne zibrannya tvoriv. Naukovi pratsi*, vol. 3, bk. 1, 206.

in a cauldron”.⁵³ The guide did not let Dubynykha fall there because she had to come back to the living people and tell them about sinners’ pain here:

ще тобі не пора туди: ще ти вернешся на той світ. Багато там людей погубля свої душі то лайкою, то бійкою, то скнаростю, то кражею, то душогубством безбожним. Отже, як вернешся, – каже, – то гледи міні, розкажи людям про все, що тут бачила; нехай вони знають, що то за муки пекельнії, нехай пам’ятають на праведний суд Божий; бо вже, – каже, – мученик Іван у Києві в печерах по шию в землі стоїть; а як увійде зовсім у землю, тогді ніколи буде каятсья!⁵⁴

As it was mentioned above, people suffer in hell, repenting mainly their common earthly sins. For example, the rich suffer for not helping the poor; a man is freezing in fire because he did not let a freezing wanderer inside his house; a reaper is dying of thirst, though he is lying next to a well and a stream is flowing out of his mouth – he did not give a thirsty man water to drink when it was extremely hot. Therefore, such stories seem rather laconic and informative, and the narrator knows none of the people she is telling a story about. Instead, when she saw her fellow villagers there, her narration became livelier, turning into a short story.

In particular, there is an interesting story about their village churchwarden, righteous Onysym,⁵⁵ who was in paradise after death because he gave food to the old and helped the poor. His mother, however, was rather rich and tight-fisted, so she was suffering in hell. When she was still alive the woman did only one righteous thing – she gave a poor old man an onion from her vegetable garden. This onion was now lying in front of her in Hell. Responding to Onysym’s request Jesus Christ allowed him to take the mother with him to paradise only thanks to this onion.⁵⁶ Of course, the other sinners saw this attempt to get to paradise and

⁵³ Kulish, 208.

⁵⁴ Kulish, 208. What concerns Ivan, the Martyr, we can suppose that it could have an association with John the Sufferer (he died in 1160), who “became famous by digging himself into the ground leaving only his hands and head above it, and stayed like that for the whole Great Lent”; see Kulish, 381.

⁵⁵ The recorded variant of this work, done in spring of 1844 by Vasyl Bilozerskyi (his sister Lesia Bilozerska became Panteleymon Kulish’s wife in 1847), mentioned St. Peter and his thrifty mother (Kulish, 377).

⁵⁶ In the Ukrainian philology the plot of this folk short story would often be analyzed in the context of one episode of Fyodor Dostoevskyi’s novel *The Karamazov Brothers* (see pt. 3, bk. 7, chap. 3 for Hrushenka’s story about an onion) and a fable by Ryūnosuke Akutagawa, *A Spider Web*. See Vasyl Ivashkiv, *Khudozhnia, literaturoznavcha i folklorystychna paradyhma rannoyi tvorchosty Panteleymona Kulisha* (Lviv: Vydavnychyy tsentr LNU imeni Ivana Franka, 2009), 285. The text of the story about an onion was also reprinted by the Russian folklorist Aleksandr Afanasyev (see *Narodnyye russkiye legendy*, collected by Aleksandr N. Afanasyev [London, 1859], 130-31). In his time Ivan Franko translated a Serbian folk song *Saint Peter’s Mother* (Majka Svetog Petra) with a similar

tried to flee from hell by "holding on to her skirt and headwear, trying to get out of hell. So that onion did not hold all of them and they fell into hot tar!"⁵⁷

Sinners suffer the hardest pain for not listening to God and killing their parents: the stories about their adventures are gripping and educational. For instance, Dubynykha met her fellow villager Semen Babynets in Hell (he was standing "up to his waist in burning coal like a pot on the furnace"). When he was still a bachelor, he "could make himself die" and saw different sufferings, but when he returned to the world of the living people he tried "to outwit" God. In the other world the main character of the story met "an old man" who arranged young people into couples for marriage. From that old man Babynets received information about his future wife – she was supposed to be the first to dance with him in the tavern, as "she was really keen on dancing". Going to the tavern, the young man hid a stone in his pocket because he had decided that "if the girl is beautiful, I will marry her, but if she is ugly I will take out the stone and kill her".⁵⁸ He did not like the girl, hit her on the head with a stone and ran away. After that Babynets tried to find himself a wife for a long time, but all the girls turned him down. Eventually, he found a beautiful girl in the neighboring village, and she agreed to marry him. However, she turned out to be the same girl who Semen practically killed with a stone – the girl still had a scar on her head.

There was another original story about a criminal who killed many people in his lifetime, including his parents. For his crimes "he carries serpents from one hole to another, and the devils make him move faster."⁵⁹ A priest partly helped the criminal to repent these sins. The priest was still a boy when his father sold him "to the devil for saving his cart out of mud on the road; so he was in Hell, somehow got away from there and became a priest."⁶⁰ The criminal seemed to have received a very unrealistic task from this priest:

Візьми ж, – каже, – ти оцю яблуневу палку; вона міні ще од мого діда досталась; та посади її отут на могилах, та чи бачиш – гень-гень у полі криниця? Ходи ти рано й вечір до тиї криниці, носи воду ротом і поливай сю палку. Коли вона прийметься і виросте з неї яблуня, і поспіють яблука, і ти їх усі струсиш, тогді спадуть з тебе і всі гріхи твої.⁶¹

plot from Vuk Karadžić's collection; see Ivan Franko, *Zibrannia tvoriv u 50 t.*, vol. 10, *Poetychni pereklady ta perespivy*, ed. Oleksiy Zasenka (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1977), 86-7.

⁵⁷ Kulish, *Povne zibrannya tvoriv. Naukovi pratsi*, vol. 3, bk. 1, 207.

⁵⁸ Kulish, 207.

⁵⁹ Kulish, 207.

⁶⁰ Kulish, 207.

⁶¹ Kulish, 208.

Indeed, the apple tree twig started to grow (maybe because the sinner followed the priest's orders really carefully) and thirty years later the apple tree had many apples, all of which were silver except for the two golden ones. The priest told the criminal to shake the apples down, so all the silver ones fell down, but the two golden apples remained on the tree, symbolizing his two unforgiven sins, i.e. "murdering his parents". As a conclusion, all the sinners will be forgiven, but he will not be.

CONCLUSIONS

Therefore, the other world in *Stranstvovaniye* is pictured as an interesting and dynamic world with vivid images. The parameters of this world are largely determined by folk beliefs about people's souls and afterlife. Olena Dubynykha's stories have a moral and ethical sense in the first place, they warn people against sins singling out the hardest ones, namely thriftiness, heartlessness, going against God's will and murder, particularly one's parents as the most serious of all sins. Meanwhile, these folk visions involve extraordinary images, plots and skillful structure, and the topic itself proves to be quite promising for modern scholars.

Kulish continued his interest in the topic of the other world and at the end of his life he wrote an extremely riveting, humorous, satirical and autobiographical poem "Kulish u pekli" (1890–1896), "skillfully using an international motif of a journey to hell and the literary experience of Homer, Virgil, Kotliarevskyi and Dante."⁶²

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⁶² Yevhen Nakhlik, *Panteleymon Kulish: Osobystist, pysmennyk, myslytel*, vol. 2, *Svitohlyad I tvorchist Panteleymona Kulisha* (Kyiv: Ukrayinskyi pysmennyk, 2007), 218.

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THE CONCEPT OF “THE OTHER WORLD” IN PANTELEYMON KULISH’S FOLKLORISTIC DISCOURSE

S u m m a r y

On the basis of *Wandering about the Other World*, included into the first volume of *The Notes on Southern Rus’* by Panteleymon Kulish, our paper highlights the specificity of folk visions the Ukrainians who experienced clinical death had about “the other world”. We underline that such visions are traditional, and the folk narrator’s material is analyzed in the context of other folk (Ivan Petrov’s records of folklore) and literary (the description of Hell in Ivan Kotliarevskyi’s *Aeneid*) stories about a soul’s adventures after death. The text of *Wandering* allowed us to make a conclusion that the Ukrainians imagine the other world as a 3-dimensional space. A field is a borderline territory

that partially belongs to someone, but gradually transforms into a “foreign” (or otherworldly) space in its horizontal dimension (here the “dying woman” meets brothers who turned into dogs biting each other). The horizontal dimension ends with a deep hole in the ground leading to Hell, but also has certain features of a purgatory, since there are people who gave charity to the poor and saved old men and women from starving. Olena Dubynkha visited this part of the other world, saw sinners’ sufferings, a happy and carefree life of the righteous and had to tell the living all about it. Due to the fact that the “dying woman” had to come back to life, the guide saved her from falling into real Hell (a deep abyss) where one could get through the hole. Dubynkha’s stories have a moral and ethical sense, they warn people against committing sins and put special emphasis on the most serious ones. Kulish continued to take interest in the topic of Hell, and we can see that from his further folklore and literary preferences.

Keywords: “making oneself die”; visions; people’s perception of the other world; soul; hell; suffering for the sins; Kulish’s folkloristic discourse

KONCEPCJA „TAMTEGO ŚWIATA” W DYSKURSIE FOLKLORYSTYCZNYM PANTELEJMONA KULISZA

Streszczenie

W artykule opartym na materiale *Stranstownianija po tomu swetu* (*Странствовання по тому світу*), który został zawarty w tomie pierwszym *Zapisków o Jużnoj Rusi* Pantelejmona Kulisza, ukazana jest specyfika ludowej wizji „zmarłych” Ukraińców dotyczących „tamtego świata”. Podkreślony jest tradycyjny charakter takich wizji, a materiał ludowego opowiadacza rozpatruje się w kontekście innych ludowych (zapisy folklorystyczne Petra Iwanowa) i książkowych (opis piekła w *Eneidzie* Iwana Kotlarewskiego) opowieści o przygodach duszy po śmierci. Tekst *Stranstownija* (*Странstownija*) pozwala stwierdzić, że życie pozagrobowe w wyobrażeniu Ukraińców jest trójwymiarowe: pole jako pogranicze, które jest częściowo własne, ale stopniowo przekształca się w „obcą” (tj. niezemską) przestrzeń w wymiarze poziomym (tutaj „zmarła” kobieta spotkała swoich braci w postaci gryzących się psów), który kończy się głębokim dołem w ziemi prowadzącym do piekła, które ma jednak pewne cechy czyśćca, ponieważ są tam ci, którzy dawali jałmużnę biednym, ratowali starców przed śmiercią głodową. To dokładnie tę część zaświatów „odwiedziła” Olena Dubynkha, aby zobaczyć pozagrobowe męki grzeszników, szczęśliwe i beztrudne życie pobożnych oraz opowiedzieć o tym żyjącym. To właśnie dlatego, że „zmarła” kobieta miała wrócić do żywych, eskorta uratowała ją przed wpadnięciem do prawdziwego piekła (głębokiej otchłani), do którego można było również dotrzeć przez dół. Opowieści Dubynkhy mają sens etyczno-moralny – ostrzegają ludzi przed grzechami, skupiając się na tych najcięższych. Dla samego Kulisza temat piekła nadal był interesujący, o czym świadczą jego dalsze zainteresowania folklorystyczno-literackie.

Słowa kluczowe: zamieranie; wizja; ludowy pogląd na życie pozagrobowe; dusza; piekło; męka za grzechy; folklorystyczny dyskurs Kulisza