



# ***Sameness/Otherness: Identity, Time, and Body in Iryna Shuvalova's Poetry***

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## **Abstract:**

The article studies different forms of identity representation in contemporary Ukrainian poetry using as an example the texts of Iryna Shuvalova. Shuvalova's poetry is discussed in a liaison with ideological and artistic changes in a literary process from the late Soviet era till post-Independent times. The article examines the process of identity building based on interaction between the Self / the Other, the private and the national, the female and the male. Besides that, the article investigates interconnections between language, corporeality, and time, which are conceptualized as different forms of identity building.

## **Keywords:**

identity, Iryna Shuvalova, national identity, contemporary Ukrainian poetry, the Self / the Other.

## Introduction

Importance of the national identity problem for the Ukrainian humanitarian space under the current circumstances is conditioned by the requirement of not only an appropriate revision of the past, but also creation of the vision of the future. Taking into account current events, not the Independence of Ukraine, but Maydan and the continuing war with Russia appear to be the true *farewell to the empire* (O. Hnatiuk). Obsessively cultivated over recent years attractiveness of the Soviet and Russian in the Ukrainian information space becomes the past that has to be redefined in order to dispose of it finally. On the other hand, the European project becomes the future as the goal to be pursued. Undoubtedly, it means not only objectivity of the vector of policy or the cultural strategy, but also subjective projections, stereotypes and mythologizing. In this perspective the Soviet is felt as a collective shadow of the Ukrainian society, the reflection of defects and fears that have to be liquidated. Instead the European is conceptualized as an ideal image of the Self to be built. What is important, in discussions of the European identity we can observe the emergence of the controversial concept of the *paradox identity* understood as *to become a European*<sup>1</sup> (Кастільйо, 2014, pp. 446–456).

At the same time, the current war not only places everyone in the situation of the existential choice but also as litmus demonstrates fundamental diversity of the Ukrainian society; in this way ethnic (Crimean Tatar, Jewish, Polish, Georgian etc.), local (Donetsk, Galician, Crimean etc.), social (a middle class, a working class etc.) and other identities are actualized. Moreover, under such conditions, the identity expression means not exclusion (either

Ukrainian, or Crimean Tatar, for example), but augment, creation of the complicated identity (for instance, the Russian speaking Ukrainian citizen of Jewish origin from Donetsk). From this point of view, it makes sense to speak about the hierarchy of identities: supranational (European / Post-Soviet), national (Ukrainian, Russian etc.), and subnational (local, ethnic, religious etc.). Moreover, a consistent pattern of identity creation can be observed – on the one hand, the Ukrainian and European, and, on the other hand, the Russian and post-Soviet.

Identity building is connected with re-thinking categories of memory, heritage, tradition/modernity, the Self /the Other (acceptance/rejection of the Other). The conceptual pureness of these categories is clearly seen when functioning in the publicist discourse, in sociological, political or cultural domains as the direct position of the author. Therefore, basing on the publicist discourse, Olya Hnatiuk has analyzed coexistence and competition of the different identity projects in Ukraine in the first post-Independent decade (Гнатюк, 2005).

However, clear categorization and differentiation become problematical in case of studying the literature that is not connected with the actual moment – in particular, poetry. But the concept of identity (and the national identity as well) can serve as a basis for the analyses of Ukrainian poetry. Here are some questions concerning the problem of extracting of this concept from the poetic texts. In what way the problem of identity is outlined in a poetic text? Can we speak about generation peculiarities of identity representation in the texts of several authors? What are characteristics of a literary process observed particularly through the prism of changes in the identity representation? In this article, I propose to examine these questions through analyzing the poetic texts of Iryna Shuvalova – the author debuting in 2011 with her first collection *Ran*.

## Identity as a Project

This paper is a part of a wider study that investigates consistent patterns of national identity representations in contemporary Ukrainian poetry since the 70s. That was when the emergence of the Kyiv School of Poetry and the Lviv Circle signaled about a decisive break with the tradition of Socialist Realism. The fact is, for the 60s generation the national was the natural part of the Soviet, but for the 70s and 80s generations the national existed beyond or rather above the Soviet as a non-official part of the cultural space (not least for the reason of the prohibition of printing for some representatives of the 70s generation).

First of all, an appeal to the problem of identity in the Soviet empire was conditioned by a desire of a human being to save the private territory of his (her) life in circumstances of a total control and manipulation. This total control (M. Foucault has applied the term *panopticon*, invented by J. Bentham, for describing the situation of destroying of the private space through total obsessive watching) indicates the situation of erosion of private and public space verges, whereas manipulation means unsteadiness of ethic, axiological, and worldview coordinates of the human existence. Accordingly, building of identity signifies foremost the search of fulcrum in the inverted world of obsessive watching and a total control. Besides that, the national identity was the only way for the 80s generation to form their otherness in the homogenizing space of the empire: according to Smith, *nationalism became a vehicle for rapid social changes, for mobilizing people, for claiming a 'homeland' by redrawing the map* (1999, p. 61).

Consequently, it is important to clarify the term “national identity”. In this context the definition of a nation by Smith seems to be the most appropriate: the nation is *a named and self-defined human community whose members*

*cultivate shared myths, memories, symbols, values, and traditions, reside in and identify with a historic homeland, create and disseminate a distinctive public culture, and observe shared customs and common laws* (2008, p. 34). In other words, the first and most important characteristic of the nation for Smith is its cultural determination. Moreover, the nation may be defined more precisely as a cultural project (Ivan Lysyy), forasmuch as the nation is not inalterable, and it constantly creates and re-signifies itself (Lysyy, 2013, p. 49). Out of this, the nation is a project of not only shaping and re-shaping of the past, but also forming the future (Ibid., p. 30). In that perspective, the national identity may be defined as *the continuous reproduction and reinterpretation of the pattern of values, symbols, memories, myths, and traditions that compose the distinctive heritage of nations, and the identification of individuals with that pattern and heritage* (Smith, 2008, p. 34).

On the one hand, the problem of identity (from Latin: *identitas* as sameness) is drawn first of all as the search of the base of continuity and sameness of the Self over time. On the other hand, the identity project includes the comparison of the Self with the Other resulted in differentiation as well. As Lysyy (2013, p. 28) has claimed, identification in the same time is a process of verification of sameness with somebody in something and differentiation (and even contradistinction) of the Self and the Other in something; besides that, it is identification of the Self with the Self, caused by determinative permanent self-instability. Despite the fact that identity in the modern world can be defined as instable or *troubled* (Leonidas Donskis) by the reason of identification with many different groups, in the Soviet empire the idea of the national identity was the only way of an anti-colonial resistance. This idea allowed people to identify themselves with their national tradition and, more

<sup>1</sup> Here and further in this article, Ukrainian texts are translated by Iryna Borysiuk.

precisely, retrieved the national worldview; moreover, it allowed separating someone's national identity from the identity of a Soviet man. According to Dariush Skurchevski, *nationalistic aspirations of the Central and Eastern Europe societies subordinated to the Soviet hegemony till 1989 had the anti-colonial basis* (Скурчевський, 2014, p. 127); properly speaking, we can extrapolate Skurchevski's deduction to the Ukrainian situation.

Zygmunt Bauman has said, that *identity is revealed to us only as something to be invented rather than discovered; as a target of an effort, "an objective"; as something one still needs to build from scratch or to choose from alternative offers...*" (2004, p. 16); in this way identity is regarded not only as a speculative and even illusive phenomenon, but also as an incomplete project. According to Donskis, *modern identity is inevitably not only inherited but also more frequently consciously and freely constructed* (2009, p. 6). Lysyy has claimed, that there are two important aspects concerning the problem of the national determination of a culture: on the one hand, objective features of a culture as a national phenomenon and, on the other hand, national and cultural self-determination and a personal choice of subjects of a culture (2013, p. 20).

Under the circumstances of the colonial oppression, cultural and national self-determination can be drawn as a moral choice – to be the part of the colonizing or colonized culture (as the German Yuriy Schneider has chosen to be the Ukrainian Yuriy Sherekh-Sheveliov). In the Soviet Union with its policy of corroding of a national memory, identification with the national culture tradition meant, first of all, discovery and implementation of this tradition. As for the term, the definition of tradition by Lysyy seems to be the most appropriate: a tradition is an actualized heritage; a heritage as an everlasting part of the past is preserved in a passive memory of successors, but, being

selected, comprehended, and actualized in the active memory, a heritage becomes a tradition (2013, p. 142). According to Lysyy, a tradition exists in the form of a dialog of the present with the past, and in this way a tradition is structuring and shaping modernity (2013, p. 142). As for the substantial aspects of tradition, it is important to interpret it not only as a narrative, a coherent sequence of facts, but also as a way of thinking and representation connected with the specific national worldview, which is defined by Georgy D. Gachev as *Cosmo-Psykho-Logos* (Gachev, 2007).

In this perspective the differentiation of history and memory made by Pierre Nora seems to be the most accurate. According to Nora, the collective memory is a complex of conscious or unconscious memories about experience which can be transformed into the myth by a social (ethnic, religious and so on) group whose identity is connected with a feeling of the past (2014, p. 188). On the contrary, the historical memory is always unified; it becomes official resulted in the scholar tradition (*Ibid.*, p. 189). Clearly, in this case a history in the Soviet time can be correlated with an official and institutionalized narrative produced by the Soviet authorities, albeit sometimes the official version was more propagandistic and mythic than scholar. On the contrary, a national memory has been preserving a national experience as a complex of unadulterated and veritable, although non-verbalized, facts.

A strategy of identity constructing for different literary generations provides changes in priorities and emphases. It was important for 70s and 80s generations to transpose their poetry to the context of the national and out of the context of the Soviet. That was demonstrated by their efforts to separate a national tradition from Soviet senses. First of all, that was actualization of ritual and folklore matrices in contradistinction to non-ritual folklore songs being a part of the official culture;

that is, Hnatiuk has written about transposing folklore texts in the context of the official culture (Гнатюк, 2005, p. 94). Further, it was an appeal – on the level of worldview concepts, allusions, and reminiscences – to the heritage of the modern poets excluded from the official canon (see Моренець, 2002). Then, it was re-thinking and verbalization of events concealed by the Soviet historiography: repressions, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) struggle, the Holodomor of 1932–1933. In other words, it was an attempt of re-thinking of the national collective experience. The challenge for the 80s generation was not only to re-discover and re-shape the national tradition based on the latent national memory, but also to form the way of its representation. In contradistinction to the 60s generation trying to reshape and humanise Socialist Realism through the discreet and diffident polemic, the 80s generation rejected the official Soviet discourse in order to avoid its rhetoric and hereby cognitive moulds.

On the contrary, poets of the 90s with a great enthusiasm practiced destruction of the Soviet discourse. From here it becomes obvious, that the 90s generation demonstrated rather anticolonial than postcolonial strategy. It should be pointed out that not only the Soviet discourse, which consists of Socialist Realism molds, journalistic propagandistic clichés, fragments of the Soviet mass culture etc., but also Romanticism and Narodism clichés, national and patriotic rhetoric became objects of deconstruction. The cultural space cleared by Avant-garde devices was absolutely free from everything. In some cases the millennial generation adopted ironical and sarcastic intonations of the 90s poets by inertia, but in other cases they tried to re-think actual axiological and worldview vacuum. Nonetheless, these poets have established the interesting tendency that is fundamental for the late millennial poets and the 10th generation. This

tendency includes their reflection on global things through the prism of a private bodily and verbal experience. In texts from the *Two tones* collected poems the bodily experience represented mostly as fragmentariness or hybridity. That is, it indicates existential distraction, instability of the Self verges, hostility of the world. Instead in Myroslav Laiuk's, Yulia Stakhivska's, Iryna Shuvalova's, Lesyk Panasiuk's poetry we can see both an attempt to expand the Self verges as much as possible and reflection on world polyphony through the lens of corporeality. The 80s generation tried to include the private experience into the context of the national, whereas the millennial generation included the collective cultural experience into the context of the private.

## The Self as the Other: Time and Death

A closer analysis reveals prominent and rather significant tendencies in Ukrainian poetry of the beginning of the XXI century. On the one hand, the millennial generation poets complement and elaborate topics outlined in the last third of the XX century, but, on the other hand, they propose their new language, senses, and values. Restitution of the Other and, moreover, re-thinking nature as an embodiment of the Other, having been the specific feature of Lyshega's poetry, is actualized now in the millennium generation texts. For instance, there are the concept of vegetation in Stakhivska's poetry, the mystery of nature in Laiuk's texts, and the language and world organic nature in Shuvalova's poems. Impersonality of a poetic language as a specific for the Kyiv School of Poetry (Моренець, 2016, p. 31) is a dominant feature of millennial poetry as well. Moreover, reflection on problems of language and memory, represented in poetry of Laiuk, Shuvalova, Mamchych, and Stakhivska, is also typical for the 80s generation.

Furthermore, in the most natural way this generation affinity is represented by building of the coherent cultural narrative from fragmental stories, by segments joining, by fulfillment of memory, history, and language lacunas, by outlining of identity. The millennium generation tries to reflect on this cultural fragmentariness, whereas the 10th generation attempts to overcome it. Quite the same as the 80s generation attempting to create the fundamental cultural project, these poets appeal to myth as the universal method of comprehension. There is not only actualization of traditional mythologems and archetypes (it is a specific feature of 80s generation poetry), but also fundamental attribute of myth to be the framework for architecture of explanations, interpretation, and insights, which allows for the possibility of the sensible existence of a human being in the world.

The central point of its worldview for the 10th generation is a concept of vegetation. In Laiuk's poetry vegetation is a way of life mystery embodiment, whereas in Stakhivska's poetry it is a way of language, body, world, and landscape being. Furthermore, in Shuvalova's texts vegetation is connected with time dynamics as well as with bodily and sensitive being of the world. Shuvalova as a poet is interested in life and death collision expressed by vegetation cycle (germination – maturing – withering), human experience (maturing – erotic experience – maternity), symbolic sphere (speaking / silence, waking / dreaming). Time for the poet is a result of this collision manifested by determinant dynamics; accordingly, motifs of changes, transformation, and otherness are typical for her poetry. Therefore, her personal existential experience is forming the vision prism for her lyric personality; thus, everything existing in the world can be conceptualized through the living body.

From this point of view, mythic and ritual life cycle scenarios, and especially initiation-maturing, erotic experience, maternity, and death, provide a basis for Shuvalova's poetry. In this way, through actualizing life cycle scenarios, she appeals to 80s generation poets that have separated the personal and ancestral experience implemented in a living body and its memory from the abstract and social one existing only in language – in the specific totalitarian and manipulative language, which has no referent, as a complex of discursive practices. It is important to emphasize that continuity of the language and bodily experience for the Shuvalova's lyric personality is a framework for reflection on world wholeness and expediency, on the contrary to the millennium generation with their *Two tones* collected poems, for whom a riven body is a sign of the world fragmentariness.

Therefore, problems of time, the Self / the Other relationship, erotica, language, and corporeality are dominant for Shuvalova's poetry. A world in which the lyric personality lives and on which he (she) tries to reflect is neither the ideal home, nor the hostile space. Moreover, this world is neither harmonized and union with the human space, nor the cold and comfortless home for humanity. This appears to indicate that the world is not anthropocentric, subaltern and subordinated to a human being. In the XXI century the bankruptcy of the 60s generation anthropocentric project that has already been called into question by the Kyiv School of Poetry representatives Mykola Vorobiov and Mykhailo Hryhoriv becomes obvious. It is worth recalling cosmic metaphors connecting with a human being, body, and world, which have been widespread in the 60s generation poetry. For instance, in Dmytro Pavlychko's and Ivan Drach's poetry we can see a human being enlarged to a cosmic size. According to Mykola Ilnytsky, *the beginning of the 1960 has brought into poetry the voice of*

*intellect as well as cosmic and industrial realities that become the material texture of an artistic image: from the attitude toward and the view of the world to the artistic image microstructure* (Льницький, 1986, p. 135). On the contrary, in Hryhoriv's poetry the completely uninhabited world that is majestic in its non-tragic wholeness and perfectness has appeared. It seems to be significant that Holoborodko has characterized Shuvalova's poetry as *panopticon of different natural and physiological deviations, monsters, marginal situations in which not human and humanistic, but bestial, dark, and desperate can be shown* (Поезія, 2015). However, I suggest that it is the crisis of anthropocentrism that brings together both Kyiv School representatives, and Shuvalova's poetry. In her poetic world a spring is easily rhymed with a war, and fruit maturity is conceptualized as flower sudden ruination: *as if the wind does is eat the blossom, / as if all the elements have conspired and engaged themselves / in ruining the fragile fortress of living leaves, / filliping seed parachutes for flight* (Шувалова, 2014, p. 33). In this world death is the inseparable part of the universe. However, in contradistinction to the 80s generation for which impermanence of vegetation has been connected rather with continuity of vegetable restoration (a seed's death is germination of a living stalk), in Shuvalova's poetry the fragility of vegetation exists as dynamics of transitional phases and conditions. In 80s generation poetry time is conceptualized as eternity as long as vegetation is rather the idea of vegetable; vegetation is immortal in so far as it is above the time of a single grass blade with its flowers and seeds. In this context time is measured by the individual bodily experience, and this implies an inside look, a thorough scan of the interior space that observes weakest bodily feels as a work of time. In general, this is conditioned by the angle of view: the look emancipated from an everyday experience rises over the

tragedy of a single being in order to see the transition of death into immortality. In contrast, the look immersed in everyday being is watching the approach of life to death with every change in someone's body. Vegetation for the poet is a flower picked by the wind, but not the abstract principle of vegetation as eternal continuity.

From here it becomes obvious, that extremity, pressure, and redundancy are central characteristics of time as finitude but not eternity. The sharp feeling of a lost caused by being in time provokes not only reckless resistance to time the monstrous killer (in this context motifs of hunting, dueling, fighting are rather typical), but also memory work as an attempt to remove moments of wholeness and advisability from the destructive flow of time. It follows that in this regard the vegetation code is the most appropriate as much as a winter and autumn are conceptualized as cropping of summer bounties: *is there anything heavier than drunken peonies' heads / slanted to the honey of the golden giant summer / than lazy hills occupied by the swarm of bumblebees / it all went away it all passed away none of this ever happened none of this will be* (Шувалова, 2014, p. 100), *October has dipped his broken finger in bile / and counted us wearing summer clothes / and determined for everyone the long separate way / in the joint stubborn winter in the empty space / children are learning to count on cranes / that will bring them a strange adulthood in spring* (Ibid., p. 101), *Is it so much to ask? / If only precision reapers / would wait with their sickles and scythes / and then we will perhaps wear out / our shirts worn next to the skin*" (Ibid., p. 96). It is essential to emphasize that ritual scenarios and mythologems (a body as the shirt for a soul, *immense roominess of the earth* which is home for life and death, death the great reaper, death in water) symbolizing the cultural memory are the natural part of the Shuvalova's individual mythology which

contains plots such as a duel between the warrior (virgin) and the serpent, hunting the bird (deer), wandering and returning of the protagonist, blossoming and withering of the garden. Quite the same as the 80s generation poets, Shuvalova actualizes life cycle matrices connected with the existential drama of a human being. However, the 80s generation have built the myth with help of the language of a personal experience, whereas Shuvalova verbalizes the personal experience with help of the language of a myth.

The work of time as an approach to death is conceptualized in the plot of hunting. The poet has built wholeness of her own story from the fragmentariness of mythic plots and ritual scenarios, choosing for the base of her story the Kupala ritual of burning wheel lowering (Славянские древности, 1999, p. 367), which symbolizes the turn of the sun to winter at the summer solstice. Embodied in the Kupala ritual, the turning-point scenario: *the sun is hunting deer on hills, a summer is perdition perdition the time of falls, the round quivering world reaches its zenith / the wheel of the song is rolling and spitting sparks* (Шуvalова, 2014, p. 49) is verbalized through signs and symbols connected with this myth (the sun, the summer, the hill, the wheel, and the deer as an embodiment of the solar God (Славянские древности, 2004, p. 545). The deer's shadow over which *whirlwinds of its legs* stumbles as well as *the shadow of the sun* which the deer tries to reach are emanation of darkness: *you will lay down your life for the glory of the day / just reach the shadow of the sun, deer / till the darkness will beat your croup with a lash* (Шуvalова, 2014, p. 50). In this context the shadow is the death that will be reached by every living being. In Shuvalova's personal mythic plot (the sun wings an arrow at the deer) the moment of killing is treated not only as a meet of the living being with its shadow, but also as acquisition of wholeness outlined

by retraction of plural and separate time flows (images of the potential future) in the irrefutable accomplishment. Clearly, this corresponds to interpretation of a natural time as a cyclic and discreet in the archaic cultures: it follows that in certain times of year connected with a solar cycle a time is ruined in order to be born again (Славянские древности, 1995, pp. 448–452).

In Shuvalova's mythology the plot of hunting is in a liaison with widespread mythic and folklore interpretation of death as connected with eroticism. Death images and symbols are erotic in substance (Еремина, 1991, p. 130); furthermore, the death is conceptualized as the marriage with the Goddess of death whereas the marriage is interpreted as the metonymic substitution of a death (Еремина, 1991, p. 132).

In archaic cultures this symbolism is more expressive and clear as long as conceiving is conditioned by the contact of our and their world. What is more, according to Bronislaw Malinowski, on Trobriand Islands a pregnancy is caused by the *baloma* soul penetrating a female body. *Baloma* is interpreted as permeating through the double death: in the world of the living and in the world of the dead where it cycles the full or incomplete life depending on the age of the dead. After his / her second death in the world of the dead *baloma* is born again in the world of the living (Малиновский, 1998, p. 204–205). In the Slavic tradition images of a death and diseases are mostly female; in contrast, in the German cultural and mythic tradition a death is a male figure (Мифы, 2000, p. 457).

This motif is realized in Shuvalova's poetry as the erotic union of a flesh and a weapon, a body and a pain: *the moment of growing the thread into the bowstring / the metal flesh aims to the living flesh* (Шуvalова, 2014, p. 49), *the pain has opened its arms put on the pavilion / straightened the grass scraped the bed* (Ibid.,

p. 49–50), *leave your throat wide open to the halter you have to go / to the dark abyss that will sting the bird with a gold* (Ibid., p. 53), *the thief is catching you like a wagtail with tenderness* (Ibid., p. 53). Besides that, it is an aesthetic attractiveness of a death: *deer the poor fellow do you know / how beautiful the face of your killer is?* (Ibid., p. 49), *the sharpshooter narrows his fiery eye / you see bloody clothes suit you* (Ibid., p. 50), *you are the poacher caballero you are the cunning trickster / and I wear colorful summer clothes / how can you not desire not gain this prey* (Ibid., p. 53). Moreover, this motif is realized as sameness of death and maternity symbolism: *red beads of blood* (Ibid., p. 53), *poppies with big mouths are baying the prey in death / through ravines hollows ditches* (Ibid., p. 49).

### The Other inside Me: the Shadow

The artistic image of a shadow is rather typical for Shuvalova's poetry. According to Carl Gustav Jung, *the darkness clinging to everyone is a door in unconsciousness and a gate of dreams through which these two indefinite figures – a shadow and anima – are going in our night dreams or, being unseen, possessing our ego-consciousness* (1996, p. 262). As Jung has said, *a shadow symbolizes everyone's personal unconsciousness, the lowest level of everyone's psyche* (1996, p. 327). In Shuvalova's poetry the image of a shadow and the motif of falling in a shadow are connected not only with chthonic, but also with erotic code. Out of this, a shadow is a metaphor of desire, and falling is a symbol of sexual appetency: *a summer is perdition perdition the time of falls* (Шуvalова, 2014, p. 49), *here there is a different demon in the every prison of ribs* (Ibid., p. 51), *the little demon / has put his foot in my bosom and is kneading my veins / is twisting long pigtales of heat / pouring fury under my feathery clothes* (Ibid., p. 53). In Shuvalova's poetry love and death are interconnected (in particular, it is correlated with the mythic symbolism) as long as it is not

only the erotic component of death (the poem *Hunting* [Ibid., c. 49–50]), but also the chthonic component of love: *here he is, the insidious thief with a silk halter* (Шуvalова, 2014, p. 53).

Love and death are deeply interconnected by the motif of guests (the poem *Guests* (Шуvalова, 2014, pp. 55–57); erotic and chthonic are conceptualized as entirely external powers to a human being. It makes sense as much as the fairytale widespread motif of a stranger on the road indicates the meet of a hero with a magic helper (Пшонн, 1998, pp. 248–249) and, therefore, the important point of the initiation. In this context love and death signalize about the meet with the Other – with otherness of a new experience, with otherness of the Other. Images of a moon (*the moon is prepared to knead the dough from bodies* [Шуvalова, 2014, p. 55]), a trace (*you can hear the bird keens suddenly / the silk sleeve soughs into the archways / the guest is visiting the sleepy abode again / he has passed through the garden without getting his clothes dewed* [Ibid., p. 55]), and a shadow (*shadows are marking the skin with their thin fingers* [Ibid., p. 55]) appear to be the night experience of a soul. Anonymity of the Other (*somebody hides amongst flowers in the garden* [Ibid., p. 55]) is correlated with a specific experience conceptualized as strange. This experience is brought outside the body (*the moon was laughing and nuzzling a window* [Ibid., p. 55]), and at the same time is deepened in bodily sensations (*I would rather drown to lay low / in your drunken arms only* [Ibid., p. 55]). In the first poem of the cycle we can see erotic symbolism. In the second one the chthonic mythology is presented by recognizable signs: ringing of bells (*copper bells are ringing* [Ibid. p. 56]), putting coins on eyes (*for the road I will took / two ice coins / those which you have put / on my eyelids yesterday* [Ibid., p. 57]), the space divided into two parts – the world of the living and the world of the dead (*oh how stars are juggling / with sabers and*

*knives / they are cutting mountains in half / they are carving rivers in half* [Ibid., p. 57]), impossibility to speak with those who are on this side (*my guests are far away / the yellow wind is pulling / pavilions of drunken wisterias / who do I talk to?* [Ibid., p. 56]), and a long journey (*it is time to go / to meet my guests* [Ibid., p. 56]). A poppy as a flower of death is represented through symbolism of a fragile stalk and a bitter juice: *poppy's hand stalks / crackles delicately drily / splashes bitterly quickly* [Ibid., p. 56]). As can be expected, erotic and chthonic fusion is conceptual; this experience may be described as travelling outside the body and at the same time as apotheosis of sensuality. In any case, this is the experience of perception of the Self as the Other conditioned by relationship with the Other: it is both otherness, strangeness of the body, and the time lag (the time stops or prolongs changing its specific features), and changed self-consciousness in the act of non-identity acceptance.

Shuvalova appeals to plots in which life cycle ritual scenarios (initiation, love, death) is integrated into wholeness. This intention is resulted in Shuvalova's collection *Os* based on intertextuality of the literature in which the process of maturing as well as a collision of childhood and adulthood are inserted – for instance, *Peter Pan* by James M. Barrie, *The Snow Queen* by Hans C. Andersen, *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King* by Ernst T. A. Hoffmann. What is important, these texts for the poet become not the object of reflection or re-thinking, but the base for building her own architecture of mythic plots. For example, the very interesting way of revealing shadow and darkness concepts connected with erotic and chthonic experience we can see in the cycle called *Macabre*. The baroque method of objectification, externalization of the internal conflict is built in the Hoffmann fairytale matrix. The darkness here is not just a satellite or absorber of the light but the detailed world

of a dungeon which comes to the surface right after fusing “to love” and “to kill” in the point of no return. This world is sensually detailed (*the crowned rabble / crawled out at the balls / wearing yellow dresses made of beeswax / and shoes made of tar* [Ibid., p. 73]), and at the same time illusive (*a shadow is rolling onto a shadow / the darkness is dousing all the whimpers* [Ibid., p. 73]), *somewhere in wide holes / rustles appeared* [Ibid., p. 74]).

Balancing on the verge of the visible and the phantom is also conditioned by signifying or concealment of the names: *mouse queens / mouse kings* turn to *those who have no ears no mouths / no bustling paws / those who know you to the touch*. This represents not only the name concealment conditioned by ritual situations, which is typical for traditional cultures, but also the requirement for verbal outlining of things that cannot be named at all. Complexity and stratification of topography of underground / hidden resonate with sophistication of the narrative strategy: gliding (connected not with grammar, but with self-awareness of the lyric personality) between the second person (*know you to the touch / know how you taste* [Ibid., p. 73]), and the first person (*one day I sewed a dress for myself* [Ibid., p. 73]) indicate the feeling of the time lag being an integral part of the initiative scenario. What is important, the bodily experience is always primary even referring to the death. Perverse sensuality is connected with body and cloth images: under clothes (*one day I sewed a dress for myself / and a jacket for my sweetheart* [Ibid., p. 73]), *my sweetheart bought a necklace / my sweetheart bought bandages* [Ibid., p. 75]) the putrefied flesh is hidden (*am not I a wife? / worms have eaten my eyes / and a snake in my belly* [Ibid., p. 74]) as well as named object is hidden under clothes of a word.

However, at the same time phraseological nature of a language is conceptualized as a counterbalance to the verbal collapse

(discontinuity between the language describing itself and the world staying unnamed). Under these conditions the process (the way of naming) becomes more important than the result (the named being). The linguistic strategy is represented in both an approach and eclipse. For instance, stringing and cutting the course of folklore formulae shot (*one day a jay was flying through the garden, one day a little mouse was running*), outlining the semantic aura of a word (the jay's feather is correlated with *a knife*, a slang word; the mouse's tale is connected with fairytale symbolism of death; a knife is *the last needle in the ribs of the sweetheart*), the poet fragments the narrative, but summation of particles contained in fragments seems to be the more adequate than the monolith of an uncrushed narrative. Similarly, whimpers barely audible in the darkness become toneless rustles and then turn to sounds of quadrille (*somewhere in deep hollows / the quadrille is whistling famously / go straight then to the left and straight / and then go to us* [Шувалова, 2014, p. 74]). In the same way a lack of voice (*my teeth are gritting / a hundred of needles* [Ibid., p. 73]) becomes speaking (*do you wish a half of the kingdom, boy?* [Ibid., p. 74]) to reach to the other world of silence (*one day a little mouse was running / whisked its tale / that is all* [Ibid., p. 75]). Therefore, the borrowed literary or folklore word becomes the mask for the poet's word that cannot be verbalized, but this word's formulary seems to be the most adequate method of verbalizing of a shadow that cannot be caught by consciousness directly.

### Body, Language, Death

In the poem *Ophelia* Shuvalova has interpreted a death as an initiation connected above all with the problem of language and self-identification. In contradistinction to other poems with intertextual elements, *Ophelia* is closely related to the pretext both on the plot

level (Polonius' warning to the daughter, a fateful dialogue of Hamlet and Ophelia) and the symbolic one (Ophelia's clothes that are heavy with water, and flowers). Turning to social and cultural dimensions, we will find that Ophelia in the masculine and patriarchy world is a great mute as long as the only adequate way for her to verbalize unspoken is a language of madness. On the one hand, this language is formulary and clichéd (song and riddle matrices), and on the other hand, this language is beyond the conversational context as much as it is loosely connected or totally unrelated to speeches of other characters. From this point of view the language formulary indicate the conflict of Ophelia's muteness and a strange word; this can be interpreted as inadequacy of existing language to the context to be verbalized. At the same time it signalizes about Ophelia's attempt of avoiding the logic and rational way of speaking that is not appropriate for verbalizing the complicated feeling of love to Hamlet, regret at father's death, and guilt. In her essay *The Ellipse of Fear and Specular Temptation* Julia Kristeva has written about embodied in rhythm, shifts, condensations, and figures *lectonic traces* that appear through the massif of verbalized as unspoken and unrepresented; lectonic traces outline *concealed in its identification: the non-symbolized instinct that is not brought to object-sign-language* (Шувалова, 2014, p. 328). The concept of lectonic traces can explain Ophelia's tense relationship not only with other characters, but also with conventional language and social rules.

Perverseness of self-identification experience (disparity of Me-for-Myself and Me-for-Others images) is realized for Ophelia first of all in the verbal domain: only reality of rhythm and reduplications is fundamental for her language, in contradistinction to the representative language that seems to be senseless for her. Afterlife of language (communication

gaps) and mind (madness) can be interpreted as a metaphor of subordination of the female treated in the masculine world as the strange. Besides that, this poem can be interpreted as an attempt of re-thinking of the female voice and female madness as problems appearing in the context of Lesia Ukrainka's, Lina Kostenko's, Oksana Zabuzhko's writings. In fact, Zabuzhko's *The Reedpipe Tale*, Kostenko's *Marusia Churay*, and Shuvalova's *Ophelia* can be analyzed as the texts about heard or unheard female voices.

Moreover, Shuvalova requires the Shakespeare's text for actualization of the motif of the death in water, in particular the female death in water. According to Gaston Bachelard, the death in water is the most motherly amongst all the deaths (Башляр, 1998, p. 109), and the death of a woman in water can be interpreted as her interflow with a female element. It is evidenced by textual allusions: Hamlet calls Ophelia the nymph, and Gertrude calls her the mermaid. In Shuvalova's *Ophelia* a death is also motherly, but at the same time pet and domestic as *a cat on gentle paws*. Similarly to other experiences, the experience of death in *Ophelia* is linguistic (speaking / silence, speaking / listening) and bodily (breathing, chill, numbness). Motifs of clothes (*wet clothes cling to her skin, full skirts become heavy with wet, a shoe embroidered with a silver thread / has lost from her tiny feet* [Шуvalова, 2014, p. 11]), and a body as clothes (Славянские древности, 2004, p. 523) (*and we will kiss your milky hands / till there is no hands and no kiss left* [Шуvalова, 2014, p. 12]), acquire unexpected explanation: to be free from clothes, body, and life is *to float on water to touch little fish / with her light-hearted dead fingers / to be herself* (Ibid., p. 12). In this context a death becomes for Ophelia an existential choice, release from her roles and masks imposed by others, and the only way for her self-fulfillment.

Similarly to *The Search of the Involved* by Hryhorii Chubai *Ophelia* by Shuvalova seems to be the poetic attempt of looking beyond the verge of life and death. In contradistinction to Chubai's poem in which soul post-mortem ordeals is described (Борисюк, 2015) Shuvalova's *Ophelia* is an attempt to fixate the subtle moment of passing. Balancing between life and death is balancing between sleeping and waking, memory and amnesia, speaking and silence; the death is conceptualized as a dream about a death (*her face appears and disappears without a trace / but muddy water becomes to grow / and flows hustle boldly and thrust into her throat* [Шуvalова, 2014, p. 13]), and the dream is conceptualized as a repetition before a death (*and when at last you breathed being powerless and scared / then suffocation and fear disappeared and all you had to do was sleep / and floating on a tender flow* [Ibid., p. 13]).

Ophelia's inner speaking before the moment of sleeping / death is a recollection of current events and everyday troubles, connected with her external life and her social role, but not concerning her inner Self: *I thought that it was time to take my dress from the seamstress / that my father was not in the mood when he came to me the day before / that yesterday the little bird fled into my apartment / that boys were throwing pebbles into the old beggar / that my red shoes were too old / that I had to take a knife and cut roses off* (Шуvalова, 2014, p. 13). But even these at first sight irrelevant fragments become signs of the accomplished future; besides that, these signs concerning the mythic sphere. For instance, a bird flying into the house is a sign of the inevitable death of somebody living in this house, and old shoes in folklore tales symbolize the journey to the other world (Пронн, 1998, p. 143–144). Correspondingly, according to the principle of parallelism, cut flowers are correlated with somebody's death.

Besides that, on the level of the plot cut roses correlate both with the speech of demented Ophelia talking about flowers in her garland and Gertrude's announcement of Ophelia's death. Old shoes about which Ophelia has thought before sleeping correlate with the lost shoe of dead Ophelia. The moment of passing beyond the edge of sleep / death is marked by the Hamlet's face appearance; with his *thin lips weariness and disdain were laughing*, and it is symbolic that *every time it seems to death cuddling closer / that it is her own appearance* (Шуvalова, 2014, p. 13).

Reflection on her own death for Ophelia is an escape not only beyond verges of a body but also beyond verges of a language conditioned by her body; it is destroying her bodily subjectivity and observing her body as an object. In this case the poet appeals to the mythic motif of macro – and microcosm identity realized in folklore not only as metamorphose but also as dissolving of a body in nature: Ophelia becomes the part of observed nature. Inner speaking is anchoring Ophelia in the space of memory, in continuity of the present, past, and future, whereas a death in this case is the eternal current moment, a loss of the past in words and recollections. Treating death as amnesia and silence was typical for the 80s generation as well; but for these poets conceptualization of the ancestral and national experience was important, whereas for Shuvalova the female private bodily and linguistic experience is determinant.

### **I am as He: the Motif of Fighting with the Snake and the Gender Inversion**

Analyzing the symbolism of overcoming of the snake as a Christian or psychoanalytic plot, we can see that all the aspects of fighting with the inner snake – fears, sins, temptations, and the call of flesh – advance the forefront. In

Shuvalova's personal mythology the concept of a shadow (darkness) is very similar to that of a snake (monster); the sole exception is that a shadow is only recognized, but a snake needs to be fought. Generally, both a shadow and a snake are parts of the central mythic plot of *Os*; they symbolize the image of time destroying a body, confusing a soul, erasing memories and words, and severing the connection with the past. It follows that bodily and linguistic self-consciousness for Shuvalova's lyric personality is the only way to overcome the snake of time by imprinting herself in transition of the current moment.

One way or another, the motif of fighting with the snake in *Os* is connected with the erotic plot (*St. George, Greet me from the city, My lunar brother*): the bloody duel can become the metaphor of the game of love as soon as interconnection of erotic and chthonic is rather typical for Shuvalova's poetry. For this reason the poet is playing with transformations of images: George turns to the bling knight with a toy sword (*the sun is so cautious like the blind / knight with a paper toy sword / who is poking childish faces of inflorescences / is praying that the snake would wait till the evening* [Шуvalова, 2014, p. 54]) as well as the snake becomes the magnificent angel (*be the snake the snake oh my angel change your skin / be the mystic shell cast your flesh beyond flaps* [Ibid., p. 40]). Furthermore, the snake is not always a monster that needs to be overcome: it can be Minotaur (*the time is shaking with bull horns. How will I / overcome this monster and walk through the blackthorn?* [Ibid., p. 40]), the dinosaur (*here the horizon is arching his spine of a dinosaur / the conqueror of the little tomorrow is moving sideways* [Ibid., p. 91]) or an unnamed monster. The function of the-word-as-the-mask is demonstrated in conventionality of naming as soon as naming is partly connected with the named. It follows that in the context of Shuvalova's poetry antiques and Christian images are

interchangeable, and plots are mixed and complimentary; applying the bricolage technic and fragmenting the narratives of earlier eras, the poet incorporates the cultural experience and memory into her private sphere, involves these in plexus of her own stories.

What is important, one of the strategies of cultural code actualization in Shuvalova's poetry is a gender inversion: the virgin becomes the knight (*I am your knight gawain don quixote lancelet paladin* [Шувалова, 2014, p. 40]), the beloved turns to the virgin-helper (*to be ariadne for me my angel and then / we will see* [Ibid., p. 40]). Oleh Kotsarev has paid attention to passiveness and even non subjectivity of male characters in Shuvalova's lyric, reasonably treating this feature as an attempt of a literature game (Коцарев, 2011). I suggest that Shuvalova follows the tradition generated by Ukrainka's, Kobylanska's, and Zabuzhko's writings – this is re-writing of European and Ukrainian matrix plots from the point of female view, crystallization of the voice of the Other in monological patriarchy culture. For instance, in Ukrainka's *The Autumn Tale* and *The Stone Master of the House* as well as in Zabuzhko's poetry ironic treating of knighthood is connected with self-consciousness of a woman that does not wish to be unseen in changed social and politic circumstances. But for Shuvalova the existential dimension of the problem rather than the social and culture is important. Despite the fact of ironic re-thinking of romance plots, this inversion appears to be the device for the personal choice expression: the virgin has to become the knight for herself in order to find herself under names and masks or abandon names and masks in favor of the name and core (*whose children we are peter and what are our names / now when as much names as there are pearls between the fingers* [Шувалова, 2014, p. 25]). Her personal battle with time the virgin has to win herself, even if she should turn to the knight for this. But the Other for achieving

her inner wholeness is also important, thus love in Shuvalova's poetry is a shadow (death), and a snake (temptation), and a transcendent impulse (an angel), and Ariadne's thread on the road to self-discovery (*tired of fighting against monsters in the sacred land / I will come to you / and that will be the way to home* [Ibid., p. 41]).

## Conclusions

The characteristic feature of Soviet era was cultivation of the black and white worldview drawing the Other as the stranger and therefore enemy; otherness was treated as anomaly and thus a death sentence. It should be appropriate to compare so called deviations in Soviet art and projects for re-education of natural and human deviations. All of this is founded on the fundamental ideological basis of the only point of view, the only truth, the only way of thinking. Igor Klekh has paid attention to such feature of totalitarianism as *narrowing or widening of the human sphere* and elimination from the orbit of being of such important elements as erotic feelings or relationships with Absolute and nature (Клех, Комський, Возняк 1990). In relation to this thought, I suppose that typical for the postcolonial situation (in social and cultural spheres as well) of totalitarianism overcoming should be return of the Other to the culture (first of all as the Other in Myself).

Shuvalova's literary strategy includes incorporation of the collective memory in the private one as well as incorporation of cultural plots in her own story. Under these conditions not my past becomes the part of my experience, but not as the revealed in texts cultural catalog of names and plots. The specific female experience reflected in her lyric is in a liaison with ritual scenarios as well as with mythic and literary matrices. The bodily experience of the lyric personality becomes a language for speaking about the drama of

self-identification, about perception of time in herself and herself in time, about collision of Self and Other relationship influencing on authenticity and wholeness of the Self. This, in turn, means acceptance of subjectivity of the Other over which the Self has no power; in this case the Other can be another human being as well as the world and nature. ☹

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## **Swojskość i Obcość: tożsamość, czas i ciało w poezji Iryny Szuwałowej**

### **Streszczenie**

W artykule przedmiotem badania uczyniono różne formy reprezentacji tożsamości obecne na gruncie współczesnej poezji ukraińskiej. Za przykład posłużyły teksty Iryny Szuwałowej. Tworzona przez nią poezja rozpatrywana jest w kontekście przemian ideologicznych i artystycznych, jakie zaszły w literaturze w okresie od schyłku Związku Radzieckiego do czasów współczesnych. W artykule skupiono się na procesie tworzenia tożsamości opierającym się na interakcjach zachodzących między Swoim i Obcym, jednostkowym i społecznym, żeńskim i męskim. Ponadto celem autorki stało się prześledzenie związków istniejących między językiem, cielesnością a czasem, reprezentujących różne formy tworzenia tożsamości.

### **Słowa kluczowe:**

tożsamość,  
Iryna Szuwałowa, tożsamość narodowa,  
współczesna poezja ukraińska, Ja/Inni.