

Between Silence and Speaking: the Representation of National Identity in Oksana Zabuzhko's Poetry

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Abstract: The article is focused on the problems of national identity, self-representation, and memory re-articulation in Oksana Zabuzhko's poetry. Language, speaking, and word as well as silence are conceptualized as key concepts in verse by the 1980s generation of Ukrainian poets to whom Oksana Zabuzhko belongs. Speaking and silence in 1980s poetry can be treated not only as concepts or metaphors but also as a literary strategy or even as the form of resistance in the late Soviet era. The article is structured as the gradation of motives from speaking to silence in Zabuzhko's poetry. The analyses includes the following subthemes: non-verbal language represented by sounds, gestures, and poses, verbal language as existing between *sacrum* and *profanum*, speechlessness, and silence.

Key words: Oksana Zabuzhko, contemporary Ukrainian poetry, national identity, *visindesiatnyky* (the 1980s generation), language, silence

Słowa kluczowe: Oksana Zabuzhko, współczesna poezja ukraińska, tożsamość narodowa, generacja lat 80., język, milczenie

Introduction

Oksana Zabuzhko is a bright representative of the 1980s generation, which played a special part in Ukrainian literature. Debuting in the last third of the twentieth century, these authors demonstrated new poetic language and poetic principles. Modernist in essence, the poetry of the 1980s generation was not a part of Socialist Realism tradition. It was essential for the 1980s generation to find a specific way of writing allowing them to exclude their poetry from the official discourse and to re-create the national literary tradition. The 1980s generation of Ukrainian poets wished to distance itself both from Russian imperial and Soviet myths and narratives. It was important for them to inscribe in the national literary tradition the names of poets (such as the 1920s generation, Prague and Warsaw Poetry School, Bohdan-Ihor Antonych, etc.), which were forbidden by the Soviet system.

As a result, in 1980s generation's Ukrainian poetry, there is the ubiquitous motif of acquisition of language (a word) and related motifs of sacred word, prophecy, counterfeit word, silence, dumbness, communication gaps, strange language. These motifs are spawned by the process of reshaping the Ukrainian national identity, which, as the 1980s generation of Ukrainian poets believes, must be separated from the Soviet identity. However, Zabuzhko's poetry is considerably more complicated for the reason of interconnection between national and gender identities in her poetry. Her lyric personality is doubly subjugated; this oppression is both national and gender. According to Vira Aheieva (Aheieva 2011, 53), the private story in Zabuzhko's novels is a voice of the subaltern, repressed by Soviet totalitarianism.

The term subaltern is the key concept in postcolonial studies. Western European colonialism, defined by Frantz Fanon, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Chakravorti Spivak as a set of practices concerning all the aspects of colonized and colonizing interactions, emerged out of the process of formation and disintegration of Western European empires; thus the First and Third Worlds were in the focus of these investigations. Racial and cultural difference, and the territorial remoteness of the colonized and the colonizer were marked as the main theoretic postulate (Moore 2006, 15). For this reason, postcolonial theory was not applied to the former Soviet republics and "East Block" states (the so called Second World). As David Chioni Moore writes, "one aspect of that commitment has been the reasonable belief that the First World has largely caused the Third World's ills, and an allied, less-justifiable belief that the Second World's socialism was the best alternative. When most of the Second World collapsed in 1989 and 1991 ... it still remains difficult, evidently, for postcolonial theorists to recognize the postcolonial dynamic within the Second World" (Moore 2006, 20).

Defining the three-part taxonomy of Western colonization, David Chioni Moore argues that the Russian Empire (the Soviet Union after 1920s) adopted all these colonial strategies. The first, classic colonization type is based on the long-distance economic, political, military and cultural control which is exercised over people who are different from the colonizer racially (Moore 2006, 21). A second type is settler colonization, and a third type is dynastic, "in which a power conquers neighbor peoples" (Moore 2006, 21). Russian and Soviet colonization of Ukraine is correlated with the third and fourth types of colonization; the last is called reverse-cultural colonization, and it can be characterized as a specifically Russo-Soviet phenomenon (Moore 2006, 26). Besides that, the situation that existed inside the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union has been defined by Marko Pavlyshyn with the term *cultural colonialism*. This type of colonization produces the institutional and ideological hierarchy of values under which the colonizer is central, visible, determinant, and universal, and the colonized, accordingly, is marginal, invisible, indeterminate, and particular (Pavlyshyn 1992, 43-44).

In Zabuzhko's poetry, the national identity project construction is realized in two ways. On the one hand, the actualization of the national cultural heritage, which has been excluded from the official Soviet discourse, is very important. That is the national project which is rooted in the past tradition and based on the linguistic and cultural identity. On the other hand, the formation of values differed from the Soviet ones is equally significant. That is the national project which is directed in the future and based on the axiological system. According to Bhabha, "the national space is, in his view, constituted from competing dispositions of human association as *societas* (the acknowledgement of moral rules and conventions of conduct) and *universitas* (the acknowledgement of common purpose and substantive end)" (Bhabha 1990, 2). First of all, the formation/differentiation of values are emerging on the axis of individual/state (society). The priority of the first one is obviously seen in the national project of the 1980s generation of Ukrainian poets – as long as such values as freedom of choice, self-realization, and corporeality rehabilitation are clearly articulated in their texts. The priority of the second one in the Soviet project is proved in that the individual is subjugated by the state, and his/her conceptualization is in the field of instrumentality, functionality (the conception of a human-cog – *liudyna-hvyntyk* – which is ubiquitous in Socialist Realism). Stuart Hall says that within the classic sociological conception "identity is formed in the interaction between self and society" (Hall 1992, 597). But in 1980s generation's poetry, the connection between the inside and the outside, public and private spheres has an air of tension and even a gap, not a bridge.

In her poetry, Zabuzhko defines national identity as predominantly linguistic and cultural. This corresponds to the "linguistic nation" model, described by Andrew Wachtel (qtd. in Wallo 2013, 15). In the Eastern European region, divided between empires, all national movements begin as linguistic and cultural, as Wachtel argues, and therefore national writers were treated as the "founding fathers" of Eastern European nations (qtd. in Wallo 2013, 15). This explains the role of language as the instrument of narrating-creating the nation and conceptualization of language as the metaphor for describing the colonizer/colonized interaction. The linguistic choice for Zabuzhko – to write in Russian or Ukrainian – plays a great role. Yet the opposition of Soviet/national, not only Russian/Ukrainian, has to be taken into account as long as the distribution of Soviet ideology was not only in Russian, but also in Ukrainian. Zabuzhko's linguistic strategy becomes her linguistic and ideological distance from the colonizer's narratives, myths, symbols and values. In this way Zabuzhko excludes her writing from the official narrative, using paralipsis, non-verbal language based on non-articulated sounds, voices, body language, silence, untold stories. Thus she develops her voice, which cannot dissolve in the voice of the colonizer, who has the privilege to speak with the language of domination.

Sounds and Voices

Zabuzhko's poetry is based on the idea of the total semantization of a world. The world is teleological and rationally regularised; the world's elements are deeply interconnected. Reality in Zabuzhko's poetry is textualised; therefore, it can be read and interpreted as a text. Accordingly, every manifestation of existence can be perceived and explained as a sequence of signs.

Zabuzhko's non-verbal language is conceptualized both as a sequence of objects (things) and as artistic or everyday gestures such as body language, dance and writing, sounds of music and voices, and visual images such as painting and photo. The sound of a human voice can be understood as a sign of the oral language. It is important for Zabuzhko to differentiate as well as to separate oral and writing languages. Soviet totalitarianism discredited the written (especially printed) word as an instrument of manipulation and propaganda. In Zabuzhko's novel *Muzei pokynutykh sekretiv* (The Museum of Abandoned Secrets) a severed thread of history and cultural experience is restored for ensuing generations due to collective memories incarnated in Daryna's and Adrian's dreams rather than to printed documents which may be destroyed easily. Besides that, for the 1980s generation the oral word is conceptualized as the word of folklore tradition and shared cultural memories whereas the printed word is a part of the official oppressive discourse. National memories are materialized in the sounds of voices of previous generations. Accordingly, the motif of voices is repeated in 1980s generation poetry, especially in Zabuzhko's writing: "Who will collect our sick and faded voices?"¹ («Хто тоді позбира голоси наші тьмяні і хворі...») (Zabuzhko 2013, 43).

What is important, the sound, which is not connected with voice or language, is also semantized. The indiscrete sound, like an intensified noise, can be interpreted as a sign of either the past (future) or another reality. Time and space context allows the reading and interpreting of these sounds: "How faces change, when a family sees its fate. Perhaps, it is the light from the door that just opened that gives them that other-worldly look... You are listening to something, yes... (Is it a sound from the ground – that grows – from year to year – like a muffled cry?)"² («О, як міняються лиця мертвих, коли на роду написано, / Ніби світло з дверей прочинених, надає їм інакший вираз!.. / Ви вслухаєтесь, так! / (Чи то стогін з могильної

¹ Here and further in this article, Ukrainian texts translations are mine, except for some poems from *In a Different Light: A Bilingual Anthology of Ukrainian Literature*. 2008. Translated into English by Virlana Tkacz as Performed by Yara Arts Group, edited by Olha Luchuk. Lviv: Sribne Slovo, 2008.

² This translation of the poem is by Virlana Tkacz in: *In a Different Light: A Bilingual Anthology of Ukrainian Literature*. 2008. Translated into English by Virlana Tkacz as Performed by Yara Arts Group, edited by Olha Luchuk. Lviv: Sribne Slovo, 2008.

ями - / Наростаючий звук – з року в рік – наче здушеним криком?)» (Zabuzhko 2013, 55). This noise can be analyzed as a piece of non-verbal information and therefore monosemantic and absolute. Thus, this meaningful sound is correlated with a prayer or prophecy as the unmediated word of God or the sign of the unavoidable destiny; it may be compared with the concept of glossolalia in Rymaruk's poetry. In another context, the meaning denominated by sounds can be interpreted as the gesture of resistance to oppressive political power: "So that the throaty shrill voice that makes their flesh creeps as a knife snatched from a scabbard will appear in a sonant maw through throaty sobbing" («Щоб крізь гортанний схлип зродивсь в лункій утробі / Мов-ніж-із-піхов-вихоплений свист – / Розбійницький! Смалкий! Морозом-в-жили! – голос...») (Zabuzhko 2013, 77). Therefore, the indiscrete sound (noise, voices, and jangle) can be conceptualized as a metaphor of the national culture excluded from the Soviet discourse. Soviet/national in this context is opposed as articulate/inarticulate (non-verbalized).

Gesture as a Word

In Zabuzhko's poetry, a gesture denominates the true language of a human body and the act of manifestation of human's presence in a world in the circumstances when verbal language fails. The philosophical problem of a gesture, based on the existentialist paradigm, is manifested in the opposition between essence and existence: "This mad rockfall of words, words, words, words – I felt – reduced my want *to be* as illegal or criminal, and inserted a stylus into my hands, and tensely made me *write* but not *be*" («Цей нависний обвал / слів, слів, слів, слів – я чула, забивав / мою жадобу *бути*, як беззаконну / чи переступницьку: вкладав до рук стило, / натужно спонукав не *бути*, а *писати*...») (Zabuzhko 2013, 188). "To be" in this context appears to mean the physical being with no aim, the static indwelling in a motionless body whereas the gesture means overcoming of boundaries of human existence. Writing here is mostly the process of self-fulfillment rather than the result of the action. What is important, an impulse to write seems to be the internal response to the external appeal. In some cases a creationist myth may be read in Zabuzhko's concept of the meaningful gesture: "Create me from the space, destroy and recreate" («Сотвори мене з простору, знищи і знов сотвори») (Zabuzhko 2013, 33).

It is necessary to point out that in some contexts there is a difference between a gesture and a pose in Zabuzhko's poetry. The pose is a possibility not to act and think over a moral dilemma in the situation of moral choice unobviousness: "Here the real is one who recanted thrice at dawn, but it is after noon now, and he is still standing and standing" («Тут реальний один: той, хто вдосвіта тричі відрікся, – / А уже на полудне звернуло,

а він все стоїть і стоїть») (Zabuzhko 2013, 80). Apostle Peter prefers staying in a static pose rather than taking part in the theatrical play of death and resurrection: “Here the death is a masquerade: naturally, the hero will resurrect and come to audience for bowing in his glory” («Тут і смерть – лицедійство: герой, зрозуміло ж, воскресне / І вклонитися публіці вийде во славі своїй») (Zabuzhko 2013, 79). This concept of non-action in Zabuzhko’s poetry has the important philosophical sense of human free will manifestation. Moreover, the choice of contemplation cancels a black-and-white scheme of the world as well as the inclusion of a human being in this one-dimensional configuration. On the other hand, the differentiation between the gesture and the pose can be interpreted in existential categories: “The gesture is marbling in a niche where the feat had to be achieved” («Жест мрамуровіє в ніші, де мав би постати подвиг») (Zabuzhko 2013, 126). In this case, the gesture and the pose relate to the self-fulfilment and the imitation of action correspondingly. The pose is a socially significant, but existentially meaningless activity; it is schizophrenic disintegration between inner and outer human being, between truth and mask. What is more, the opposition between the gesture and the pose means the opposition between the ontologically true word and an empty totalitarian word: “a converted word” («конвертоване слово») vice versa “the words are as dried pods wherein darkness is rolling” («слів – наче висхлих стручків, у яких барабанить п’ятьма») (Zabuzhko 2013, 126). In this way Zabuzhko combines words and gestures with freedom, truth, and existential self-fulfilment in the related conceptual sphere. The Soviet axiological system was based on the cultivation of an acting character. But Zabuzhko’s choice of the reflecting, not acting, person is that of existential self-realization, not a social role (or mask). It appeals to Ukrainian baroque narratives on the whole, and to Hryhorii Skovoroda as a person and a text in particular, in which human beings are identified with their inner self, not with a social role.

Poet / Witch / Prophet

In Zabuzhko’s poems, there is a correlation between witchcraft as an ability to possess a magic word and poetry as an ability to create: “Come on! Conjure! Create! In the city which is full of Social Realism... Seed a word under the moonlight!” («Ну давай! ну чаклуй! ну твори! – / В місті, сповненім соцреалізму... / Проти місяця слово сій») (Zabuzhko 2013, 71). Witchcraft in this case is an interesting variant of the creationist myth; moreover, the specifically female ability to create is represented within. On the contrary, witchcraft in Zabuzhko’s fiction *Kazka pro kalynovu sopilku* (The Reedpipe Tale 2000), *Poliovi doslidzhennia z ukrains’koho seksu* (Field Work in Ukrainian Sex 1996) is predominantly “openness to evil”; in other words, witchcraft can be recognized as a marker of female margin-

alization in the patriarchal society. Nila Zborovs'ka (Zborovs'ka 2005, 59) argues that “the key for reading Zabuzhko’s novels can be found in a sexual and mystic conflict between the sexes that is in total the conflict between a woman and God”. George Grabowicz (Grabowicz 2005) interprets a witch in Zabuzhko’s novel *Poliovi doslidzhennia z ukrains'koho seksu* (Field Work in Ukrainian Sex 1996) as the inner Otherness which is realized and represented in a word. In Zabuzhko’s poetry, the reality conjured by words is a fragile reality of another – dreamed and mystic – world: “It is a dawn first light! The clock is striking! And Kyiv is vanishing underground” («...Треті півні! / Дзигарний бій!!! / І – під землю щезає Київ») (Zabuzhko 2013, 71). Thus the plurality of versions of reality is opposite to the monochrome picture of Social realism and, what is more, to official discourse in general. Above all, the plurality is admitted as a nightly, shadowy side of this assailable world.

In Zabuzhko’s poetry, a word is treated as acquittal (or translucence) of the “right” reality in the world of simulacra and phantoms. Thus the interesting inversion of senses emerges: in fact, the familiar daily world is seen as a phantom world of lies, and, on the contrary, the visionary reality of conjured world is regarded as veracious: “We are immortal henceforth – all who have been inscribed in these snow and evening” («Ми віднині безсмертні – всі, хто вписані в сніг цей і вечір...») (Zabuzhko 2013, 21).

The concepts of “memory” and “history” are connected with the special role of time in 1980s generation’s poetry. The culture role of a prophet is based on the persuasion that s/he possesses time through the mechanism of memories of the nation’s past experience – the experience which is actually not the part of his/her life. An ability to predict future is estimated as the replenishment of time matrix in endless series of cycles. Accordingly, not only does a prophet predict the future, but also verbalizes the past. Furthermore, Zabuzhko actualizes a specific identity-protection function of a literary word, which has been formed in Ukrainian literature during the period of lost statehood. Therefore, the poet as a prophet provides a dialog of the nation with its past; in this way s/he is involved in the building of a national tradition (in Shevchenko’s poetry, a prophet is embodied in the character of *kobzar*, whose blindness as disability to percept his current time visually could help establish special relationship with the past).

In Zabuzhko’s poetry, “the connection of a memory with the past” (Paul Ricoeur 2004, 36-37) spawns the character of a national memory keeper who can become a prophet through the act of verbalizing. In *Polon Rohnidy* (The Captivity of Rohnida), Zabuzhko demonstrates the functioning of the memory as an activation of the past in the current moment. The trigger of a shared reminiscence connects Rohnida and Volodymyr the Prince in the present moment: “My prince who has been whittled with tempests! You who have a face of God – a face of an idol! You had noticed me that night – me, who was naked, white and volant like a snow! And the reminiscence like

a hoop tightened your head, and you called me then” («Князю, тесаний буревіями! Боголикий – ідололикий! / Як я тобі промайнула в ту ніч – / Гола, біла, летюча, мов сніг!.. / ...І стиснув тобі обручем спогад чоло, / І тоді ти мене покликав») (Zabuzhko 2013, 27). The vengeance is recognized as an intrusion of the past in the current moment of murder. The act of recollection makes possible the emancipation from the past: the murder can be interpreted as a moment of time collapse (assimilation of the past in the current moment) both for the prince and Rohnida. The act of murdering as verbalization of the shared memory becomes possible in virtue of Rohnida’s spell, which causes the reminiscence in the prince’s memory. In the same way, all of the elements of this interconnection (the spell, the reminiscence, the murder) can be interpreted as acts of verbalization. Interestingly enough, the act of soricide in *Kazka pro kalynovu sopilku* (The Reedpipe Tale) is interpreted by Aheieva (Aheieva 2003, 301) as an act of re-establishing justice in the heroic fight of Hanna with God.

The role of a prophet who embodies the non-verbalized experience of the nation is extremely important in Zabuzhko’s poetry. Yet the relationship of prophets with their society is represented mostly in the form of a communication gap: “And then I went into the crowd, and they did not recognize me” («І пішла я у натовп – і там не пізнали мене») (Zabuzhko 2013, 47). Such an inability to hear the voice of the past verbalized in prophet’s words is called “Cassandra’s complex” in Zabuzhko’s essays (see Aheieva 2011, 47 and Semkiv 2012, 425) – compared with Cassandra, the protagonist of the dramatic poem by Lessya Ukrainka: “Cassandras are those who are unemployed now, and ever, and unto ages of ages! To cry to those who have beeswax in their ears...” («От хто безробітний, так це Кассандри – / Нині, і прісно, і поки світ! / Гукати у вухі, заляпані воском») (Zabuzhko 2013, 95).

From this point of view, the figure of Nostradamus is intriguing for Zabuzhko due to the actualization of the unsolved (or misunderstood) writing as a cultural phenomenon. The concept of a cycle in Zabuzhko’s scheme of the past and future interconnection is emphasized. Moreover, the unread past makes the future problematic or even impossible: “This planet was good – rest in peace!” («Славна була планетка – / Мир її решткам!») (Zabuzhko 2013, 96). The unread writing of Nostradamus is a bright metaphor for the unread past, which provokes chronologic gaps separating the present moment from the past and future simultaneously. In addition, writing in this case becomes a materialisation of stamps in which, according to Ricoeur (Ricoeur 2004, 31), the memory can be represented. Thus the problem of a communicative gap between the prophet and society is introduced twofold: the prophet’s message that is unheard and the one that is unread (misunderstood).

In Ukrainian poetry of the 1980s, a poet is conceptualized as a person beyond time, simultaneously in the past and future, never in the present

moment. Representatives of the 1980s did not participate in a dialog with their contemporaries. For this reason, their poetry is predominantly based on a fundament of existential fulfilment rather than communication (in Ihor Rymaruk's, Vasyl' Herasym'iuk's, Petro Midianka's, and Serhii Zhadan's poetry, the poet is marginal and not accepted by society). In that case, a dialog is possible only as communication with a deformed and disrupted national tradition represented in forms of lacuna (non-verbalized) or substitution (self-representation through the discourse of the Other / Stranger).

This problem can be defined as a formation of word/silence gradation: 1) self-representation through the poet's self-discourse; 2) self-representation through the discourse of the Other/Stranger; 3) non-verbalization; 4) silence. Accordingly, it is significant for poets of the 1980s not only to complete lacunas, but also to form (or re-form) the way of verbalization which can demarcate its own territory from the language of power.

The False Word

In 1980s poetry, the concept of a true word is extremely important. On the one hand, the 1980s generation's true word was not a didactic proclamation of the ultimate truth, since promulgating a universal compulsory point of view was a privilege of the official discourse. On the other hand, the 1980s generation tried to oppose an alternative to the total lie of propaganda. The true word of the 1980s generation is recognized as the existential homology of the speaking subjects and their self-representation (the concept of "my truth"). Therefore the false word is conceptualized as inappropriate self-representation.

In Zabuzhko's poetry, the concept of a false word is connected not only with the problem of discourse, but also with the problem of identity, authorship, and a body. On the level of discourse, the false word is opposed to the "converted" word: "How many words are as dried pods wherein darkness is rolling! Refund the converted word! The word that smells of heretics' burned meat..." («Стільки слів – наче висхлих стручків, у яких тарабанить пiтьма! / Поверніть конвертоване слово! Те, що пахне – підсмаленим м'ясом / Єретицьким...») (Zabuzhko 2013, 126). Here the false word is a word with an empty denotatum; this word pretends to have sense. There is an interesting example of double re-coding (a word – a pose – an emptiness): "The suit imposes the pose by its style. Forms are enveloping. A rebel in a process of rebelling is pretending to be the rebel" («Костюм нав'язує позу самим покромом. / Форми обволікають. Бунтар у процесі бунту / Починає вдавати бунтаря») (Zabuzhko 2013, 125). More precisely, a word is related with emptiness through the series of mediation.

The false word works for communication, so far as it is manipulative in substance. In comparison to the false word of power and authority, the true word in the 1980s poetry aims to perceive a sense without developing a dialog. What is important, “a mask” and “to be liked” are interconnected through the series of etymological correspondence: “To be liked is originated from either ‘likeness’ or ‘guise’ or, in other words, ‘a mask’” («Подобатись» – від “подоба”, себто “личина”, / Чи, щоб зовсім було зрозуміло, – “маска») (Zabuzhko 2013, 125). The mask is dedicated to others and therefore should be liked by them; human identity is hidden beyond the mask since it may be inconvenient for others or disliked by them. False identity in this case can be understood as existential disparity but not as a “troubled” (Donskis) identity. The Christian concept of free will worked for a Soviet man in a very specific way: the problem was either to save (reestablish, create) his identity, or to become a part of homogeneous Soviet mass.

Moreover, false and true words in this context can be correlated with plagiarism and authorship: “So that my own words sound for me like a quotation from the unknown source” («Вже і власні слова мої – наче цитата / З невідомого джерела, починають мені звучати») (Zabuzhko 2013, 125). In this capacious metaphor, Zabuzhko outlines the concept of “an irresponsible word” which is essential for understanding Social Realism literature. In his article about Socialist Realism poetry Volodymyr Morenets’ analyses causes, forms, and methods of writers’ distancing themselves from their artistic words (Morenets’ 2010). The process of double-coding (poet’s own words pretend to be others’) denudes the need for colonial culture to be seen and perceived by the eyes of colonizing culture. From this point of view, the metaphor of a mirror is quite representative: “The mirror should be closed as quickly as possible since I will learn to pretend my unwillingness soon” («Свічадо ліпше запнути, і то якнайшвидше, / Бо ще трохи – і власну нехить я теж навчусь удавати») (Zabuzhko 2013, 125). The mirror allows the spectator to look at oneself through the eyes of the Other: therefore the identity of the spectator is multiplying and finally becomes the reflection for the Other.

In the same way, falseness is connected with the traumatic body experience and loss of spontaneity: “I should learn to move only if my arm and my leg grew stiff (or if I had a stomach ache, let bad luck never come!) I mean when I do not think how I look from the outside” («Та аби ще навчитись рухатись – тільки коли затерпне / Рука чи нога (або скрутить живіт, нівроку!), – / Тобто коли не думаєш, як виглядаєш збоку») (Zabuzhko 2013, 124). The gesture as a spontaneous self-expression resists the pose which is intended to be the object of observation. This reduction from the subject of action to the object of observation (Michel Foucault) makes the human being of a totalitarian society feel threatened at a core of his/her existence.

False memories, mendacity and authorship are combined in the poem *Ofelia – to Gertrude*. If creation is recognized as overcoming of nature,

body, and social expectations, then in some cases an ability to create can be opposed to female corporeality and sexuality. Female sexuality, death, and language are interconnected in a special way: a true word is influenced by death (or by blood in *Vstup do estetyky pozy* (Exordium to the Aesthetic of Pose) and is opposed to sexuality. According to Zabuzhko's version, the queen does not die, but marries Fortinbras in concordance with her "eternal femininity". Furthermore, Gertrude re-writes the past, proposing her own version: "You will read them memoirs named *Hamlet, my son* («Читатимеш їм мемуари / під назвою «Гамлет, мій син»)» (Zabuzhko 2013, 149). In this context, Gertrude's character reads as a personification of power; besides, Zabuzhko speaks about the Soviet practice of re-writing history.

In Zabuzhko's poetry, the gift of writing is regarded as a painful search for a true word on the verge of life and death. Gertrude's words are irresponsible, optional, and distanced from the speaker as long as her authentic self-representation is the only language of her body desires: "Ave, Regina the Vagina! Your region is under the baldachin where oak bed legs creak every night!" («Ave, регіно-вагіно! / Се край твій – під балдахіном, / Де ніжки дубового вгину / Щоночі до світа риплять!») (Zabuzhko 2013, 149). In Zabuzhko's version, female behavior in accordance to patriarchal social expectations envisages faithfulness to her female nature and her body. The character of the female poetess transmutes her body into music and words whereas "eternal femininity" reduces itself only to the body. The truth for Zabuzhko is verified by her own experience, opposed to the words of authority, and in this context it works as Soviet identity deconstruction.

The Untold Story

The 1980s poetry demonstrates a peculiar differentiation between silence and non-verbalization. Non-verbalization is connected with the colonial trauma and impossibility of adequate self-representation. The colonial trauma is based on forcible break from national tradition linearity – therefore, concepts of memory, history and language are extremely important for the 1980s. From this perspective, the self-representation in the word of Ukrainian poetry of the 1980s implies both national tradition reconstruction and dialog formation with the national tradition.

The impossibility for poets to express their own unique experience is determined not only by the absence of adequate (rooted) discourse, but also by the colonial substitution of history, memory and language. The problem of a false, phantom history and memory is connected with a global problem of the false, phantom language far from the reality of a national experience. In *Portret K. M. Hrushevs'koi v iunosti* (The Portrait of K. M. Hrushevs'ka as a Young Woman) (Zabuzhko 2013, 55-56), Zabuzhko advances the problem of the falsified national history and, consequently,

lost national memory – the portrait of a bright scholar who was killed and whose archives were destroyed becomes a reminiscent mark with an empty denotatum in the landscape of a national memory. In the poem, two types of discourse are contradistinguished – the silence of the portrait as a metaphor of non-verbalized national memory and the language of Hrushevs'ka's nameless killers. What is interesting, the discourse of the Stranger is represented here not through the language of Russian invaders (in *Krym. Yalta. Proshchannia z imeriieiu* (Crimea. Yalta. A farewell to the Empire) Zabuzhko talks about “the Moscow accent” directly), but through the prison slang which is mutual both for jailers and criminal (nonpolitical) prisoners as well: “is it the heavy handed fist? Slam! that over-educated schoolgirl – that professor's daughter – that upper class bitch!”³ («це – об стільницю дубовий кулак: / Трах! гімназисточка-професорівночка-інтелігенточка, мати твою так!..») (Zabuzhko 2013, 56).

Similarly, the poem *Krym. Yalta. Proshchannia z imperiieiu* (Crimea. Yalta. A Farewell to the Empire) (Zabuzhko 2013, 110-111) is based on the contrast of the language of the empire and the muteness of the colony. In addition, the language of the empire is a relatively broad concept; in this case, it consists of signs of the imperia's presence: an old woman who is playing a violin and singing prison songs, veteran's napes appearing in a crowd, and the Moscow accent which is “scorching like chilli”. Importantly, quotations from prison folklore are in Ukrainian transliteration, but Brodski's words are properly in Russian: the language of oppression and the language of culture are differentiated. All these artistic details form the image of a huge (prison) zone, “the homeless land” as the territory of coercion and oppression; that reposes on a myth of conquerors (veterans as representatives of “the Great Patriotic War” imperial narrative), a myth of “great Russian culture”, and romanticizing of prison folklore as a specific feature of Soviet mass culture. The muteness of the colonized subaltern is represented in acute metaphors: “You can live as if you have been escaping from a prison for all your life. You can even write to the wind with fragments of words” («Можна жити і так – все життя утікаючи з зони, / Можна навіть писати – на вітер, обривками слів»). The language of national self-representation is disjointed in sounds since the word as wholeness of sense has been turned into the instrument of oppression, and the tradition of self-representation has been destroyed. The opposition of speaking and silence is represented here in the polarity of the Self and the Stranger, where the Stranger is represented as Evil in St. Augustine's sense – a godless emptiness which, however, is hidden under different masks and fragments of different identities. Therefore, self-representation through the discourse of the Other/Stranger is deeply connected with a problem of verbalization.

³ This translation of the poem is by Virlana Tkacz.

Silence

In the poetry of the 1980s, the silence stands for metaphor, concept, sort of resistance, and literary strategy. Silence as a process of the word blackout, “hermetization” of a text in a perpetual war with a censor was a means of literary survival in the late-Soviet era. Moreover, the poet’s silence as an answer to the purpose of collaboration with the regime was the only form of literary existence for Kyiv School poets – Mykhailo Hryhoriv, Viktor Kordun, Mykola Vorobiov, and Vasył Holoborod’ko. Apart from that, silence as an element of polarity is opposed to official discourse with its deception, manipulation, and propaganda: thus silence is a method of word rehabilitation through the appeal to the non-verbalized depth of senses. As a concept, silence embodies pre-verbal plenitude of being, non-tragic solitude of the world. In Kordun’s poetry, God’s silence is a moment of abundance before the act of creation; in Hryhoriv’s poetry, silence is the wordless (humanless) wholeness of nature.

In Zabuzhko’s verses, silence as a concept and metaphor is connected, on the one hand, with a process of writing, and, on the other hand, with visions of the past and the future where soundlessness is a feature of the world with no human beings in it. Silence as a sense concentration in a moment of poem maturing is waiting for a voice: “I was sick again in that moment: I heard plump trees growing, and somebody calling me, and silence turning into noise” («...Це я знов була хвора: я чула, як сливи росли, / Як хтось кликав мене, і мовчання лункішало в гомін...») (Zabuzhko 2013, 8). Above all, silence is a synonym of emptiness: “This man was born from the tree designed for a violin, the mute tree with disconsolate eyes; [...] I was surprised: he was ringing as a muzzle-loader! Every sound multiplied within him like an avalanche! (He was the tree alright, and voices of the dead were planted in his fingers – and the fingers grew stiff while names of the dead were turned by alive)” («Цей чоловік / вродився з дерева, що призначалося на скрипку, / німого дерева з печальними очима; [...] Я здивувалася: він був лункий, як жерло / гарматне! Кожен звук у ньому множивсь, як лавина! / (Ще як був деревом, йому вросли у пальці голоси померлих - / і пальці терпли, коли їхні імена переверталися живими...») (Zabuzhko 2013, 15). The metaphor of emptiness describes the ability to hear voices of the world. Consequently, the forgotten voices of the dead are symbols of national memory and tradition which have to be re-established. This motif is important for the 1980s generation in general (“night voices” in poems by Ihor Rymaruk, stories and myths in Vasył Herasym’iuk’s poetry, night dreams in poems by Natalia Bilotserkivets’). Also for this generation, their own self-representation is built on the vertical dialog with the forgotten national tradition. The concept of a voice represents the distrust in writing sources as manipulative instruments and the trust in the spoken tradition of collective memories (the official falsified history versus the collective national memory).

Yet in Zaduzhko's poetry, silence is an apocalyptic threat, since it is connected with the ecological problem of surviving. Furthermore, it corresponds with Tamara Hundorova's statement (Hundorova 2005) about Ukrainian literature of the end of the twentieth century and later as "post-Chornobyl'", constructed by awareness of Chornobyl' conceptually as the manifestation of catastrophism in fiction and mentality.

Chornobyl' in Zabuzhko's vision is the space, full of the signs of human presence, though free from genuine human voices: "How endless the silence behind this boundary... On the polished wood two stains (or maybe it's tears?), an apple, bitten but not brown, still lies on the floor near the chair..."⁴ («Як космічно, пронизливо-тихо за цією межею! / На рудій поліровці дві плями (а може, то сльози?) – / І надкушене яблуко, де надкус ще не взявся іржею...») (Zabuzhko 2013, 49). What is interesting, in the interpretation of the dead space as voiceless Zabuzhko follows Ukrainian folklore tradition (and especially the genre of spell), which treats another world (the world of death) as the voiceless world of nature reified in the forms of forest, meadow, and swamp, or as a "strange" (black, red, stony, empty etc.) world in which inhabitants look like human beings but in fact they are other-world creatures. Silence also correlates with the metaphor of a shadow: "Four walls multiply each shadow. The room is empty"⁵ («На чотири стіни перемножена тінь – і порожня кімната!») (Zabuzhko 2013, 49). In the same way, the concept of a shadow is the disembodiment of a thing or a living being and balancing on the verge of existence: "In the chair lies a suit that once held a body, the suit had collapsed into a flat lifeless bundle"⁶ («Тільки в кріслі костюм, перед миттю заповнений тілом, / Раптом тихо згортається плоским безживним сувоєм...») (Zabuzhko 2013, 49). In addition, the correlation between silence and disembodiment is typical of folklore: only named things can exist, and, vice versa, unnamed things and people do not belong to the world of living beings. Therefore, silence for Zabuzhko is first of all a sign of a deserted world.

Conclusion

In Ukrainian poetry of 1980s, the opposition of speaking/silence is represented as a worldview. The opposition builds poetic levels in terms of a social position (interrelation with contemporaries and power institutions as well as an attitude toward the dominating ideology). The 1980s generation was guided not only by the intention of adequate self-representation, but also by ambitions of distancing from official discourse and restoration

⁴ This translation of the poem is by Virlana Tkacz.

⁵ This translation of the poem is by Virlana Tkacz.

⁶ This translation of the poem is by Virlana Tkacz.

(formation) of the national tradition (the official Soviet history which is falsified versus the repressed national memory). Therefore, oppositions of false/true word, the Self/the Other (Stranger), speaking/ silence, verbalized/hidden (repressed) are significant for 1980s generation poetry. Above all, the concept of a spoken word is very important because of distrust in the written word as falsified and manipulative.

In Zabuzhko's poetry, the concept of verbalization is the most important. On the one hand, world self-manifestation is described and represented only through the word, according to Zabuzhko's conception of the total semantization of the universe. On the other hand, the process of self-verbalization is perceived by Zabuzhko as the process of restoration of the ruined national tradition and simultaneous inscription of herself in this tradition. For this reason, the modernist concept of a prophet is studied in Zabuzhko's poetry in a specific way: a prophet as both the predictor of the future and the carrier of a spoken tradition preserving the true, unadulterated past. Consequently, the process of writing correlates with a liminal existential experience and is interpreted as self-overcoming. In that case, a poet is represented as a creator, a witch, and sometimes as a marginal and insane person. Furthermore, a poet can be the mediator who transmits the repressed, hidden voices of people, living or dead, things, and nature.

In contrast, non-verbalization and silence are connected with the traumatic and frustrating experience of oppression in the situation of colonial dependence. The double work of self-verbalization in the restored tradition is justified by the destruction of the national memory and discontinuity of tradition linearity. Silence in Zabuzhko's poetry indicates the complicated problem of cyclic time. The world is deserted at the beginning and the end of a cycle. The beginning of a cycle is connected with the world of wholeness and plenitude, where words can be interpreted as rooted in silence. Silence at the end of a cycle indicates post-human and, therefore, post-verbal world; accordingly, in connection with concrete historical facts (the Chornobyl' catastrophe) it acquires ecological and/or apocalyptic connotation.

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