

GENDER CONCEPTS AND LINGUISTIC MODELS OF FEMALE IDENTITY IN THE
POETRY OF ANNA AKHMATOVA AND ZULFIYA ISROILOVA

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ABSTRACT

The article presents a comparative analysis of gender concepts and linguistic models of female identity in the poetry of two prominent twentieth-century poets, Anna Akhmatova and Zulfiya Isroilova. The study is conducted within the frameworks of cognitive poetics and linguocultural studies and aims to identify the conceptual structures that shape feminine world perception in Russian and Uzbek poetic traditions, as well as the ways in which the experience of the female “self” — emotional, cultural, and existential — is constructed in these traditions. Special attention is paid to the analysis of key concepts such as love, memory, fate, home, voice, and woman, along with the mechanisms of their linguistic representation, including metaphorical models, cultural codes, semiotic structures, and emotional dominants. The paper examines metaphorical patterns (woman as the voice of memory, woman as pain/wound, woman as the guardian of the world), strategies of subjectivity in poetic discourse, and the specific features of culturally embedded codes.

Keywords: gender concepts, female identity, cognitive poetics, linguocultural studies, metaphorical models, poetic discourse, Anna Akhmatova, Zulfiya, Russian poetry, Uzbek poetry, cultural codes.

АННОТАЦИЯ

Статья посвящена сопоставительному анализу гендерных концептов и языковых моделей женской идентичности в поэзии двух выдающихся поэтесс XX века — Анны Ахматовой и Зульфийи. Исследование выполнено в русле когнитивной поэтики и лингвокультурологии и направлено на выявление концептуальных структур, определяющих женское мироощущение в русской и узбекской поэтических традициях, как в русской и узбекской поэтических традициях конструируется опыт женского “я” — эмоциональный, культурный, экзистенциальный. Особое внимание уделяется анализу ключевых концептов *любовь, память, судьба, дом, голос, женщина*, а также механизмам их языковой репрезентации: метафорическим моделям, культурным кодам, семиотическим структурам и эмоциональным доминантам. Анализируются метафорические модели (женщина как голос памяти, женщина как боль/рана, женщина как хранительница мира), стратегии субъектной речи, особенности культурных кодов.

Ключевые слова: гендерные концепты, женская идентичность, когнитивная поэтика, лингвокультурология, метафорические модели, поэтический дискурс, Анна Ахматова, Зульфийа Исраилова, русская поэзия, узбекская поэзия, культурные коды.



INTRODUCTION

The theme of female identity in twentieth-century poetic discourse is one of the key directions of contemporary humanities research. Changes in the social status of women, their cultural subjectivity, and their role in national memory are reflected in the artistic language of poets across different traditions. In this regard, a comparison of Russian and Uzbek poetry of the twentieth century is particularly valuable, as it brings into focus two powerful literary figures: Anna Akhmatova, a representative of the “acmeist experience of the world,” and Zulfiya Isroilova, often described as the “voice of Eastern female spirituality.”

Both poets construct a model of the female “self” that is simultaneously personal and national, intimate and historical. However, while Akhmatova’s female subjectivity is shaped through the tragic experience of “silence,” “waiting,” and “memory,” Zulfiya’s emerges from the concepts of “devotion,” “maternal light,” and “spiritual courage.”

The cognitive-poetic approach makes it possible to uncover the deep mechanisms through which the language of both poets organizes emotional worlds and cultural meanings. Metaphors, symbols, and the structure of the lyrical “self” are not random sets of images, but stable cognitive schemas encoding the experience of a generation and a national culture.

The Lyrical “Self”: Subjective Strategy and Identity

Cognitive poetics views a literary text not merely as a set of images, but as a reflection of conceptual structures of consciousness. Every word and image carries culturally embedded meanings. Gender linguistics provides tools for analyzing female subjectivity, including modes of expression, self-representation, and patterns of emotional articulation. The historical-cultural method allows for consideration of context—epoch, cultural transformations, and ideological challenges. The semiotic approach makes it possible to analyze symbols, recurring motifs, and archetypes.

Female Subjectivity in Akhmatova

Akhmatova creates an image of a woman grounded in tragic memory, silence, dignity, and the depth of the inner voice.

The concept of “love” is represented through loss, waiting, pain, and fidelity. The concept of “fate” appears as a persistent motif of inevitability and inner acceptance. Memory (“I write as if in a testament”) becomes a central mechanism for preserving female identity. The metaphorical model “woman as the voice of history” shapes the lyrical “self.” Akhmatova’s archetypal system is built upon female resilience in the face of destruction.

Akhmatova’s “self” is tragically divided between personal destiny and historical responsibility.

Example:

«Мне ни к чему одические рати,
Я предпочту простую прядь волос»



Here, the concept of a woman preserving dignity in simplicity is formed, contrasted with grand historical rhetoric. Female identity is defined through dignity, simplicity, and the ability to endure in silence.

In *Requiem*, another model emerges:

«Это было, когда улыбался
Только мёртвый, спокойствию рад...»

Here, the woman becomes the bearer of collective suffering.

Female Subjectivity in Zulfiya

In Zulfiya's poetry, female identity appears brighter and is rooted in Eastern spirituality. The concept of "love" is associated with harmony, warmth, and self-sacrifice. The concept of "mother" is central: the woman as the guardian of lineage and the world. Natural imagery ("гулхондай юрак", "очик осмон") functions as cultural symbols of purity. Zulfiya constructs the model "woman as light," which is essential to Eastern poetics. The lyrical heroine is both a private and a social figure. Zulfiya's "self" is brighter, though not devoid of *trparism*.

Example:

Onam! Sening issiq, aziz joningni,
Zarradek chog'imdan boshlab bilaman,
O'zim ham zarra-yu, lekin qoningni
Yangilab jisingdan o'zni uzganman.

Here, female identity is constructed through maternal light, generational continuity, and the connection between womanhood and world-creation.

Akhmatova represents a tragic voice of history, while Zulfiya embodies a luminous voice of memory and lineage. Both, however, construct the image of woman as a spiritual center.

Shared concepts include love, waiting, sacrifice, voice, and memory. Differences lie in emotional tonality: Akhmatova's density is tragic, while Zulfiya's is luminous and harmonious.

National cultural codes differ as well:

Russian: cold, silence, stone, night

Uzbek: sun, garden, flower, steppe

Models of female subjectivity diverge:

"woman as witness" (Akhmatova)

"woman as creator" (Zulfiya)

Their metaphorical systems differ: rational restraint versus figurative musicality. Cognitive Metaphors of Female Identity

Metaphor of pain and silence in Akhmatova. Akhmatova employs metaphors such as silence → cry of the soul, waiting → life, love → wound.



Example:

«Я научилась просто, мудро жить...»

Here, “simply” functions as a cognitive model of survival.

Metaphor of light and fidelity in Zulfıya. Zulfıya uses metaphors such as woman → light (nur), love → bridge between souls, memory → garden (bog‘). Example:

From the poem «Бахор келди сени суроклаб»

«Кетсанг ҳам менга жон туйғунгдан айнаб,

Билардим, қайдадир оласан нафас,

Мураккаб бу дунё сен-чун ҳам тирик.

Сенга ёт — ношудлик, тунд рухлик, қафас».

(“Even if you leave, I will feel your soul; I know that somewhere you breathe; this complex world is alive for you as well; alien to you are misfortune, darkness of spirit, and confinement.”)

Shared Models and Symbolism. Common models include:

woman as the guardian of memory

woman as mediator between past and future

woman as the voice of morality. Akhmatova’s symbols: candle, window, rain, weeping, road. Zulfıya’s symbols: sun, flower, heart, wings. Semiotic strategies differ:

Akhmatova: the code of silence (whisper, muteness)

Zulfıya: the code of light and warmth

Both poets use the archetype of the Mother-Woman, though in different forms. The semiotic density of their texts reveals deep cultural models.

The Poetics of Love Akhmatova: love as fate-burden. Akhmatova presents love as something fateful and destructive:

«Но я предупреждаю вас,

Что я не та, за что себя выдаю...»

Love appears as inevitability and tragedy.

Zulfıya: love as creation. Example:

«Севгимда олам тикланар яна»

(“In my love, the world is restored again.”)

Here, love is a creative force rather than a destructive one.

Comparison: Akhmatova: love, tragedy, responsibility.

Zulfıya: love, creation, spiritual devotion.

Akhmatova is rooted in the Russian tragic tradition, with symbols connected to Orthodoxy, history, and St. Petersburg—cross, church, night, snow, memory of Pushkin and the city. Zulfıya draws on Eastern poetic tradition, with imagery of gardens, sun, rivers, maternal wisdom, and Sufi symbolism.



Akhmatova embodies tragic courage; Zulfiya embodies luminous resilience. Both are symbols of the feminine national spirit.

In Akhmatova's poetics, female subjectivity is both vulnerable and resilient, developing at the intersection of pain, ожидания, guilt, and historical pressure. In poems such as *Courage*, *Requiem*, and *In Memory of a Friend*, the personal "self" dissolves into the fate of the country, becoming a collective voice of tragedy. The woman in Akhmatova is not only loving and suffering but also a guardian of memory, capable of speaking for those deprived of a voice.

Zulfiya, by contrast, constructs female identity through the poetics of light, creation, and moral elevation. In her poems (*Onasiga*, *Sen kimsan*, *ayol?*, *Yuragimda*), the female soul appears as an inexhaustible source of warmth and spiritual support. Even in moments of loss, she endows woman with the power of renewal—the power to restore harmony.

If Akhmatova, through the "gesture of the word," фиксирует tragedy, Zulfiya, through the "gesture of the heart," seeks to transform it. Their artistic solutions differ fundamentally:

Akhmatova constructs identity through the endurance of tragic experience and the ability to withstand history.

Zulfiya constructs identity through creative transformation and faith in preserving humanity within the human being.

Thus, the poetry of both authors becomes a space where female experience acquires national significance, and the female voice becomes an act of cultural continuity.

CONCLUSION

The comparison of the poetics of Anna Akhmatova and Zulfiya Isroilova demonstrates that female identity in Russian and Uzbek literature is constructed through stable cognitive models—metaphors of light, pain, memory, and love. However, each tradition encodes female experience differently: tragically and historiosophically (Akhmatova) versus spiritually and creatively (Zulfiya).

The study shows that the poetry of these authors constitutes a unique space where personal experience becomes part of national memory, and the female voice functions as an act of cultural self-preservation.

This comparison reveals both universal archetypes of female consciousness (motherhood, sacrifice, inner voice, memory) and national-cultural specificities shaped by differences between Russian and Uzbek traditions. The results of the study can be applied in gender linguistics, cognitive poetics, comparative literary studies, and the teaching of world literature.

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