

## ORIENTAL CODE OF “LISOVA PISNIA” BY LESIA UKRAÏNKA

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**Summary**

Despite the considerable corpus of scholarly publications addressing to genius Lesia Ukraïnka’s legacy, we are far from the global multifaceted comprehension of her phenomenon. The article presents a new interpretation of “Lisova Pisnia” by Lesia Ukraïnka through the prism of oriental aesthetics (code), which goes through the life and oeuvre of the poetess, made on the base of the systematic method of research, which includes such modern methods of literary analysis as: contact technique in combination with the biographical method; the parallel method, in particular in the study of literary analogies and contrasts in the literatures of different continents and eras (“Lisova Pisnia” by Lesia Ukraïnka and “The Epic of Gilgamesh”); elements of Freudian psychoanalysis; a hermeneutic and poststructuralist approach (a textual analysis offers many different codes that are at the same time closely intertwined and incomplete); intertextual approach and elements of feminist criticism. The target readership for the article is all the interested in Ukrainian literature and culture in the global context.

**Key words:** “Lisova Pisnia” by Lesia Ukraïnka, “The Epic of Gilgamesh”, the “Ashurbanipal effect”, Lesia Ukraïnka studies, oriental code.

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**1. Introduction**

Despite the considerable corpus of scholarly publications addressing to genius Lesia Ukraïnka’s legacy, we are far from the global multifaceted comprehension of her phenomenon. The late 19th – the early 20th century was marked by the intense interest of European intellectuals, in particular modernist writers, in the East and Oriental studies in order to seek inspiration, get hold off new themes and images, to renovate, to reach the “enlightenment”. This period can be characterized with the awareness of the fact that European culture had been stuck in a rut, the appearance of numerous magazines and manifestos, the foundation of small groups and artistic association in order to change the situation appealing to the Middle and Far East, Africa, India, etc. aimed at obtaining new cultural inspiration, the patterns of how things can be done differently. At this time, the intellectuals decoded the ancient cuneiform tablets, published the first translations of the literary masterpieces of the Ancient East into European languages, in particular the “discovery of the century” “The Epic of Gilgamesh” (hereinafter referred to as the Epic) (1900 – in German, 1907 – in French, 1909 and 1911 – in German) (*Jensen, 1900; Dhorne, 1907; Gressmann, 1909; Gressmann, A. Ungnad 1911*).

The objective of this article is to present a new interpretation of “Lisova Pisnia” by Lesia Ukraïnka through the prism of oriental aesthetics (code), made on the base of the systematic method of research, which includes such modern methods of literary analysis as: contact technique in combination with the biographical method; the parallel method, in particular in the study of literary analogies and contrasts in the literatures of different continents and eras;

elements of Freudian psychoanalysis; a hermeneutic and poststructuralist approach; intertextual approach and elements of feminist criticism.

In Ukraine, Mykhailo Drahomanov, the uncle and consultant of Lesia Ukraïнка, and Lesia herself were at the origins of Oriental studies. In 1890–1891 Lesia Ukraïнка wrote the first Ukrainian manual on the history of the peoples of the East for her younger sister (“Стародавня історія східних народів” (“The Ancient History of the Oriental Peoples”)). In 20 years, in 1910–1911, being treated in Egypt, she resumed editing and refining the manual, using the works of Gaston Maspero (*Maspero, 1878*) and Louis Menard (*L. Menard, 188*), and proposed to change the title to “Історія давніх народів Сходу. Зложила Леся Українка по Менару, Масперо і інших” (“The History of the Ancient Oriental Peoples. Compiled by Lesia Ukraïнка after Menard, Maspero and others”) (the letter to sister Olha dated by 14 October 1911). However, the manuscript of the new version of this manual was lost, therefore in 1918, after Lesia Ukraïнка’s death, her sister, Olha Kosach-Kryvnyiuk, published its original version (*Ukraïнка, 2018*). In the manual “The Ancient History of the Oriental Peoples” (hereinafter referred to as “History”), the author laid down the principle of priority of the historical studying the spiritual, ethical and cultural experience of the ancient the peoples of the East, that she considered to be the most valuable (*Ukraïнка, 2021, vol. 10*). In particular, in the chapter “Primitive times”, the author with a special piety characterizes the syllabic writing of the Assyrians, who used clay tablets for writing, and mentions the Behistun Inscription in Old Persian, Median, and Assyrian-Babylonian languages as a scientific source for decoding Mesopotamian written artifacts on the clay tables and columns in the discovered libraries, in particular in the library in Ashurbanipal’s palace in Nineveh (*Ukraïнка, 2021, vol. 10:241–242, 250*).

From Lesia Ukraïнка’s letter to her sister Olha dated by 11 August 1911 we know that “Lisova pisnia” was written by Lesia when she was editing her “History” at the urging of a sudden impulse, creative ecstasy (*Ukraïнка, 2021, vol. 14: 228–229*): “Yesterday I received the last portion of the rewritten “History”. Now I have the whole there... By October I hope to revise the manuscript properly, if removals, health or something else won’t prevent. Until now, I have not been able to do this due to some home keeping work, but recently I just have been “seized by a poetry impulse” to write, so I finished some of the old things, and in addition, I wrote a drama-narrative poem in 3 acts for 10 days, under such an impetus that I couldn’t sleep at night and even eat at the daytime... When I finished it, I got a little weaker as I had a fever and faintness, so I have thinned down a bit, but now everything is fine” (*Ibidem*). At the same time, she actively was corresponding with the outstanding orientalist Ahatanhel Krymsky. In the letter dated by 27 October 1911 she wrote to him: “I should have been born in Egypt, then maybe it would have been all right, but the worst mistake of my life is that I grew up in the Volynian forests, the rest are just logical consequences. However, I do bear no ill will to the Volynian forests. This summer, remembering them, I wrote a “drama-extravaganza” in their honor...” (*Ibidem: 275*). In a letter to her mother dated by 2 January 1912, Lesia depicted in more details about the impulse to create “Lisova Pisnia”, but noted that it was difficult for her to arrive at the truth consciously (“to grasp it consciously”) in this case: “But I am “not indifferent” to this thing, because it gave me so many precious moments of ecstasy than any other. There wasn’t the impulse from Nikolai Gogol, as far as I can grasp it consciously. It seems to me I just had remembered our forests and longed for them. Besides, I’ve been “holding” that mavka in my mind for a long time, ever since you told me something about mavkas in Zhaborytsia, when we were walking through a forest with small but very bushy trees. Then in Kolodiazhne, at a moonlit night, I ran alone into the forest (no one knew that) and waited there for a mavka to appear to me. And in Nechimne, I dreamed about her when we spent the night there – do you

remember? – at uncle Lev Skulynsky's... Apparently, I should have written it once, and now for some reason the “right moment” has come – I don't understand this reason actually” (*Ibidem*: 284–285).

That is why the Volynian landscape of “*Lisova Pisnia*” (“*A dense and hoary primeval forest in Volynia... At one end the glade turns into tussocks and reedy growths, and then into a vivid green marsh, the shore of a woodland lake...*” (Prologue)) is so syncretically harmonized with the description made by “*one Roman historian*” of Lower Mesopotamia, given by Lesia Ukraïнка in her “*History*” in the section about the Assyrians and Babylonians (“*The Euphrates overflows every spring... the excess water spills over the plains close to the sea and creates lakes overgrown with reeds...*”) (*Ukraïнка*, 2021, vol. 10: 275); the pictures of the mountains of Lebanon, which “*provided with cedar, pine, and cypress trees*”, and coastal bays in the section devoted to the Phoenicians (*Ibidem*: 239); Lebanese landscapes from the “*exotic poems*” by Ahatanhel Krymsky (collection “*Пальмове гілля*” (“*Palm Branch*”) (1898–1901)) and the Lebanese-Mesopotamian “*sacred-cedar*” settings of the “*Epic of Gilgamesh*” (“*They saw the Mountain of Cedar, seat of gods and goddesses' throne. [On the] face of the mountain the cedar proffered its abundance, its shade was sweet and full of delight*”. (Table 5)) (*The Epic of Gilgamesh*, 2000). Conventionally we name such syncretism in creative impulse as “*Ashurbanipal effect*”.

## 2. The Mirror between Female Masculinity and Male Femininity, or What Mavka and Enkidu Have in Common and How Lukash is (Un)Similar to Gilgamesh

The Epic starts by presenting the protagonist Gilgamesh as an experienced, open to new knowledge, wise man who got enlightened after his wanderings and searches for immortality epitomized in his epical literary story about his way to this enlightenment: “*He who saw the Deep, the country's foundation, [who] knew ..., was wise in all matters!*” (Table 1). At the beginning of “*Lisova Pisnia*” Lukash, whose name comes from Latin “*lux*” (“*light*”), described as inexperienced, narrow spirited, incapable even of self-cognition, and only at the end of the drama, after getting back from his wanderings in the guise of a werewolf, he quietly says about himself with “*a queer, quiet smile*”: “*Ah, wife, I see that which you cannot see . . . / I've learned some wisdom now...*” (Act III).

By his origin, Gilgamesh is the firstborn of Lugalbanda (Shum. “*a younger (or adolescent) king*”), who, according to the legend, was a shepherd, and of Ninsun (Shum. a mistress of wild cows), the patron goddess of shepherds and herds with a symbolic presentation as a wild cow. Two-thirds of Gilgamesh is a god and one third is a human (Table 1). Lisovyk (Forest Elf, a woodland sprite) from “*Lisova Pisnia*” notes about Lukash that “*He's from afar; / Not from these woods, but from the groves of pine / Where our Great Father all his winters spends. / The widowed mother and her orphaned son / Were given a home by good old Uncle Lev*” (Act I). We know about Lukash's mother that she opts for Kylyna as a daughter-in-law because she (Kylyna) possesses “*a cow of Turkish breed*” (Act II). Lukash is also a mortal human being who is blessed with a higher gift, which Mavka tells him about: “*Do not despise that flowering of your soul, / For from your music this our love was born! / Like to the magic blossom of the fern, / Which hath creative power within itself*” (Act II).

Gilgamesh is a reliable and brave warrior-brother, “*brave scion of Uruk, wild bull on the rampage!*”, who “*Going at the fore ...was the vanguard, / going at the rear, one his comrades could trust!*”, “*a violent flood-wave, smashing a stone wall!*”, “*the perfect in strength*”, “*has no equal when his weapons are brandished*” and “*tall, magnificent and terrible*”, handsome

because “*It was the Lady of the Gods drew the form of his figure*” (Table 1). Lukash, although he is also young and handsome, slender and black-browed, but has “*a still childish look in his eyes*” (Act 1) and physically can’t even take a stand against Kylyna. At the beginning of the Epic, Gilgamesh is shown as a despotic ruler of the city, who forces the young men to build a city wall from sunup to sundown and “*lets no [daughter go free to her] mother*” or “*to [her bridegroom]*”, exercising droit du seigneur and having sexual intercourse with all the girls of Uruk, for what the city community complains of him to the gods (Table 1). Lukash, on the contrary, is chaste (“*I’ve never been / In love before*”) and easily tempted (“*I never knew / That love could be so sweet*”) (Act 1).

The framing of the Epic is the fact that the main Gilgamesh’s achievement is infrastructure development of Uruk and a patron goddess’ of the city, Ishtar’s, sacred storehouse and construction of a wall around the city. And also, Gilgamesh is famous for the fact that he consecrated in stone his name to posterity, that is, he left his successions with an epical description of his travels as an author, not a copyist or scribe: “[*See*] the tablet-box of cedar, / [*release*] its clasp of bronze! [*Lift*] the lid of its secret, / [*pick*] up the tablet of lapis lazuli and read out / the travails of Gilgamesh, all that he went through” (Table 1). Lukash in Act II builds a dwelling that may easily be destroyed or burned down. As for the cattle pen, he made it under the pressure of his mother (Act II). At the end of Act III, Lukash is already the watchman of the burnt house, who tells to Kylyna “*with a contemptuous smile*”: “*Who’s going to stay / To keep a watch on this that still remains?*” (Act III). We know nothing about Lukash’s wanderings in the guise of a werewolf. He is able just to pipe about it in one’s dying hours on the advice of Fate and at the behest of Mavka.

Gilgamesh “*scoured the world ever searching for life, / and reached through sheer force Uta-napishti the Distant; / ... restored the cult-centres destroyed by the Deluge, / and set in place for the people the rites of the cosmos*” (Table 1) (Uta-napishti is the Sumerian counterpart of Noah, who started a new mankind after the flood, was also considered to be a progenitor of Gilgamesh), that is, he has restored the generational bridge and collective memory. In “*Lisova Pisnia*” Uta-napishti corresponds to Unkle Lev, who has a boat and avoids the death by drowning in the fight with Vodianyuk (Water Goblin, guardian spirit of the lake), he also tells stories to Lukash about the past (fairy-tales about Okh-Sorcerer (a forest king), Tromsyn, the Princess of the Wave), like Uta-napishti to Gilgamesh, and is the head of the family and the last holder of “antediluvian” knowledge. Gilgamesh contributed to rebuilding the city after the flood giving the tranquility to all people with that, Lukash, however, was not going to restore the burnt house and borrow customs and Uncle Lev’s wisdom as well, but he had a quite opposite gift: not to give the tranquility or peace, but to awaken up, in particular Mavka, by playing the pipe and a werewolf’s howling.

What events set Gilgamesh on the path to enlightenment and getting back to Uruk as a wise ruler and reconstructor of the city? In response to the community complaints, Anu – the supreme god of the sky, asked Aruru, the Great goodness who creates all human beings of clay and prophesies their fate, to create Enkidu, the equal of Gilgamesh, to distract him from his outrages on fighting with an equal rival: “*Let him be a match for the storm of his heart, / let them vie with each other, so Uruk may be rested!*” (Table 1). So, with an eye to Gilgamesh’s pursuing a better path the gods created a being worthy of Gilgamesh and equal to him not in his outrages, but in his valiantness. Enkidu is literally “son of Enki”, that is, the son of the god of fresh waters and the underworld, of wisdom (as Enkidu was made of fresh water and clay). In the Sumero-Akkadian cosmogony there was a divine triad: passive Anu; active and hostile to people Enlil (Bel, Baal) – the lord of the wind, the god of the air, who unites the upper world

(earth), water and air, because he carries out storms and hurricanes both on water and on land; and well-minded to the people Enki (Ea). Enkidu looks like: “*All his body is matted with hair; / he bears long tresses like those of a woman: / the hair of his head grows thickly as barley*” (Table 1). Enkidu lives alone: “*...he knows not a people, nor even a country. / Coated in hair like the god of the animals, / with the gazelles he grazes on grasses, / joining the throng with the game at the water-hole, / his heart delighting with the beasts in the water*” (Table 1) and prevents hunters from hunting animals.

Mavka’s origin is not known for sure even to herself: “*It seems to me that here I’ve always lived...*” (Act I), she accepts a willow as her mother (trees, especially a willow, were considered to be a bridge between the underworld and overworld and united the elements of the earth, the ground water, and the air), and Lisovyk as her father/grandfather, who is more well-minded to the people (in contrast to Vodianyky). The contraposition of Lisovyk and Vodianyky resembles the confrontation between Enlil and Enki. Mavka, when we see her for the first time, is dressed in the light green transparent garment and has “*her black hair, hanging loose*” with “*a greenish sheen*” (Act I). Mavka tells to Lukash about her loneliness: “*In all my life I’ve never been outside*” (the forest) (Act I), and here, in the forest, the birch is gloomy, the alder is rough, the aspen is frightening, the oaks are too pompous, the wild rose, the hawthorn and blackthorn are badass, the ash, maple, and sycamore are haughty, the viburnum blows her own horn because of her beauty and that is why seems to be totally indifferent, the willow is dry, cracks and thinks of winter constantly, and all dances and jokes are “*All those are but like sudden gusts of wind*” (Act I). Mavka knows “*Here in the forest there / Are certain pitfalls hidden in the brush, / Of which nor beasts nor humans are aware / Until they fall therein*” (Act II) and defends the forest from people, particularly her “sisters” Birch and Field Sprite from Lukash’s knife and the reaping-hook, which Lukash’s mother put in Mavka’s hands.

The hunters complained on Enkidu to Gilgamesh, who ordered to lead Shamhat the harlot (from Akkadian “beautiful”) for Enkidu to seduce him and wean off of the beasts. Shamhat saw Enkidu at a watering hole, seduced him with her naked body, made love to him for six days and seven nights, and, as a result, “*The gazelles saw Enkidu, they started to run, / the beasts of the field shied away from his presence*”, “*Enkidu was weakened, could not run as before*”, but “*...now he had reason, and wide understanding*”. Shamhat invites Enkidu to the city to show his strength to the people in the fight with Gilgamesh, tempts him with discovering the joys of urban life, because he does not know life, teaches him to dress, eat human food and drink human drinks and “*The barber groomed his body so hairy, / anointed with oil he turned into a man. / He put on a garment, became like a warrior*” (Table 2). As for the fight and, accordingly, the first meeting of Enkidu and Gilgamesh, Enkidu stands in Gilgamesh’s way to one couple’s house on their wedding night, thus putting an end Gilgamesh’s outrages in the city (cf. the first meeting of Mavka and Lukash – Mavka rushes to prevent Lukash from tapping a birch tree for sap).

In “Lisova Pisnia” we have two female “civilizers”: firstly, Lukash’s mother invites, “*opulent*”, “*a full-faced young widow*” named Kylyna (like that Shamhat) in order to wean off her son of “*running off to fool around / With that bold hussy, that queer vagabond!*”, “*witch from the woods*”, “*forest trash*” (about Mavka). But if Shamhat civilizes Enkidu, then Kylyna, on the contrary, primitivizes Lukash. Oksana Zabuzhko noted, that “their introductory (mating) love game in Act II is the most overtly sexual scene in the entire play... This couple demonstrates “a perfect animal partnership” without any mediation of “culture”, i.e. music and words”. The “game of instincts” turns into the “game of characters” and “the war of the sexes” and firms in a model of “who will be on top” relationships (Zabuzhko, 2007: 238).

Secondly, Lukash's mother pretends to be a "civilizer" for Mavka: "*Why do you always go trimmed up like that? / You're always combing, fixing up your hair. / You dress up like a witch. It isn't nice. / And what is all that rubbish you've got on? / Not practical at all for working in. / I've got some things of my dead daughter's there: / Go put them on – you'll find them hanging up; / These you can lay away inside the chest*", the mother applies to Mavka at the beginning of Act II, who helped to manage the household, brought the wood for putting up the house, helped with the garden, sowed the fields, planted the lovely flowers beneath the window in such a manner "*That when she takes care of the cows, more milk / They always give*" and everything produces a bountiful harvest like never before. Mavka comes to the people deliberately, because of her love for Lukash. But the constant Lukash's mother's heartburning and her "civilizational" pressure force Mavka to disfigure herself in a human cast-off clothing and acquire the status of "*not a bit of good*". In response to Mavka's reproaches, Lukash does not give her a chance to understand humans and find a common ground with his mother: "*To understand these human cares and woes, / One should grow up elsewhere than in these woods*" (Act II).

Pulling away from her nature, Mavka, like Enkidu, loses her identity and strength, and Lisovyk reproaches her for self-betraying. Enkidu later, with his dying breath, curses Shamhat because she made him "*[weak, who was undefiled!] / Yes, in the wild [you weakened] me, who was undefiled!*", but Shamash (Sumerian-Akkadian god of sun, well-minded to Gilgamesh and the city of Uruk) reproaches Enkidu for cursing the woman who made him a human and gave him the friendship of Gilgamesh, who "*[will] lay you out on a magnificent bed. / [On] a bed of honour he will lay you out, / [he will] place you on his left, on a seat of repose; / [the rulers] of the underworld will all kiss your feet. / The people of Uruk [he will have] mourn and lament you*" (Table 7). After that, Enkidu wishes Shamhat all the best. Mavka does not blame anyone, especially Lukash, but only regrets that he can't "*bring your life up to the level of your soul*" (Act II). But who will curse and plague Starvelings (imps personifying Famine and Want) and other troubles each other, are the two "civilizers", the Lukash's mother and Klyna. Although after Mavka had turned Lukash to a human being again, delivered him, Lisovyk practically renounces her: "*Unworthy of the name of forest child! / Your soul is no more of the forest free, / But of the slavish house!*" (Act III).

### 3. The Conflict of Two Sphynxes, or the Oedipus Complex

In the Epic, there is a comparison of Gilgamesh and Enkidu, where it is emphasized on their equality: "*This fellow – how like in build he is to Gilgamesh, / tall in stature, proud as a battlement. / For sure it's Enkidu, born in the uplands, / his strength is as mighty as a rock from the sky*" (Table 2). On the contrary, Lukash suggests Mavka might descended from an honorable family: "*Your hands are white, your figure's straight and slim, / Your clothes, somehow, are not the same as ours...*" (Act I). Then the comparison proceeds to another dimension that is spiritual one, where Lukash's "metaphysical blindness" (*Ibidem*, c. 262) can be traced: ("*Your voice is clear as is the running stream; / Your eyes, though, are opaque*"), and Lukash is unable to hold Mavka's eyes with his own: "*Your eyes seem peering down into my soul .../ I cannot stand it*" (Act I).

In "Lisova Pisnia" there is a conflict of two sphinxes – "female" (ancient Greek, from Theban cycle, Oedipodea) and "male" (ancient Egyptian); "winged" and "wingless"; complex existential truth which is mostly incomprehensible and down-to-earth ignorance (cf. dark Lukash's eyes, who can't "bring" his "*life up to the level of the soul*"). It was the Theban Sphinx

who threw herself off the cliff into the sea (committed suicide), when Oedipus solved her riddle. Accordingly, Mavka voluntarily goes into oblivion to “He Who Dwells in Rock” (a phantom signifying Death and Oblivion). But after that we have deal already with the Phoenix (again a mythologem from the ancient (Phoenician, old Egyptian) world). Phoenix (the etymology of the word is unknown) is the soul of the deity Ra and one of the hypostases of Osiris that is a union of the afterlife with light, in fact, it is the path of Mavka. In the Phoenix, we again see wingedness, but, at the same time, the ability to arise from the ashes. According to medieval Arabian legends, the Sphinx could restore a person’s lost skills and abilities, just one needed to have a look at the monster (Lukash gets horrified, turns his eyes away from Mavka’s ones, does not understand her language, finally abandons her and simultaneously dismisses self-cognition and enlightenment). According to the legend, Oedipus met the Sphinx after killing his father (cf. the loss of his father is the main reason for Lukash to come to Uncle Lev’s and to the forest), and the Sphinx for Oedipus was the first woman in his life (cf. Mavka is the first love for Lukash), whom he drew to suicide and married his own mother (Lukach’s marriage of Kylyna essentially manifests so-called “Oedipus complex”).

#### **4. Dreams about the Afterlife and Beyond, or How Gilgamesh Foreshadowed Two Mavka’s Deaths**

There are quite enough dreams, delusions, transcendent transitions and prophecies, including pseudo and false ones in the Epic and “Lisova Pisnia”. At the beginning of the Epic (Table 1), before meeting Enkidu, Gilgamesh has two dreams and relates them to his mother to interpret in her way. In the first dream “*the stars of the heavens appeared above*” Gilgamesh and a rock fell in front of him from the sky, he could not lift up it and dislodge. In the second dream everything happened in the same way but only with the axe. In both dreams “*a crowd [was milling about] before it, / [the menfolk were] thronging around it*” and Gilgamesh “*like a wife [I loved it,] caressed and embraced it*” (rock and axe), as well as his mother her gave blessing (“*you made it my equal*”). The mother predicts to Gilgamesh that “*a mighty comrade will come*”, a “*friend’s saviour*”, whom he will love “*like a wife*”, the people will love him as well, and she (the mother) will make him her son equal. The mother didn’t just say about that fact that the rock and the axe would cause his friend’s death. After the “incomings and outgoings” of Gilgamesh and Enkidu (killing Humbaba (rock) and cutting down cedars (axe) (see the corresponding section for more details) and their getting back to Uruk, Enkidu has a dream with the great gods in counsel who determine who should die to atone for that violation. The last word was Enlil’s one, who decreed: “*Let Enkidu die, but let not Gilgamesh die!*” Enkidu tries to beg the gods off, but: “*The word [Enlil] spoke is not like the ... gods’, / [what he] commands, he doesn’t erase, / [what] he sets down ..., he doesn’t erase*” (Table 7). In the Epic Gilgamesh’s mother is depicted as a “wise” mother, because she knew about Enkidu’s mission for her son and she was familiar with Enkidu’s fate as well, but Gilgamesh was not supposed to cognize everything that the gods knew. However, Lukash’s mother, on the contrary, wean her son off of Mavka ruining him unconsciously: “*She doesn’t fancy such a daughter-in-law ... / She has no liking for the forest folk ... / An unkind mother-in-law she’d be to you*” (Act II). Lukash’s mother is materialistic and pragmatic, but she also has a great influence on her son.

In the “Lisova Pisnia”, Mavka’s “two deaths” are also marked by a rock and an axe. The first death was sphinxlike, suicidal, rocky. Mavka fell on an eternal stonelike sleep in the cave of “He Who Dwells in Rock”, where she, hearing Lukash’s the werewolf howling, seized the thought that she “*...was not destined to forgetfulness...*”, mustered up her strength to “*split*

*the granite vault*” in order to give a helping hand to Lukash and turn him to a human being again). The second death was phoenixlike, saving, axe-flamy. Kylyna gave Lukash an axe to cut down the willow that Mavka turned into, it is precisely at the blow of the axe Perelesnyk came flying to save her. In the drama, there is a moment when Mavka seems to evoke death for herself: “... *And yet 'twould lovely be / To die as dies a falling star...*” (Act I).

In his dreams in the mountains in the course of the march to Humbaba, Gilgamesh has another five dreams and Enkidu interprets them for him. In the first dream, Gilgamesh sees how a mountain fell on him (in the sixth dream it will be a giant; both – a mountain and a giant – are embodiments of Humbaba). In the second dream it happened again but Gilgamesh was saved by a handsome man. In Gilgamesh’s third dream, the earth rumbled, the sky was getting dark of the dust and the lightning flashed across it but he was saved again by an old man. In his fourth dream Gilgamesh sees a Thunderbird with the breath like death but a strange man cast it down. In the fifth dream Gilgamesh meets “*a bull from the wild*” and someone who gave him water to drink from waterskin. Enkidu interprets all three dreams as a good omen and victory over the enemy (Table 4).

Lukash can’t understand and perceive Mavka’s “rescue” mission either in his dreams or with his mind. He remains to be “metaphysically blind”. Mavka not even once tries to reveal to Lukash the approach to himself (“*Ah, that is why I love you most of all: / Because you do not understand yourself, / Although your soul sings all about what’s there / So clearly and sincerely through your pipe*”) (Act II), but he keeps nourishing his “sin of ignorance”, “which ultimately causes disaster in the microcosm of the drama” (Zabuzhko, 2007: 263).

In the Epic, only the death of Enkidu made Gilgamesh think about the transience of life and the powerlessness of a human over the death, and aware that he had just slept all these years and wants his eyes “*see the sun and be sated with light*” (Table 9) and starts his wandering. Lukash, the werewolf, set off on his wanders not consciously, but as a punishment from Lisovyk, but these encircling between worlds will contribute to his enlightenment as well.

Table 2 of the Epic mentions the episode of Enkidu’s struggle with lions and wolves in the outskirts of Uruk that is a certain ritual of joining the civilizational processes and destroying / taming wild nature, in particular his own wild nature. In “*Lisova Pisnia*” Mavka searches for words as a weapon against the beasts, in particular a human’s inner “werewolves”: “*I found the magic liberating word / Which transforms brute back into human form*” (Act III), she says to Lisovyk after turning Lukash, the werewolf, into a human back. Mavka is at every turn looking for words to be heard. The most her terrible dream when the lips are dumb.

Enkidu’s troubles get started with his awareness of his “lost power” (Table 2). Gilgamesh decided to go on a campaign to Lebanon to kill Humbaba and steal Lebanese cedars. In her “*History*” Lesia Ukraïнка noted that all Assyrian-Babylonian stories about a war were constructed in the same way and it can be seen in numerous drawings: the cause of the war was the intolerance to strange gods, therefore “*strange gods were taken captive and chopped, holy woods were cut down either*”, the victory over the enemy was equal to the victory over “*native gods over strange ones*” (Ukraïнка, 2021, vol.10: 247, 250). For Gilgamesh it is a way to establish “*a name eternal*” (Table 2).

At the beginning of “*Lisova Pisnia*”, Mavka has an awareness of being sleeping for longer time than usually. Mavka tells to Lukash about her “*white*” dreams: “*Through those white dreams came rosy thoughts which made / Themselves into a bright embroidery. / The dreams thus woven out of gold and blue, / Were peaceful, tranquil, not like summer dreams...*” (Act I). That awareness auspicates Mavka’s the “the Way of the Cross, made up of all-time self-sacrifice” (Zabuzhko, 2007: 245). Mavka’s “*white dreams*” will turn into a “*stone-like dream*”,



when she agrees to go with “He Who Dwells in Rock” (Maryshche) to a faraway land with quiet, dark, dead waters with mute, lofty mountains, where neither trees nor grass arouse dreams and thoughts that do not let one sleep, “*stronghold of gloom and peace*” (Act II), where neither wind rushes flying in, singing about freedom, nor lightning gets in, and where no fires burn, “*in the rock, / In depths profound, in blackness, damp and cold*” (Act III). Mavka deliberately goes to the Netherworld as a “she-Faust”, she makes a pact with the devil for peace and oblivion, that practically stands for “spiritual suicide” (*Ibidem*: 273) but it will be “the only meltdown on her spiritual path” (*Ibidem*: 276). Unlike Enkidu, Mavka doesn’t pray to higher forces, she wakes up by a distorted, drawn-out, wild howling voice and with “*ardent pity*” wreaks a miracle – “*like subterranean fire*” splits the cave and frees herself, and gives life to her dumb lips (Act III).

In Enkidu’s last dream (Table 7), “*the heavens thundered, the earth gave echo*”, and he was standing between them, when a grim man with eagle’s wings and lion’s claws seized by Enkidu’s hair and after struggling overpowered Enkidu and crushed him underfoot with all his might (Mavka fought against Maryshche psychologically, although she actually fought against herself at that moment). Enkidu called Gilgamesh for help, but he was afraid of that man and failed to help (Mavka with “*expiring hope*” after the words “*No, I’m alive! I’ll live eternally! / I have that in my heart which cannot die!*” went to meet Lukash, who came out of the forest, but he was horrified by Mavka and notably loudly informed his mother about his desire to make proposals for Kylyna. It was the last straw and completely wore Mavka down in her fight with Maryshche. The messenger of the “the house of darkness” (“*seat of Irkalla*”) turned Enkidu into a dove and led him to the place that “*none who enters ever leaves*”, where there are no paths back, whose “*whose residents are deprived of light*” (Maryshche touches Mavka, who cries and falls into his arms, throws his black robe over her, and both melt into the ground). Enkidu tells whom he saw in the “House of Dust” – the kings, priests, magicians, servants, etc., the queen of the Netherworld Ereshkigal and Belet-eri, the scribe of the Netherworld, who held a tablet and read aloud, then she raised her face, saw Enkidu and said: “[*Who was*] it fetched this man here?”. But let’s note that the last word, the last decision was up to Mavka, Enkidu had no choice. After Enkidu’s death, Gilgamesh made a statue of Enkidu and placed it on a large bed of honor in a silent place.

In “History” Lesia Ukraïнка mentions the treatise “Ishtar’s descent into the underworld”, and we can find the description of the underworld there and see that it correlates to Enkidu’s version of the Netherworld in his last dream: “*This is a dwelling where one can enter but can’t leave, where one can descend but can’t return, this is a dungeon, where for a hunger there is only dust, where instead of food there is swamp, where no light is visible, where one has to live in darkness, where shadows, like birds, throng the vaults*” (*Ukraïнка, 2021, vol.10: 263*). The author also describes in detail the funeral rites of the Oriental peoples, in particular the Egyptian pyramids and the city of the dead necropolis, and also mentions Anubis, the deity-jackal, a psychopomp, and tomb guarder (*Ibidem*: 156–157). It is no coincidence that Lukash’s, the werewolf, howling, like no other, urges the way through stone walls of Mavka’s oblivion (interestingly, if we read the name “Lukash” backwards, we get “shakul” (from persian šāgāl, from oldind. śrīgālā – “the one who howls”)).

The author in “History” also notes that among the ancient Semitic peoples there was no distinction between the righteous and the sinners, because the reward for good deeds and the punishment for evil is carried out on earth, it indicates that these peoples had a little developed belief in life after death (*Ibidem*: 264). All the creatures of the forest are afraid of “He Who Dwells in Rock” (let’s remember Rusalka’s horror in the Prologue), regardless of the way of life

and the number of “good deeds”. Although according to Dharma Shastra of Manu, described in detail in “History”, the soul can pass, depending on its righteousness, either “into a clean creature” or “into an unclean one”. For example, a jackal was considered to be an unclean animal, therefore, “transition into the body of a jackal was considered to be a punishment for sins” (*Ibidem*, c. 78). So, it is now becoming apparent that such a punishment for Lukash as turning him into a werewolf (jackal) wasn’t eventual. In the chapter on Aryans, Lesia Ukraïнка describes in detail their belief that the human soul is immortal, and that they “burned the dead on a pyre, then took the bones and buried them in the ground” (*Ibidem*, c. 67). Mavka’s staying in the Maryshche’s cave and burning of Mavka, the willow, by Perelesnyk – the Sphinxlike and Phoenixlike Mavks’s deaths – also looks like a contrast between Egyptian-Semitic and Aryan philosophy and burial culture. That is why Mavka’s final monologue seems so similar to the Vedic “funeral hymns” translated by Lesia Ukraïнка in “History”, in particular the one dedicated to Agni, the deity of fire.

## 5. Conclusions

The words of Dmytro Dontsov about the death and immortality of Lesia Ukraïнка sound in unison with Mavka’s path, since, in his opinion, the poetess herself didn’t die of tuberculosis, but of “that inner fire that drove her to an action, that was still impossible at the time, – this small woman with the soul of a chained Prometheus. She died an early death, because people, who live so intensively, live a little. Her voice was not heard during her life and she was frighteningly lonely in it... But like many other tragic figures, she has triumphed over death” (*Dontsov*, 1922: 35). So, we have deal with eternal masterpieces with the everlasting and endless process of reinterpretation and multitude of representations. It is possible that “Lisova Pisnia” along with other contributing factors had an “Ashurbanipal effect” on writers and other intellectuals of different generations, but this is already the subject of further Lesia Ukraïнка studies.

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