



УДК 821.161.2-31

## ETHNOGRAPHIC UNIVERSE OF ULAS SAMCHUK: FOLK TRADITIONS, PEDAGOGY AND NATIONAL IDENTITY IN THE NOVEL “MARIA” AND THE TRILOGY “VOLYN”

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**Abstract.** The article is devoted to the analysis of the ethnographic universe of Ulas Samchuk as one of the key ideas of his work, which combines folk traditions, pedagogical guidelines and the issue of national identity. To consider the specifics of the artistic embodiment of Ukrainian peasant life in the novel "Maria" and the trilogy "Volyn", where the writer depicts the way of life, customs, rituals and moral values of the people. It is emphasized that Samchuk's works not only reproduce the ethnocultural background of the era, but also have significant educational potential. They form in the reader an understanding of traditions, respect for labor, spirituality and religiosity as the basis of national character. The study focuses on the pedagogical significance of the writer's work, in particular on the ability to form civic consciousness, love for the native land and a sense of responsibility for history. It is analyzed how, through the depiction of the tragedies of the Ukrainian village - the famine, repressions, social cataclysms, the author actualizes the issue of preserving national memory and identity. At the same time, Samchuk's works are considered as valuable material for understanding the role of literature in the processes of nation-building, youth education and transmission of cultural heritage.

**Key words:** Ulas Samchuk, national identity, pedagogy, novel "Maria", trilogy "Volyn", historical memory, cultural heritage, Ukrainian peasantry.

### Introduction.

Iconic in Ukrainian literature of the beginning of the 20-th century became the works of Ulas Samchuk – a great connoisseur of the Ukrainian soul, the Ukrainian peasantry, the author of a number of monumental works written during the interwar period of the 20-th century – short stories, novels, the novel "Maria", the trilogy "Volyn", etc.

Ulas Samchuk truly became "a chronicler of the Ukrainian space in the era that he himself "saw, heard, experienced." According to the fair opinion of the authoritative researcher S. Pinchuk, the trilogy "Volyn" practically has no analogue in world literature, except for Homer's "Odyssey" and "Iliad", this gives reason to title the writer Ulas Samchuk as the Homer of the 20-th century. It should be noted that this work was nominated for the Nobel Prize in the 1930s, but under the conditions of Ukrainian



anarchy, U. Samchuk never became a Nobel laureate: the "Volyn" trilogy could not compete with other submitted works either in terms of the number of translations or for advertising promotions. However, this work was destined to become a bestseller, "a kind of sensation of the time" (U. Samchuk), "a stout peasant epic" (E. Malanyuk), a hymn to the Ukrainian countryside and Ukrainianism as a nation in general.

The work of the outstanding writer U. Samchuk, which is deeply national in its essence, is determined primarily by the author's reliable knowledge of the Ukrainian village, its way of life, and everyday life.

### **Main text**

In the Samchuk family, national customs, rites, and traditions were respected from grandfather and great-grandfather. The family lived according to age-old laws, where God, land, work, family, and love were sacred, where the farming calendar dictated the division of duties, where everyone knew their role and place in life. It was from the family that the future writer brought the conviction: the highest value is the human race, and not group or class interests – "an unwise invention of unwise heads" [3].

U. Samchuk's novels are an important source of Ukrainian ethnology, in particular folk pedagogy as its component. By resorting to a detailed analysis of the works ("Maria", "Volyn" trilogy, "Youth of Vasyl Sheremety", etc.), it is possible to find such components of Ukrainian studies knowledge as mentality, customary and ritual traditions; ethnopedagogical knowledge of Ukrainians; folk morality; oral poetic creativity, etc.

Thus, from the first pages of the novel "Maria" the reader learns about the ancient customs and rituals of the life of rural youth who lived at the end of the 19th century in a Ukrainian village, so-called blocks. This peculiar form of youth leisure provided for games, fun, songs, dances, courtship, accompanied by the playing of tripartite music and dances ("Cossack", "Cossack"), folk entertainment. In the work, we also include children's folk games, such as "pigs", "witch", Parubot entertainment – "obrok".

The author vividly and colorfully describes the wedding rites: inspection, betrothal, gathering of the bride, preparation of dowry, baking a loaf of bread, untying a braid, blessing on marriage, hiding the bride in the pantry, putting on the "tour".



Which creates a great color and reflects the originality of the Ukrainian village. Christmas and Easter were of great importance for the spiritual world of Ukrainians. These are eternal symbols of the "holy soul", hope for the best, for renewal, purification. It is no coincidence that Kornii brought a gift from the city for Maria – material for a skirt and a scarf. And it is on the great holy night that Maria and Kornius experience true happiness from communication, the heroes' confession, belated declaration of love, awareness of Kornius as a master, as a farmer.

The heroes of the novel act in accordance with folk moral and ethical principles. In addition, Ukrainians are a deeply religious nation, so the characters align their actions with Christian canons. Let's name some of them: "It is not appropriate for a woman to be taller than a man" (it is about height); "it is not appropriate to eat before marriage", "it is not appropriate to be at the table between the elders" for young guests; "obey and be kind" to the mother-in-law; a wayward, walking woman should be "bent over the knee and pour twenty-five narapniks on her" so that "she would remember and order her children to make such"; not to insult the orphans (Martin, "like a relative, respects" Maria: during the repast, the host gives a gold five-karat, two tithes of land and a cow), etc. According to such laws, the "old village" has been living for centuries [2].

There are, however, deviations from folk and religious norms: "the godfathers did not take care of their goddaughter very much in their lives", so Maria almost did not know them, however, according to custom, she asks for a wedding: the godfather must bless – be for the bridegroom.

In "Maria" U. Samchuk touches on the problems of folk pedagogy, the basis of which is economic education. Maria has been working since the age of six, and not only her. The Pereputkas also instill love for work in their children. Folk pedagogy emphasizes the need for early education, love and respect for children, and the development of their intellectual abilities. In the family, as well as in the whole village, a craving for knowledge, a desire for education is nurtured. Hence the respectful attitude towards "scientists", towards people who acquire high science. "Have you come home from school for the holidays? – asked him Hnat. It is necessary to pay



respect to scientists in advance. Hnat understands this well. Not for the first time between people" [2].

Among the virtues of Ukrainians, which have been cultivated from time immemorial, the author singles out modesty and shyness: "Mary with a trembling hand (perhaps someone is watching) puts a candle, quickly crosses herself and, blushing, turns back" [2]. "Andriy, a young man, entered the house, said "good evening" and was embarrassed."

The worldviews of Ukrainians and their beliefs do not remain outside the writer's attention: they are about cosmogonic ideas about the universe, the personification of natural phenomena, the existence of numerous superstitious rituals, charms or taboos. Yes, blessing with "odd images" – unequal in size – "is a bad sign" (that's why Maria's first marriage broke up). During the wedding ceremony, candles should burn evenly so that none of them go out. Maria "caught the gun on which she was standing with her foot and distracted him from the threshold – so that happiness would not remain standing." It is necessary to "put a lovage in the baby's font, so that the girls will love"; put on a shirt in front of the jaw of the furnace, warm it and cross it – the fire and the cross drive away evil forces. One should not sleep on Easter night [2].

One of the foundations on which the spirituality of the nation and the nation in general is based is the language, the word, the genetic code of the Ukrainian people. The language of the heroes is rich, selective, bright, taken from folk sources.

It is not by chance that there are two languages in the work: one is everyday, peasant, folk, the other is the "great and mighty" state language, the language of the united Ukrainian school, in particular the student of Mark Zakablyuk, this is a Russian-Ukrainian twist Korniya, who returned from the tsarist army, this is the language "guys" with a red flag is the language of the renegade mankurt and werewolf Maksym Pereputko, who uses coarse language and, as a rule, "swears vilely."

Traditional forms of rural life of Ukrainians are most closely connected with the community. The rural community appears in the works as a great collective force (according to the views established in the minds of Ukrainians). Not a single more or less important event in the life of the Samchuk heroes and the village in general is



complete without the community (people). Public etiquette was formed under the influence of socio-psychological features inherent in the rural way of life, as well as national traditions that have been formed for centuries. Yes, the community feels sorry for Hnat when Maria "walks" and condemns the woman.

The scene of Kornius, a diligent and hard-working householder (later an "honorable man in the community"), being sent off to war with the "Hapon" is notable, where he asks his fellow villagers to "excuse me" – once, twice and three times.

In the eyes of the community, labor assistance to victims of natural disasters or other disasters was an obligatory and honorable thing. The community understands and sympathizes with Maria, who lost her entire household during the fire. In the village east, they decide to collect grain and sow the fields, and in a group (toloka) to help erect a roof on the house and cover it with straw; help harvest.

Thus, the healthy system of peasant life, polished over the ages, appears to the author as "a well-established mechanism, set in motion by the agricultural tradition." U. Samchuk artistically interprets life from the standpoint of folk mentality. He sees the support of the peasantry in strong owners. The peasants do not accept sermons about the Bolshevik paradise, about industrialization, about new free relations between people.

The loss of genealogical lines and genetic roots has a detrimental effect on the history of any people. Children are "responsible for their parents", forced to publicly renounce them, as Maksym did with his younger brother. The communist authorities were afraid that the genetic program of the family would be restored, and the historical memory would be resurrected in some generation, because the thicker and stronger the crossing of the families, the stronger the backbone of the nation, the more stable its morals, the deeper its consciousness. The Holodomor, perpetrated by Moscow, thinned the genealogical trees of Ukraine by almost a quarter. Glorification of the progressive traditions of the Ukrainian people, honoring father-mother, God, ancestral customs, feeling the roots of one's family tree, returning in the most difficult moments of life to ancestral experience, to the Mother of God, to the land that gave birth – the leading leitmotifs of the novel.



U. Samchuk wrote a monumental image of Matvyi Dovbenka ("Volyn" trilogy), which focuses on the collective image of the Ukrainian peasantry. Vin and Martyn Zaruba (the novel "Maria") are images of wealthy peasants, caring owners, who are neither extortionists nor cruel landowners-skinners, but people who have achieved prosperity through tireless work, parents who educate their children in high schools. They fulfill the original agricultural mission of "keeping the world".

The host is the central image in all of Samchuk's prose on the topic of the village. Work on the land and for the sake of the land, concern for family well-being – this is the meaning of life and the components of the inner world of the Samchuk owner.

The problems raised by the author in the "Volyn" trilogy sound very relevant for today's Ukraine: the occupation of the native land, refugees, the topic of war, the search for happiness in a foreign land, the topic of exiles, etc. The thoughts of Ulas Samchuk, expressed on the pages of the work as early as the mid-1930-s, that military cataclysms and socialist revolutions destroy personal self-sufficiency, lose the soul, and separate from "one's own" seem prophetic today. It is also indicative that even the war cannot deprive Matvyi Dovbenk of his roots, powerless to move him from his native land ("His house is at the end of the village. People who have already moved from their place stop by it, and as if they do not "decide to cross the border of the village" . Matvii himself stands on the threshold of his kluny and as if the prophet is saying: "Don't abandon these places. Bite your teeth, but defend yourself, because these are our kublas, earned by hard work. This is not money, not gold. This is your land... Your children are growing up and they have to replace you in these places... We will be pushed out on the road and, like that worm, will be trampled into the mud. Let the cattle be driven, and you will return!" The hero himself does not fully understand where such words come from, but the power of influence on people they have a big one: people are returning home.

Volodko, the son, also loves his native land, Volyn, fascinated by its beauty and nature, but longs for a new life, he is "more interested in books and drawings, and singing, and music, and school, and cities, and distant lands, all kinds of stories about terrible , about the incomprehensible and about "God". This is a young generation of



Ukrainians who are ready to change it for the better, able to leave their father's house to get an education, to become useful to their native land. Young Volodko thinks about the historical fate of Ukraine, he realizes that "everyone who wants to insults her." And he chooses the path of struggle, he is Dovbenko, "the successor of his father's cause, the bearer of its essence in new historical conditions", Volodymyr is primarily hurt by the fact that the "Volyn quiet side" is slowly waking up from sleep, the hero does not put up with the indifference of Ukrainians to their own fate, with a lack of national consciousness, a sense of self-respect.

This is how an image emerges that personifies a new generation of Ukrainians, nationally conscious, effective, ready to fight for the Ukrainian idea. A new generation of Ukrainian intelligentsia capable of leading the nation to independence. The "Volyn" trilogy taught the reader how to make the right choice in the historical progress of the Ukrainian people, to see their place in the events of national history.

U. Samchuk creates an artistic concept of works from the standpoint of folk philosophy, mentality, folk morality, folk pedagogy, imbues images with folkloristics, and infuses the works themselves with a powerful stream of oral poetry. The glorification of the progressive traditions of the Ukrainian people, honoring father-mother, God, ancestral customs, feeling the roots of one's family tree, returning in the most difficult moments of life to the ancestral experience, to the Mother of God, to the land that gave birth - are the leading leitmotifs of Ukrainian Homer's novelistics.

The image of the earth is imbued with deep symbolism. Earth is a traditional folk image-symbol of life, work, prosperity, happiness. In her works, she also carries a deep ideological and psychological load. The earth acquires a powerful cathartic character: whoever is closer to it is purer, more righteous. Heroes experience the highest inner elevation on earth. The scenes of spiritual closeness with the nurturing earth are written with great lyricism, sounding like a real hymn: "Honor to you, Kornia! God himself is inseparable with you here in the fields with the wind, with the expanses of the sky, with the sun! God himself! And how many times it happens that Kornius gets up for no reason, takes off his new Sunday cap and is baptized... He feels joy, he feels greatness, he feels the presence of a higher, eternal power..." [2]. Moreover, the land helps him to



feel his ethnic self, to understand the essence of man as an eternal worker. Korniy U. Samchuk condemns the anti-human nature of the Bolshevik regime, which destroyed healing national morality, national and family traditions, and the well-being of the people.

The Ukrainian village appears through the image of everyday life, work, the national spirit of the region, Ukrainian folklore. On the pages of the novels "Volyn", "Maria" you can write a folk calendar with all the ceremonial holidays. Starting from Easter and ending with Christmas, without missing either the temple holidays of Nicholas (in Gilcha) or Trinity (in Derman). Volyn is depicted in the work also through legends and tales, which the inquisitive Volodko ("Volyn") so greedily absorbs into his memory and soul.

### **Summary and conclusions.**

Thus, the work of Ulas Samchuk, one of the most outstanding writers of Ukrainian and world literature of the 20-th century, was of great importance for the formation of the national character and spiritual development of Ukrainians. U.Samchuk's works belong to the category of novels about the spiritual formation and development of a Ukrainian, ethnography dominates here as a thematic and stylistic current, characterized by special attention to the reflection of traditional forms of folk life, folklore poetry, the inclusion of elements with descriptions of folk rites, the use of songs, folk pedagogy. The ethnographic authenticity of the novels serves the objective and realistic reflection of life, the affirmation of the high moral and ethical, spiritual forces of the people. The creation of the artistic concept of U. Samchuk's works takes place from the standpoint of ethnology and folk pedagogy of Ukrainians. U. Samchuk's principle of reflecting reality is based on the ideas of national philosophy, Christian morality, folk ideals and traditions, customs and rites, that is, on cultural and historical experience, its moral and ethical values. Here is the poetry of work, and the problems of human spirituality, truth and wrong, the poeticization of love, work on one's own land, national dignity and mankurtism, the desire for education, the acquisition of knowledge. The lives of the heroes, their actions are dictated by age-old folk truths.



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**Анотація.** Стаття присвячена аналізу етнографічного всесвіту Уласа Самчука як одного з ключових ідей його творчості, що поєднує народні традиції, педагогічні орієнтири та проблематику національної ідентичності. Розглянути специфіку художнього втілення українського селянського буття в романі "Марія" та трилогії "Волинь", де письменник змальовує життєвий уклад, звичаї, обряди та моральні цінності народу. Підкреслюється, що твори Самчука не лише відтворюють етнокультурне тло епохи, але мають й значний виховний потенціал. Вони формують у читача розуміння традицій, пошани до праці, духовності та релігійності як основи національного характеру.

У дослідженні акцентовано увагу на педагогічному значенні творчості письменника, зокрема на здатності формувати громадянську свідомість, любові до рідної землі та почутті відповідальності перед історією. Проаналізовано, як через зображення трагедій українського села – голодомору, репресій, соціальних катаклізмів, автор актуалізує питання збереження національної пам'яті та ідентичності. Водночас твори Самчука розглядаються як цінний матеріал для осмислення ролі літератури у процесах націєтворення, виховання молоді та передачі культурної спадщини.

**Ключові слова:** Улас Самчук, національна ідентичність, педагогіка, роман "Марія", трилогія "Волинь", історична пам'ять, культурна спадщина, українське селянство.

Article sent: 31.08.2025

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