



METHODOLOGY OF IMAGOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE NOVEL MARIA: A CHRONICLE OF A LIFE BY ULAS SAMCHUK

A In order to examine the mechanisms of the development of images and perceptions of national characters during the 1932-33 Holodomor, the guideline for imagological analysis of the novel *Maria: A Chronicle of a Life* by Ulas Samchuk has been drawn up. The guideline is based on Birgit Neumann's framework developed for a discussion of cultural and historical imagology. Imagological analysis will show that negative perception of the national character results from oppression and not from cultural distinctions.

Ключові слова: famine, national trauma, comparative literature, Imagology, auto- and hetero-image, Self, Other, stereotype, the Holodomor, collectivization, Bolshevik ideology, national character.

Research problem. Western readers are not well acquainted with Ukrainian history and literature. The novel *Maria: a Chronicle of a Life* by Ulas Samchuk, published in English in Toronto in 2011, contributes to the knowledge of English-speaking readers of Ukraine's 1932-33 tragedy and her people's national trauma. This paper aims to investigate the complex constructs of Self and Other in Samchuk's work of famine fiction. It develops methodological guidelines for an examination of literary techniques deployed by the writer for the development of auto- and hetero-images, which are used to express Ukraine's trauma. Birgit Neumann's framework, developed for a discussion of cultural and historical imagology in 'Towards a Cultural and Historical Imagology. The rhetoric of national character in 18th-century British Literature' is used as the basis for the guidelines.

The distinctiveness of national peculiarities is achieved by means of juxtaposition of a positive portrayal of the Ukrainian peasantry with a negative depiction of the Bolsheviks-Komsomols-Russians. The contrasting representations of the characters' conduct, language, their virtues and vices shape the binary polarity between the Ukrainians and the Russians, separating the Self and the Other. Such a technique allows for an emphasis of depravity and moral corruption of the Other, and leads to express Ukraine's trauma.

Analysis of recent research and publications. In Ukrainian literary criticism, *Maria: A Chronicle of a Life* by Samchuk was researched by V. Basaraba, N. Bernadska, V. Vyhovanets, A. Zhyvyuk, M. Zhulynskyy, G. Kostyuk, P. Kulchynskyy, Y. Marynenko, I. Rozhanchuk, A. Sytchenko, L. Skurativskyy. The Ukrainian scholars focused on the examination of the characters' traits, the language of the novel, the specificities of the genre, the image of the Mother of God, and the relationship between the work of fiction and Ukraine's historical reality. It appears that literary analyses of the novel in the English language have not been conducted. The analysis of the images in Samchuk's novel, which is unexplored also in Ukrainian literary studies, is worth examining. Regrettably, there is no sufficient research that would explain the influence of the tragedy of

the Holodomor on the development of the outlook of the next generations of Ukrainians after the Holodomor.

Research objectives. Within comparative methodology, develop guidelines for an imagological analysis of the novel *Maria: A Chronicle of a Life*. The analysis will contribute to the restoration and preservation of national memory of the Ukrainian people.

Research paper presentation. *Maria: A Chronicle of a Life* is the first work of fiction about the Holodomor. Written by the Ukrainian author Ulas Samchuk shortly after the famine – in 1934, the novel recounts the life story of a Ukrainian peasant girl Maria from the small village of Hnyloryby. Descriptions of the years of Maria's happy infancy and her parents' early death, her work as a servant at the age of nine and her first love and disappointments, Maria's loveless marriage to Hnat and the loss of her children, a divorce and a family life with her second husband Korniy and all their children are presented within the context of the 1930s political and social developments in Ukraine, which lead to the most tragic pages in the protagonist's life story, and to the nation's greatest trauma.

An imagological approach to Samchuk's portrayal of the events preceding the famine and those that occur during it reveals transformations in the perception of the Russians between the 1860s and the 1930s in Ukraine. The presentation of the protagonist's life against the background of the disquieting times of the Russo-Japanese war, years of World War I, the 1917 Socialist revolution in Russia and finally, the 1932-33 famine in Ukraine, provides the context for these transformations. The literary form of a chronicle lends itself to an imagological analysis, as establishing a link between an imagined Ukrainian village and the entire Ukraine, it allows for a better understanding of the discourse. This is what imagology as a discipline aims for, as Beller and Leerssen explain:

Imagology [...] aims to understand a discourse rather than a society. Literary works unambiguously demonstrate that national characterizations are commonplace and hearsay rather than empirical observation or statements of fact. Our sources are

subjective and rhetorically schematized [1].

Constructed upon complex historical processes that influenced the relations between Russia and Ukraine at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, the novel displays structural features that create 'suggestive images of national character'[2] revealing the strategy of the development of positive Self and negative Other. Therefore, effective and practical use of Birgit Neumann's framework, developed for a discussion of cultural and historical imagology, can be made. Integrating 'a social constructivist view of national character and national identities with discursive, rhetorical and cultural approaches to literature and media'[3], Neumann structures the framework around four central premises, 'essential' to cultural and historical imagology. The first premise suggests the ability of national images not only to describe 'a pre-existing reality of national others' but 'actively construct that very reality'[4]. The second discusses the reliance of 'culturally significant images' on 'trans- and intermedial strategies'[5], in order to be perpetually reaffirmed. The third shows that national auto- and hetero-images are 'variable forms'[6], which are liable to change depending on specific contexts, in which they are created and disseminated. Finally, the fourth premise suggests that national images fulfil 'diverse functions in specific historical, cultural, and aesthetic contexts, and not only used to construct national identity'[7]. Using this framework, Neumann explores 'a spectrum of aesthetic techniques' [8] that narrative texts can fall back on in order to perpetuate persuasive images of the Self and the Other. The scholar furthermore specifies four distinct features within narrative texts that emphasize cultural differences between the Self and the Other: 1) the adoption of a specific stance common to a certain genre and deployment of a narrative voice appropriate to the content; 2) the deployment of semanticization of space; 3) a suitable choice of character constellation; 4) the right choice of plot. All four features can be identified in *Maria*.

First, in order to convey a sorrowful atmosphere, the novel adopts a tragic stance, common to famine fiction works. The dedication 'to the mothers who died of hunger in Ukraine in 1932-33'[9] immediately alludes to a sensation of grief and forebodes catastrophe, which intensifies as the story unfolds due to the structure of the novel. Even though *Maria* is narrated from the perspective of a third-person narrator, we identify very strongly with its stance.

The novel consists of three books, each of them dealing with a particular stage of the protagonist's life. The first book, entitled 'A Book about the Birth of Maria', has fourteen enumerated chapters that narrate the story of Maria's birth, love, first marriage and loss of children; the second, 'A Book of Maria's Days', comprises eleven chapters that relate Maria's life with her second husband and presents events preceding the Holodomor. The last book, 'A

Book about Bread', contains twelve chapters that show the establishment of the Soviet power in Ukraine, and portrays the horrors of the famine organized by the Bolsheviks. The knowledge of all the issues about the Holodomor is thus held back from the reader until the very final part of the novel, and in this way, a greater emotional effect is produced. The presentation of the Bolsheviks' negative character traits and behaviour, strengthened by their unimaginable cruelty, enables the reader to see and 'pass judgement on customs and manners'[10] that are presented as foreign to the Ukrainian national character.

Second, the semanticization of space is used to reinforce an explicit distinction between the Self and the Other, and shows Ukraine as a victim and Russia as her oppressor. Physical descriptions of the territory of Russia in the novel are scarce, yet, in comparison with Ukraine's fertile land, whose depiction acquires at times an idealised quality, reminding us of Neumann's discussion of 'the idealised nation-scape'[11], they are a clear signal of Russia's deficiency. Space becomes a reflection of the Russian character, abundantly promulgating the Russians' idleness throughout the narrative: 'Russia is rich in people, but the expansive fields are covered in weeds from one to the other, and there is no one left to rescue the soil' (*M*: 175). An understanding that instead of toiling their own land, the Russians are involved in ravaging and oppressing Ukraine, leads to the notion of territorialisation to acquire an 'ideologically charged'[12] character. The scope of the negative perception of Russia is heightened by connecting her deficiency to a larger space. This is achieved by means of listing the names of such remote places in Russia as Manchuria, Vladivostok, Sakhalin, and Siberia. The true geographical names add 'a sense of the real' and substantiate 'a spatial opposition between 'here' and 'there' [13], which furthers a semantic opposition between prosperity versus poverty, and cruelty versus vulnerability. It becomes clear that the 'binary polarity' [14] between Ukraine and Russia in *Maria* is constructed mainly upon the vector of the human-created phenomena of cruelty and moral corruption that, spreading from Russia, engulf Ukraine. Brief, yet clear-cut references to these negative traits presented as characteristic of Russia furnish the reader with an understanding that Russia is the orchestrator of Ukraine's tragedy, and that draconian directives to plunder Ukraine are coming from 'there': 'And from the centre Russian commands were being issued one after another... [...] The telegraphs and telephones were shouting: "Give us grain, Ukraine! Grain!"' (*M*: 198). Cruelty coming from 'the centre' is a sign of the corrupt nature of its delegates, who are sent to Ukraine to organize the appropriation of grain, but in fact, expropriate everything:

They seized that buckwheat; they took away everything, a scrap of bread, a fistful of millet, a bit of mouldy biscuit, ten potatoes. They took every-

thing that they could find. Moscow was demanding “grain”. (M: 199)

The semanticization of space emphasizes the magnitude of Russia’s oppressive cruelty and places it in stark contrast with Ukraine’s defencelessness, strengthening thus the contrast between the Self and the Other.

Third, contrasting the virtuous Ukrainian peasants with the ruthless Bolsheviks, strongly associated with the Russians, the constellation of the novel’s characters ‘is organized in terms of a rhetoric of “us” and “them”, which serves to insistently dramatis cultural difference’[15]. The characters’ conduct, languages, their character traits, and moral virtues and vices, highlight an understanding of a duality of the Self and the Other, and shape the ‘binary polarity’[16] between the Ukrainians and the Russians. Such character traits as love of the land, religiosity and diligence are engaged to emphasize the positivity of the auto-image. They are in juxtaposition with the corrupt nature of the hetero-image, constructed upon indolence, use of bad language and cruelty.

Fourth, the tragic plot of the novel allows for the construction of images of national Self and the Other ‘with an intelligible pattern’[17]. National differences are presented as ‘asymmetrical binary oppositions’ [18], which generates the reader’s sympathy and empathy with the oppressed, and condemnation of the oppressor.

The events of the novel constitute a valuable source for the discernment of mechanisms of the development of the negative perception of the Other within the context of Ukraine’s national trauma. The Ukrainian people’s realization that the famine was planned and their suffering from the cruel deeds of the famine’s perpetrators, strengthened by the trauma-based emotional and bodily sensations, associated with hunger, generate the development of a strong resentment towards Russia and the Russians.

Conclusion. The process of intensification and deepening of negative stereotypes is not the result of cultural differences between nations but of cruelty and oppression. This paper will contribute to a

further practical examination of images as created in famine fiction within the field of comparative literature.

Works cited (за текстом):

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3. Ibid, p. 276.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid, p. 277.
9. Ulas Samchuk, *Maria: A Chronicle of a Life* (Toronto: Language Lanterns Publications Inc., 2011), p. 5. Henceforth, all page numbers in parentheses, placed after quotations and preceded by M, refer to this text.
10. Neumann, p. 281.
11. Ibid, p. 282.
12. Ibid
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid, p. 283.
18. Beller in Beller and Leerssen, 2007, p. 266

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1. Birgit Neumann, ‘Towards a Cultural and Historical Imagology. The rhetoric of national character in 18th-century British Literature’, *European Journal of English Studies*. – Vol. 13, No. 3, December 2009. – P. 275–291, [Accessed 15 November 2014]
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Крол Т. П. Методика імагологічного аналізу роману Уласа Самчука «Марія: хроніка одного життя».

А З метою дослідження особливостей формування іміджів і національних характерів під час насильницької колективізації й голодомору 1932–1933 років в Україні запропонована методика проведення імагологічного аналізу роману Уласа Самчука «Марія: хроніка одного життя» (в перекладі на англійську мову Роми Франко) за специфікою компаративної літератури. Імагологічний аналіз дозволить виявити, що в основі ворожого відторгнення й утворення негативних стереотипів в українського селянства лежить руйнівний вплив більшовицької ідеології.

Ключові слова: голод, національна травма, імагологія, колективізація, Голодомор, авто- і гетеро-іміджі, більшовицька ідеологія, національний характер.

Крол Т. П. Методика имагологического анализа романа Уласа Самчука «Мария: хроника одной жизни».

С С целью исследования особенностей формирования имиджей и национальных характеров во время насильственной коллективизации и голодомора 1932–1933 годов предложена методика для проведения имагологического анализа романа Уласа Самчука «Мария: хроника одной жизни». Имагологический анализ позволит осмыслить, что в основе отторжения и образования в украинском крестьянстве отрицательных стереотипов лежит разрушающее влияние большевистской идеологии.

Ключевые слова: голод, имагология, национальная травма, коллективизация, голодомор, авто- и гетеро-имидж, большевистская идеология, национальный характер.