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SYMBOLISM OF GIFTS IN THE UKRAINIAN FOLK LOVE SONGS

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Ukrainian folk love songs are one of the most popular genres of Ukrainian folklore. The songs of this genre have reflected a lot of specific national features of the behavior of Ukrainian people, especially of young people, including information about moral and ethical norms. In the songs of the investigated genre there were a lot of symbols, for example, ripe or unripe guelder rose, maiden's braid, weed field, lost wreath, etc. One of the symbols of folk love songs are gifts, which were exchanged between lovers during the dates.

The gift-giving or gift-exchange was the most common and important element of behavior in the premarital communication of lovers. Depending on the functional value of the gift, it could be given in the presence of no one (in order not to be ashamed of a possible refusal), and in the presence of family members or friends (during *vechornitsi*, matchmaking). Such a gesture could be directed at publicity when they gave a present that testified to the existence of a premarital couple. Depending on the feelings between the guy and the girl there were certain stereotypes of behavior during this custom.

Girls usually gave handmade presents, which testified to the true love of the girl. Handmade presents reminded guy of his beloved. The ability to sew and embroider was a partial guarantee of the welfare of the future family. Embroidered clothes were a sign that a girl was hard-working, and her work was an example of cleanliness, neatness and diligence: *«Винесла хустинку, Як біль біленьку: «Оце ж тобі, мій миленький, А про неділеньку»* [1, p. 289]. Such gifts were equated to the first oath of allegiance: *«Обіцяла-м ти обіцяночку дати. Крамну хусточку біле личко втирати»* [9, p. 42].

Before the long separation girls usually gave an embroidered headscarf or shirt as a present. In love songs these things acquire the properties of pointers, taking over their functions from the fairy tales: *«А вже хустинонька Та й запилалась – Либонь, моя чорнявая Та й зажурилась. Та вже хустинонька Та й пилом припала – Либонь, моя чорнявая Та з личенька спала»* [1, p. 289]. Parallelisms – *«хустинонька запилалась – дівчина («чорнявая») зажурилась, хустка пилом припала – дівчина з личенька спала»* – are focused on the long separation of lovers; compare the emotional state of the girl with the state of her gift. Headscarf was covered with dust because no one washed it, was a proof of guy's fidelity.

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The most iconic gift which was given to a guy was an embroidered shirt – one of the most important items of Ukrainian clothes. Beside the practical use of it, it also had a function as a peculiar protective element for a person. So, one of the rituals of making daily things that could magically affect the fate of the future was sewing the “first” shirt to the guy by the bride that should be done at one time. If the girl gives guy a shirt – it means that she publicly expresses her feelings and intentions to the guy, the shirt is a material proof of this. In addition, the original embroidery, neatness of work are those characteristics that define the girl as capable of sewing and embroidering, as a tidy, creative with art taste – the future housewife. To make the shirt the girl asks to choose the best materials: *«Купи ж мені, моя мати, за три копн голку, За чотири золотії червоного шовку, За п'ятого золотого мальовані п'яльця. Шовком шила, шовком шила, золотом рубила, Все для того козаченька, що вірне любила»* [1, p. 272].

Gifts of a shirt were aimed to publicly express the feelings, in order to mark / sign a couple, in love songs we quite often find unambiguous indications: *«Донеслася слава по всьому світочку, Що дівчина козакові вишила сорочку. Шила-вишивала жовтими нитками, Щоби його пізнавала меже козаками»* [10, p. 259].

In folk love song embroidered with gold or silver shirt often are being mentioned. If in lord's life embroidered with gold or silver shirt was a sign of social status, then in the folk imagination the shirt, as the closest garment to the body, was identified with the magic power hidden in the human body, therefore the most symbolically significant was the embroidery of wedding shirts as the amulet of the laminar face when transition from one state to another. In folk imagination, the shirt was a symbolic substitute for human [4, p. 22].

The guys received gifts from the girls not only as an expression of attention and commitment, but also in response to their feelings. Maidens's gifts more or less were aimed at publicity, in gift was put a deep meaning: gifts were valued not only for beauty and practicality, but also for the symbols of these things.

Gifts from boys also were a common form of flirting. “Gifting is one of the most archaic customs which was based on the principle of exchange: the gift was given in exchange for something. In some of the above-mentioned songs, such addiction is “well-read”: the gift was given for the right to date a girl” [3, p. 187], and in some cases the gifts accepted by the girls predicted the future matchmaking and marriage.

At evening parties boys could treat girls with sweets or nuts. More important signs of attention were bought things – shoes, coral, earrings and rings. Sometimes, to get the girl's favor, they used jewelry. The girl who accepted **jewellery** and wore them formally were considered “single”, because she agreed to a relationship with that guy. Therefore, when the guys asked girls whether they had coral, this meant a question whether the girl was engaged: *«А я тебе не питаю, що ти за кавалір, А ти мене питаєш за мої коралі»* [2, p. 194].

Analyzing love songs, M. Kostomarov rightly noticed that gifts were not determinative as their own things, they were only peculiar signs of attention: “As soon as [the young man] has time to earn something, he is in a hurry to buy her gifts: a “silver ring” or a “silk handkerchief”, although he does not really need gifts.

“The silver ring is drying up – the heart crumbles, and the scarf rubs his head”, he is the most expensive and “best of all” for her” [5, p. 160]. M. Kostomarov's remarks once again confirm the opinion that Ukrainians, in particular young people, were not materialistic: gifts were not valued at their price or practical value, but they were considered as a manifestation of respect and love.

The engagement ring was the most important and iconic gift, which meant the proposal of marriage. When the boy gave the ring and the girl accepted it, it was traditionally a symbol of the proposal to marry: *«Береш перстень, дай ми слово, Люблю в світі тя єдного. А в єдино руки зв'яжуть, Що ся любим, при всіх скажуть»* [1, p. 97]. The rejection of the engagement ring meant a negative response to the proposal to marry or to continue the pre-marital relationship: *«Дарив, дарив з руки перстень – Вона його не взяла»* [2, p. 224].

So, the turning point in premarital relations was the proposal to marry, symbolically it was expressed in gifting the ring. The girl's “yes”, as well as the accepted ring, is the key to the consent to the marriage. “The ring is a many-valued symbol. It is a gold object with the form of a circle. On the one hand, it is a symbol of wedding and marriage, on the other hand it has a function of a pagan amulet. The ring protects the girl's **microcosm**, the engagement ring protects the **microcosm** of the married girl. “During the wedding ceremony, the wedding ring becomes a symbol of the new social status of the couple, their unity performs a protective function, and in folklore texts – the function of the married couple. Before the appearance of the Christian wedding tradition, couples in order to marry just need an engagement ring [8, p. 83].

Gift exchange between lovers in public could be made during matchmaking. Then the bride's relatives carefully prepared for this meeting, the bridegroom brought vodka and presents to the girl (canvas, sweets, engagement rings). Instead, the girl gives to her father-in-law a handkerchief, and for the mother-in-law a thin canvas [7, p. 51]. The agreement on both sides was also evidenced by gifts such as towels for matchmakers, a shawl for the bridegroom, various items that symbolize consent to marriage (bouquets, kites, binds (ribbons), etc.) Such gift exchange was differently distributed in different regions of Ukraine.

During the matchmaking the most popular and iconic gift – a symbol of refusal – was a pumpkin. If the girl brought the pumpkin, then this refusal was resolute and irreversible. The class of the matchmaking attributes, which defined the refusal, included the well-known in Ukraine pumpkin and more limited in relation to the territory – rolling pin. “The ritual application of these attributes may be related to erotic semantics (in folk consciousness the tavern, and rolling pin act as allegorical substitutes for male genitals)” [6, p. 104-105].

So, the gift exchange between lovers symbolized a certain stage in premarital relations: treating with food or beverages, small jewelry showed the first feelings; a gifted shawl, shirt or coral were aimed at public labeling of lovers. The engagement ring was considered the most important gift, which meant the proposal of marriage. Accepting gifts (including during a matchmaking) meant agreeing to maintain intimate relationships, to give consent to marriage; the refusal was manifested in the rejection of any things, which symbolized the termination of any premarital relationship.

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