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Korotko's phenomenological myth of Odesa in *Bera and Cucumber*: otherness, melancholy and anthropocene

Феноменологічний міф Одеси у книжці “Бера і Огірок” О. Коротка: інакшість, меланхолія та антропоцен

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Abstract

In the research, with the help of the method of mytho-criticism and archetypal analysis (Carl Gustav Jung), the author has analyzed and outlined the chronotope represented in the stories in *Bera and Cucumber* by Aleksandr Korotko. This book, translated into English by M. Pursglove, was published in London in 2023. With the help of archetypal analysis, the Odesa text was characterized as a mythological one. It has been investigated that the Odesa narrative represents a special worldview of the heroes, who are characterized by a combination of kabbalistic worldview, Christian humanism, Turkish melancholy, contemplativeness that results from the unity of the heroes of the Odesa space with eternal nature elements. The writer reconstructs the Odesa identity in its ontological form: the social interaction between the characters reveals their essence superficially, on the other hand, the anthropocene way of depicting the characters as immanently connected with the elements of nature reveals their universal ontological essence. The Odesa text is represented as mythological one, the loci of which are subordinated to the idea of the immutability of space and time. This is the peculiarity of the chronotope marked by mythological intentions: the characters appear only as variable, fluid entities in the macrocosm of Odesa that as depicted in Korotko's stories is characterized by the intertwined relationships

Анотація

У статті за допомогою методу міфокритики й архетипного аналізу (К.-Г. Юнг) проаналізовано й окреслено хронотоп, репрезентований в оповіданнях у книжці “Бера і Огірок” Олександра Коротка. Цю книжку в англійському перекладі М. Пурсглові (M. Pursglove) було видано в Лондоні в 2023 р. (Glagoslav Publications). За допомогою архетипного аналізу одеський текст схарактеризовано як текст міфологічний. Досліджено, що одеський простір репрезентує особливу світоглядну настанову персонажів, яким властиве поєднання кабалістичного світогляду, християнського гуманізму, турецької меланхолії, контепляційності, що виліває з єдності геройів одеського простору з правічними стихіями. Письменник реконструює одеську ідентичність в її онтологічній формі: соціальна інтеракція між персонажами розкриває їхню сутність поверхово, натомість антропоценний спосіб зображення персонажів як іманентно поєднаних зі стихіями природи розкриває їх універсальне онтологічне ество. Одеський текст репрезентовано як міфологічний, локуси якого підпорядковано ідеї незмінності часопростору. В цьому полягає особливість хронотопу, маркованого міфологічними інтенціями: персонажі постають лише змінними, плинними сутностями в макрокосмі Одеси, де споконвіку дух реалізує себе як через

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between the spirit, nature, and humanity from ancient times. Rather than viewing human beings and nature within a subject-object framework, the writer presents a holistic system that reflects an anthropocene perspective of the world. The article argues that traditional logocentric paradigms fall short in capturing and unraveling the identity of Odesa that is intricately woven into the interconnected narratives of Korotko's stories.

Keywords: Odesa text, Odesa myth, mythocriticism, archetype, melancholy.

Introduction

Aleksandr Korotko's (Олександр Коротко) short stories collection *Bera and Cucumber* (in Ukrainian: "Бера і Огірок") has reinforced in the discourse of contemporary post-postmodern literature the discussion about a new representation of the well-known and already established concept 'Odesa text'. The events in the short stories take place in Odesa and are directly related to the Odesa mythological representation and its special identity, the psychology of Odesa residents, the specific worldview of the characters who live near the sea and have a special type of relationship with nature.

The thesis statement of this article is that in Korotko's *Bera and Cucumber*, Odesa is portrayed as a mythical city that encapsulates the complex history and cultural identity determined by the sea. The narratives woven around Odesa in these short stories delve into the multifaceted layers of the city's past and the intertwining of diverse cultural influences, mainly Jewish. Through the lens of postcolonial discourse, A. Korotko has skillfully crafted his short stories that capture the essence of Odesa as a space that evokes melancholia, nostalgia, defiance, and a rich tapestry of interconnected narratives.

Moreover, the fictional portrayal of Odesa's mythological narrative in Korotko's contemporary postcolonial fiction serves as a compelling example of how the author has engaged with the complexities of history and identity. By delving into the mythos of Odesa, these narratives offer a profound exploration of the city's significance in the postcolonial context, shedding light on its enduring impact on the imagination and consciousness of its inhabitants and those who encounter its literary representations. Odesa in *Bera and Cucumber* becomes more than just a physical setting; it

феномени природи, так і через людину. Письменник послуговується зображенням людини і природи не в суб'єктивно-об'єктивній парадигмі, а в системі голістичного зв'язку, який розкриває антропоценний погляд на світ. У статті наголошено, що в логоцентричній парадигмі неможливо описати й розкрити одеську ідентичність, яку репрезентовано в оповіданнях О. Коротка.

Ключові слова: одеський текст, одеський міф, міфокритика, архетип, меланхолія.

becomes a symbol of resilience and cultural-metaphysical hybridity.

In this article, the author has focused on reevaluating the 'Odesa text' and 'Odesa myth' in contemporary fiction, aiming to provide a fresh perspective on this cultural phenomenon. The new representation of the 'Odesa text' in Korotko's *Bera and Cucumber* involves examining how Odesa, as a city and a concept with specific mythological explications, is portrayed in various literary works and cultural contexts. This analysis is important because the 'Odesa text' not only represents a specific geographical location but also embodies a unique cultural identity shaped by historical events and the concept of melancholy, multicultural population, and influential literary figures. By delving into this representation, it is possible to gain a deeper understanding of the complexities and significance of the Odesa narrative in literature and its broader cultural implications, e.g. in the anthropocene paradigm.

The ongoing Russian invasion in Odesa has drastically altered the region's landscape and world perception, disrupting the centuries-old colonial paradigm that had shaped the city's identity. The attacks on Odesa have brought to the forefront the realities of conflict and the struggles faced by its inhabitants, challenging the romanticized notions often associated with the city represented in Russian fiction of the previous times. This shift has forced a reevaluation of Odesa's historical context and cultural significance in the post-colonial Ukrainian paradigm, highlighting the resilience of its people. The current situation underscores the need for a nuanced understanding of Odesa's past and present, shedding light on its complexities beyond the colonial framework. *Bera and Cucumber* offers a unique perspective on contemporary Ukrainian fiction in the context of



wartime, contributing to the growing body of fiction about the country that is emerging on the world book market. One notable example is Maria Miniailo's book 24.02 that explores the theme of resistance in contemporary Ukraine. In this narrative, the discourse of resistance is depicted through elements of satire and anti-colonial motives, as in Miniailo's novella *Stolen Spring* (Drozdovskyi, 2023). The increasing visibility of such narratives not only sheds light on the socio-political landscape of Ukraine but also serves as a testament to the resilience and creativity of Ukrainian writers in portraying the complexities of their homeland's experiences during times of conflict.

Korotko's *Bera and Cucumber* offers a unique narrative portraying Odesa as an anthropocene reality, a place of peace, melancholy, and harmonious coexistence, emphasizing the inherent qualities of its citizens. The sea serves as a significant backdrop shaping the worldview of characters navigating a cross-cultural environment, blending elements of Jewish and Ukrainian identities. Through this lens, the characters strive to mitigate the absurdities of life. Korotko's *Bera and Cucumber* sheds light on the intricacies of coexisting in a multiethnic setting, highlighting the city's vibrant tapestry of cultures and the shared pursuit of melancholy, peace and understanding among its inhabitants who live in the anthropocene reality.

Studying the representation of Odesa as a mythical phenomenon in *Bera and Cucumber* is vital for several reasons. First, examining how Odesa is portrayed in contemporary fiction allows for a deeper understanding of its cultural significance and the impact of historical and political events on its identity in the post-colonial paradigm. Second, analyzing the mythic essence of Odesa in *Bera and Cucumber* can provide insights into how myth shapes collective memory and influences perceptions of place and community. By delving into the mythical representation of Odesa in *Bera and Cucumber*, the author of this paper has uncovered hidden layers of Odesa myth and melancholy, explore the intersection of reality and imagination, and ultimately contribute to a more nuanced appreciation of the city's rich cultural heritage as a place of melancholy and leisure.

In this context, the representation of Odesa as a special mythological city with an eternal identity based on elements and harmony reflects a new understanding of Odesa as an ontological place. The characters in *Bera and Cucumber* are likened to mannequins, suggesting a deeper symbolic

connection to the overarching themes of existence and parabolic realism (Drozdovskyi, 2021) and surrealism that permeate the narrative. This analysis sheds light on how the city of Odessa is portrayed as a timeless entity embodying universal principles, offering a unique perspective on its cultural and metaphysical significance in the novel.

In the literature review section of the article, readers can expect an overview of existing research on Odesa's myth and ontological identity, contextualizing the significance of these themes in Korotko's *Bera and Cucumber*. The methodology section will detail the approach taken to analyze the representation of Odesa in *Bera and Cucumber*, outlining the research methods and theoretical framework employed. The results and discussion section will present the findings of the study, exploring how Odesa is mythologized in *Bera and Cucumber* and how its ontological identity is constructed in Korotko's narrative. Finally, the conclusions section will synthesize key insights, offer interpretations of the findings, and suggest implications for further research in this cultural and literary area.

Theoretical framework or literature review

The hypothesis of the research is that the Odesa narrative unfolds the landscape of the short stories in three vectors: 1) *anthropocene* that implies a special connection of the characters with the sea and nature in general, their immersion in the natural world, deep unity, manifested with the help of the sea and other natural phenomena and elements. The concept of *anthropocene* has been discussed in recent academic researches and it provides a new outlook on how we can exploit literary phenomena taking into account a special point of view based on the deconstruction of traditional antagonism between subject and object. The nature in such phenomena is not considered to be an object but has its role epistemological status. We see a peaceful co-existence between human beings and nature and the humans follow the principles of nature organization in order to survive and to avoid catastrophes that may happen due to the human destructive activities. Korotko's short stories demonstrate these deep anthropocene connections between human beings and the sea, human psychology and nature cycles, which is portrayed in the analyzed texts. The methodological approach and theoretical framework regarding this section of my research is based on the publications by C. Bonneuil and J.-B. Fressoz (2016), N. Castree (2015),

P. J. Crutzen and E. F. Stoermer (2000), V. Napolitano (2017), S. Solnick (the author of the chapter "Anthropocene" in *The Routledge Companion to Twenty-First Century Literary Fiction*, 2018), S. Dalby (2015), R. Macfarlane (2016), W. McKenzie (2015), A. Trexler (2015), S. Mertz (2015), C. Waters et al., (2014). In Korotko's writings, we observe the fundamental idea of anthropocene reality in which nature has an important impact on human mentality and it structures human lives and leisure activities, determining human behaviour and a special way of world perception. 2) a special type of *leisure* that is included in the life of the characters, the opportunity to contemplate most of the time, rather than act; a special way of life that involves immersing oneself in oneself and feeling all the movements of nature that helps to maintain psychological balance, and it is worth emphasizing that this form of leisure is typologically combined with a special concept of life that is present in the Turkish worldview discourse, and that also correlates with the Jewish tradition worldview that verbally visualizes the multidimensionality of the Odesa text in *Bera and Cucumber*; 3) the *Otherness* of the Odesa world (Odesa identity): the language of the characters appears to be radically different, which is especially noticeable in the English translation by Michael Pursglove, the *Otherness* of worldviews, life orientations, etc.

These specified vectors determine the peculiarity of the representation of the Odesa text in Korotko's book. The writer resorts to the representation of the Odesa myth that is heterogeneous, multidimensional, and multicultural. Moreover, it is worth saying that for centuries, Odesa has been integrated into the cultural map and mindset of the Russian Empire. A. Korotko with his short stories have deconstructed this tradition paying attention to the immanent uniqueness and *Otherness* of Odesites and Odesa narrative not in the empire cultural paradigm but taking into account the specific features of Odesa mind, psychology, identity, leisure, connections with nature and anthropocene in general.

Besides, there is no political factor in the Odesa narrative that is psychologically reliable and artistically depicted by the writer. The characters are immersed in the space of everyday problems that reveal their philosophy of humorous stoicism, the ability to perceive difficult situations with dignity, with a smile, revealing a special inner strength that comes from immanent wisdom. Here it is appropriate to say both about the motives of Ecclesiastes and about the special

kabbalistic conception of the world (Scholem, 1996) that is a characteristic of Odesites.

Methodology

In conducting a rigorous study on the representation of Odesa as a myth-narrative in Korotko's *Bera and Cucumber*, several key methodological considerations are essential to ensure the validity and reliability of the research findings. First, the selection of the text for analysis was justified based on its relevance to the study's research questions and objectives, with clear criteria outlined for why *Bera and Cucumber* was chosen as the primary source material. This importance is determined by the contemporary political situation and the importance of representation of Odesa to the world community. Korotko's book *Bera and Cucumber* published in London in 2023 (translated by Michael Pursglove) provides a ground for such a discussion about the representation of Odesa in the post-colonial paradigm in Ukraine's wartime context. The data collection was comprehensive, involving a thorough examination of the text to identify and document all instances where Odesa is portrayed in a mythological context in *Bera and Cucumber*. The analysis employs a theoretically informed approach, drawing on established literary and mythological frameworks to interpret Odesa's narrative function in *Bera and Cucumber*. Rigorous data analysis techniques, such as close reading, content analysis, thematic analysis, archetype analysis, and comparative analysis has ensured a robust exploration of Odesa's mythic representation. Furthermore, the study critically engages with the existing literature on mythology, narrative theory, and post-postmodern literature of the 21st century to situate the analysis within a broader context.

The criteria for selecting stories from *Bera and Cucumber* about the identity and ontology of Odesa as a mythological narrative included elements such as the centrality of Odesa as a character and a place (*locus* and *topos* at the same time), the exploration of themes related to identity ontology within the narrative, and the symbolic significance of Odesa in conveying mythological concepts. Additionally, stories that delve deeply into Odesa's origins, characteristics, and role within the narrative as it relates to broader mythological themes have also been considered in the selection process. Overall, the chosen stories from *Bera and Cucumber* offer a rich and nuanced exploration of Odesa's identity as an ontological phenomenon within the mythological framework.



In the context of studying Odesa as a myth and as a text in Korotko's *Bera and Cucumber*, the data analysis has involved categorizing textual passages related to Odesa, identifying recurring themes or motifs, analyzing narrative structures and character development, and exploring intertextual references or symbolic representations associated with Odesa. It was essential to outline the specific analytical tools, frameworks, and methodologies (works of A. Stepanova, S. Kaya, M. Gauhman) used to examine Odesa's mythological and textual dimensions in order to elucidate the research process and outcomes for readers and researchers alike.

In analyzing Odesa as a myth and as a text in Korotko's *Bera and Cucumber*, a detailed methodology has included several steps. First, a thorough reading of *Bera and Cucumber* was conducted to identify passages where Odesa is mentioned or plays a significant role. These passages are then categorized based on themes such as identity, ontology, symbolism, and cultural references related to Odesa. Second, a hermeneutic process is implemented to tag specific textual elements associated with Odesa, such as character descriptions, interactions with other characters, and narrative progression. A thematic analysis was carried out to explore the mythological underpinnings of Odesa's character, including any symbolic or archetypal representations present in *Bera and Cucumber*. Third, a comparative analysis was conducted to examine how Odesa's portrayal aligns with traditional mythological narratives or deviates from conventional mythic structures. The data analysis involved further interpreting the findings in the context of broader literary and mythological theories, aiming to uncover insights into Odesa's significance as both a myth and a literary character in *Bera and Cucumber*. Finally, the detailed data analysis approach ensures a comprehensive exploration of Odesa's multifaceted dimensions within *Bera and Cucumber*, enriching the understanding of Odesa as a mythological figure and textual construct in Korotko's book.

Methodology of myth (archetype) studies, cultural studies and hermeneutic approach have been exploited in this research. The author has provided the structural and phenomenological analysis of Korotko's short stories to underline the key concepts that spotlight and structure a phenomenological representation of Odesa text and Odesa's mythological narrative as it is portrayed in *Bera and Cucumber*.

The concepts of *Odesa text* and *Odesa myth* have been discussed and explained in contemporary publications in the aspect of postcolonial interpretation of Odesa cultural and literary texts (M. Gauhman, 2016; Ja. P. Girrihs, 2011; T. Shekhovtsova & S. Yurchenko, 2020; A. Stepanova, 2022). "The Odesa text represents a certain figurative structure, <....>, the urban consciousness accumulates its highest spiritual meaning through the perception of the city."

The semantic setting (idea) of the Odesa text initially lay in the sociocultural plane and was associated with the historical image of the city and its perception in the minds of citizens. Founded in 1795, Odesa according to the plan of Catherine II was destined to become an ordinary trading city-port" (Stepanova, 2022, p. 734).

Furthermore, in the article, the author has provided a postcolonial interpretation of Odesa narrative in Korotko's *Bera and Cucumber* as a phenomenological being that has its unique nature. This nature of Odesa is not connected with political ideology and social structures but it is determined by the inner psychology of Odesites who live in peaceful coexistence with natural elements, such as the Black Sea, etc. The phenomenological nature of such phenomena structures the mindset of Odesites and reveals its multifaceted mythological revelation of Odesa as a mythological narrative

Results and discussion

The selection of stories that in *Bera and Cucumber* portray Odesa in a post-colonial frame and emphasize its ontological identity as an eternal place reflects a deliberate methodological approach to highlight the essence of Odesa as a myth. This rigorous research methodology aims to delve deeper into the philosophical and existential nature of Odesa, exploring its timeless and intrinsic characteristics that define the city in Korotko's *Bera and Cucumber* as more than just a physical location (locus and topos) but as a place with enduring significance and symbolism. By analyzing Odesa's ontological essence through these narratives, this research offers a comprehensive examination of the city's cultural and historical post-colonial underpinnings, enriching the understanding of its complex identity beyond mere geographical boundaries and ideological limitations, politics and social boundaries.

Moreover, the criteria for selecting stories from *Bera and Cucumber* were connected with the concepts of multicultural and multidimensional

representation of Odesa in historical terms, while aiming to create a unifying narrative of harmony and peace that portrays a thematic focus on the desire for tranquility, contemplation, and unity. These stories exemplify a shift towards introspection over aggression, emphasizing the role of human nature in creating rather than destroying. The chosen stories also reflect the sea in the narrative as a symbolic space of elemental forces that provide leisure, inspiration, freedom, independence, and autonomy, underscoring a connection to nature and inner self-discovery. By selecting stories that embody these criteria, the compilation in *Bera and Cucumber* presents a diverse and historically rich portrayal of Odesa's character that aligns with the overarching theme of seeking harmony and peace through contemplative and harmonious narratives. Besides, the criteria for selecting the stories was based on the premise that humans in the narrative are represented not superior to nature but instead dependent on it, as evidenced by the sea's influence on their attitudes towards leisure. It was stressed that the narratives highlight a unique perspective on leisure that reflects a form of freedom. In *Bera and Cucumber*, this concept is embodied through internal freedom and a deep connection to elemental forces that transcend societal constraints and conventional perceptions of time. According to the analysis, the characters despite being engaged in social responsibilities maintain a profound affinity with nature's timeless essence, portraying a sense of kinship and liberation through their interactions with the elements.

Moreover, to underline the rigor of the study, it is important to say that Korotko's Odesa text represents a system of values based on the concepts of honour, dignity and truthfulness. It is these concepts that correlate with the categories defining the life world of the characters. Special attention is paid to the depiction of landscapes, the landscape plan that correlates with the element of the sea. Life near the sea, as the narrator convinces, forms a special philosophy in Odesites as a way of relating to events and things. They are able to dissolve in the natural element, to immerse themselves in the primal matter that cannot be destroyed by the ideological and political contradictions of the time. To depict the political world, the writer uses humour and ironic mode. Instead, the style of describing landscapes, sea, Odesa air, streets and historical districts (Moldavanka, city down town) and quarters has a special slowness. In such places, the narrative seems to dissolve in the element about which the narrator speaks.

He was born, and grew up, on Mala Arnautska Street, and his whole life had passed in full view of an old Odesa dvoryk or yard. Solomon Volkovich was the image of a wise man twenty-four hours a day, so it was impossible to catch him out. His neighbours thought he had gone in the head, admittedly not very far. But no one doubted he was heading that way (Korotko, 2023, p. 16).

Emphasis on the connections of Odesa characters with nature, in particular the sea, contributes to the general mythologizing of the narrative. Stories reveal to the reader a strange world that has its own *autonomy*. Certain worldview parameters of the characters in the stories convince readers that Odesites have an inherent wisdom that is usually associated with the Eastern tradition (wisdom as a system of constant parameters of world perception that determines the stability of the world, its harmony, and the harmonious existence of a person in this world for the sake of happiness and other benefits).

Indeed, Korotko's short stories are dominated by philosophical contemplation, contemplativeness that correlates at the same time with the absurd and whimsical world of social processes in which the characters *volens nolens* exist:

The quarters to which the tourists flock and where real Odesites live are two separate towns, with feuds and nomadic raids by their core inhabitants. The first is idle and imperious, well fed, unhurried in thought and deed, the second is human and embittered, life-enhancing and gloomy, cut off from flourishing hopes by disorganisation, daily existence, screaming children and overworked streets, sickness and malaise; it yearns to earn money on the eve of running out of it. Oh, these eves – reliable and true friends of Odesites! (Korotko, 2023, p. 88-89).

Odesa in *Bera and Cucumber* is multicultural, multidimensional in historical terms, and the unifying narrative that combines different historical dimensions is the desire to create a space of harmony and peace, when contemplation wins over activity, so that human nature does not reveal itself in something aggressive to the unworthy, which destroys rather than creates.

The world of the sea is a space of elements that gives leisure, inspiration, freedom, independence, and ultimately autonomy.



Half a year went past. He was standing on the penthouse terrace wearing an expensive suit and a snow-white shirt, looking at the sea. It seemed to him that no one in the world felt the sea like he did. As he looked at the raging element, Solomon Volkovich suddenly realised what was happening in his soul. Maybe the sea was his soul and he himself was nothing, dust, a hollow being, an empty one-room flat lacking furniture, comfort and warmth. But the sea seethed, changing its colours and shades, summoning help. How could he save both his soul and himself? Again, he wanted to look beyond the horizon and sea, beyond the fiery red curtain of the sunset scenes of spiritual life, but his imagination failed him. From the height of the spiritual fog all that could be heard was the croaking of frogs in the subterranean underpasses of satiated normality (Korotko, 2023, p. 28-29).

A human being in these stories is not superior to nature, he or she is dependent on it, because the sea itself determines the special attitude to leisure, which is represented in various narratives. Leisure is a special form of freedom in the book. If we recall the ancient world, slaves did not have the right to leisure time: only free citizens had leisure time. This maxim finds its embodiment in *Bera...*: we have images of internally free people who, although forced to deal with various social concerns, nevertheless deeply feel a kinship with the elements that are not governed by time.

In Korotko's book, the characters refuse the subject-object existence in the human-nature system. They exist in an inseparable unity of material and metaphysical, corporeal and transcendental, physical and elemental, material and spiritual. Odesa world has its own language, its own philosophy of life. By this concept, we understand the ethical code of norms, which are formed not in the socio-political plane, but in the philosophical, metaphysical plane, which combines various religious experiences and traditions, sometimes different in time and space, but approximate in its ontological basis.

"Mama: De Baguza de bazé?

Son: Bazé.

Mom: Be manóta chi?

Son: Útsa.

Mama: Néisyk dúkhil fo?

Son: Limatýka na koté?

Mama: Bókhil!

Son: Móza zui

Peaceful conversation smoothly switches to elevated tones.

Mama: Zóga!

Son: Gam!!" (Korotko, 2023, p. 88).

"One of such concepts corresponds to the Turkish concept *hüzün* (melancholy). Melancholy, or *hüzün* in Turkish, is a key concept for understanding the worldview of a Turkish person" (Drozdovskyi, 2013). According to one interpretation, it is what is experienced when we "put too much effort and time into achieving earthly pleasures and material goods" (Pamuk, 2012, p. 124). For Sufis, *hüzün* is "the mental torment of not being able to be closer to Allah, because in this world we are unable to do as much as is necessary for him" (Pamuk, 2012, p. 125). Finally, according to El Kindi, "*hüzün* is not only the pain of the loss or death of a loved one, but also other emotional disturbances such as rage, love, malice and unfounded fear" (Pamuk, 2012, p. 126). Istanbul is also *hüzün*, and therefore everything in this city is perishable, like a phantom. Istanbul itself is important as a space of memory, which must be preserved in an image: verbal or pictorial. Istanbul does not exist without its inhabitants, whose language it speaks every minute. And therefore, not having support from his parents to become an artist, Orhan chooses another "profession": to be a writer. He must preserve the memory of his eternal city" (Drozdovsky, 2013). The researchers draw attention to the fact that both in the novels of the Turkish writer and in the Ukrainian literature of the latest period, a feeling of melancholy is presented that is a component of the structure of the worldview of the characters. "In the novels "Silent House", "Snow" by O. Pamuk and "Living Sound" by A. Kokotiukha, a type of city person is proposed who acutely feels his alienation and loneliness among a large crowd, in the community of fellow citizens and in his own family. If the options for the initiation of the urban hero are specific to novels with a historical or pseudo-historical background, then the self-estranged one is found in works where the city is the embodiment of the modern world. The characters have big dreams and hopes, which are shattered by the realization of the impossibility of changing social relations. So the melancholic intonations, the dramatic finale, as well as the existential loneliness of the city man, are foreseen" (Kaya, 2021, p. 234). A similar motif is represented in *Bera and Cucumber*, where Odesites are characterized by *melancholy*, which stems not only from existential *loneliness*, but from the ontological *autonomy* of each character, which revitalizes the connection with an ancient myth and is a representation of the archetypal image of the protohuman.

"Memories make us even more lonely. We become like trees in winter. I look at their bare flesh, shyly avert my gaze, and don't know where to put myself or what to do with this cloud called soul.

My memory stands behind your back, you are frying sunflower seeds in a hot frying pan, carefully sprinkling them with salt with a table spoon, and stirring them unhurriedly. I come a bit nearer, you feel my breath, and, as if nothing has happened: "Son, I'll just finish frying them, they can cool down a bit and we'll go to the football. There's still time" (Korotko, 2023, p. 97).

Turkish *melancholy* in Korotko's book is typologically similar to the feeling of spleen, contemplation, dissolved in being. Such a feeling arises from the fact that a person is immersed in the world of nature, and not superficial social processes. Its existence is determined by the eternal elements that reveal an unlimited space of freedom to human beings. In this case, a person tries to imitate nature, and nature is immanently wise, subject to cycles, the alternation of which ensures order and harmony. The desire for a harmonious life determines the specifics of the worldview of the characters, who strive to distance themselves from chaos and bring the *transcendental* harmony in the human world closer to the cosmic order that determines the sunrise and sunset, tides and other natural cycles. And it is precisely such natural laws that ensure the stability of existence that is often shaky in the social space. Therefore, the ideal for the characters exists not in social institutions, but in the feeling of what exists outside the word, in approaching the energy that has a relationship with nature, because nature is not oriented to self-destruction, but only to existence, to self-development and continuation, which will continue until, as long as the world exists.

In Korotko's stories, a closed, cyclical chronotope is presented, which is generally subordinated to the narrator's intention to mythologize the Odesa space. The sea, the geographical loci of Odesa, often marked historically, are parts of the universal-mythological topos of Odesa that grows out of an ancient, spontaneously conditioned mythological substrate. Mythology is also facilitated by the way the characters are portrayed: they often pretend to be active, although they are involved in various life conflicts that are of a trivial nature. In fact, the characters are immersed in the *otium* and *negotium* of Odesa, its *leisure* connected with special worldview guidelines.

Moreover, an important component of the compositional design of these stories in *Bera...* is the description of the landscape. The characteristics of the exterior and natural landscapes become an important factor in the mythologizing of the narrative, a form of representation of the immanent and eventual connection between human beings and nature that sometimes cannot be explained verbally. In this way, a mystical image of the inner world of a person, revealed in the bosom of nature, is presented, and this revelation is represented not in language, but in the deep states experienced by the characters. Outwardly, they exist in various social configurations that do not relate to the multidimensional inner spiritual life of Odesites. The short stories present various philosophical models of the worldview of the heroes: kabbalistic and Eastern, connected with Turkish melancholy, self-absorbed contemplation.

Odesa does not demand sacrifices. The doors and windows of heroism are boarded up and you sleepwalk through tunnels of the unconscious in the deaf hermetic space of solitude and along streets of childhood and youth, in the carapace of a lethargic dream of recollections, breathing in the aroma of past life. But alongside are people, many people; they move and orbit, as the Earth does the Sun. You can touch them mentally and even pinch them, but they will not feel any pain – they are from another reality. You will plunge into the sediment of the broth of student life, but even there you are absent (Korotko, 2023, p. 28).

The external dimension has little weight in this case: Odesa in Korotko's exists as a *transcendental*, immanently unchanging space that arose near the eternal elements and that has a connection with myth. Social processes reflect people's lives, but the emphasis in the book is not on them at all. The space of social interaction is marked by irony, descriptions of landscapes reflect the principle of static depiction of elements that are immovable in time, eternal in space, and therefore, people living near the sea are depicted as an organic continuation of these elements.

Furthermore, Odesites in these short stories are an anthropological model of the manifestation of the spirit that is invisibly represented in natural elements. A human being in these stories is not different from the elements of nature, but their organic continuation. Korotko emphasizes that the special spirit that was discussed by the classics of German philosophy, in particular Hegel, constantly wanders from one epoch to another, and in the Christian paradigm it realizes



itself in the human dimension, developing and improving at each turn of the spiral.

In Korotko's stories, there is a lot of humanism that stems from the Christian instructions of the New Testament, but at the same time there are archetypal models of the image of the world through the basic archetypal images of the eye, shadow, house, road (in the system of Jungian approaches), etc. The possibility of using archetypal reconstruction is determined precisely by the general intention of the narrative to mythologize. The characters are creatures, but at the same time, mannequins born of the elements of nature that fall asleep at nightfall and come to life with the tides of the Black Sea. The narrator shows that the psychological state of Odesites, the rhythms of their life correlate with the rhythms of the sea.

The writer reconstructs Odesa identity, searching for an existential dimension, demonstrating not social identities as the basis of Odesa space, but through attempts at archetypal reconstruction of characters. O. Korotko's story is an attempt to write the history of Odesa that is represented through the micro-histories of the heroes, whose names are often included in the chapter titles. In fact, it is about an anthropological story, passed through the destinies of the heroes. When we read these narratives, we understand how much the characters are, as it were, heroes-components of one common myth. From this we reconstruct the general myth of Odesa as a primeval space in which nature weighs. Moreover, we observe a special *anthropocene* way of depicting reality connected with the display of characters as beings who minimize their activity in the external social manifestation, but live an intense inner psychological life that can be characterized as being: it is marked by value, directly related to the Odesa narrative and is part of the Odesa myth. Thus, under the *Odesa myth* in *Bera...*, we understand a narrative in which a person exists in inseparable unity with nature, with the historical memory of Odesa that is realized through the loci of the city where the characters live. This is the space of immanent connection between human beings and the elements. The characters are absorbed in themselves, they look at the world contemplatively and melancholy, realizing that they are only variables, only travelers, components of the great macrocosm of Odesa, in which there are different realities, hidden gaps between which non-linear connections are formed.

I'm even afraid to describe my feelings, so as not to dissipate that spiritual state which had made

me an invisible man. At those moments everything was subordinate to my imagination. I took advantage of this without ceremony, even abused it, but tried very hard, by the end of breakfast, to return to the body which had been cast to the whims of fate, to breathe life into it and begin the existence of an ordinary person (Korotko, 2023, p. 38).

Finally, it is impossible to perceive Odesa identity linearly, in the categories of logocentrism. Ultimately the archetype realizes itself through imagery, but it is never really possible to verbalize what the archetype itself is. This is an ancient model of the functioning of the universe as a macrocosm of matter and energy, realized in the depiction of characters and the sea in *Bera and Cucumber*, where the Odesa identity appears as a special type of *Otherness*, as a potentiation of the mythological narrative that has a connection with an ancient myth.

Conclusions

In *Bera and Cucumber*, Korotko depicts Odesa as a mythological topos. The chronotope has a cyclical nature, the characters subordinate their own lives to natural cycles that determine the peculiarities of the connection between man and nature in the Odesa space. Such a connection has an archetypal character and a mythological nature: from a social point of view, the characters appear to be simulacra, but their inner psychological world should be defined as a space of being: it has its own axiology. The psychological characteristics of the Odesa world are marked by multidimensionality: they combine various worldviews and philosophical traditions, in particular, they perceive the world in the categories of natural philosophy, cabalistic multifaceted dimension, and Turkish *melancholy*. The interaction of the characters with the sea indicates that, in these narratives, there is no traditional division into subject and object relations. Such a feature that contemporary scholars define as *anthropocene*, only confirms the mythological orientation of the entire narrative, since the lack of such a division into subjects and objects is characteristic of mythological thinking. The characters try to experience and find deep existential happiness in their leisure time that fills their inner world with essential axiology, that is, values that are timeless in nature. The Odesa myth in Korotko's *Bera...* is presented as a timeless myth that has its representation in the socio-urbanistic dimension marked even in the names of districts, historical realities and loci of Odesa, but the most

important here are the relations of human beings with the elements of nature.

Furthermore, such correlations have an archetypal and mythological nature: the short stories present the archetypes of the Eye, realized in the system of twins, the archetype of the Road and the archetype of the Home. Odesa space appears as a cozy home, a comfortable existence, for which the concept of peace is decisive.

The writer skillfully inscribes the Odesa narrative into the multicultural space of interaction of Jewish traditions with specifically Ukrainian ones, with Turkish melancholy and mythological natural philosophy. However, in general, we have a tendency to derive the Odesa text from the paradigm of the Russian narrative that indicates that the Russian culture that incorporated the Odesa narrative into its own indicates its exoticism and otherness. The concept of *otherness* is certainly present in Korotko's stories, but the otherness of Odesans, Odesa psychology and identity has an immanent nature and is not connected with the Russian myth that for centuries sought to colonize the Odesa narrative. In the end, such a break with the colonial tradition is indicated by the translation strategy of Michael Pursglove, who in the English translation uses the word 'Odesa' with one 's' that corresponds to the Ukrainian tradition of writing this city name.

Thus, *Bera and Cucumber* is an example of the post-postmodern postcolonial Ukrainian fiction that reveals the Odesa space as possibly mythological, for which the concepts of peace, happiness, leisure, melancholy, harmony, and the unity of human beings with nature are decisive. And this representation of the Odesa myth contradicts the Russian colonial policy that today already in the sociopolitical dimension has led to numerous attacks on Odesa, the destruction of this city that for decades Russian culture tried to incorporate into its own imperial body, manifesting Odesa as Southern Palmira as opposed to Northern Palmira, i.e. St. Petersburg. The narrative strategies used by the narrator reveal the immanent *Otherness* of Odesa that stems from the special Odesa socio-cultural and religious identity that is based on a harmonious combination of various philosophical and worldview traditions.

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