

Sakamoto M.

<https://orcid.org/0009-0005-6883-5025>

Temple University

Nikolenko O. M.

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7374-7226>

Poltava V.G. Korolenko National Pedagogical University

FEATURES OF ARTISTIC SYNTHESIS IN THE INDIVIDUAL STYLE OF RYUNOSUKE AKUTAGAWA (On novella “The Flatcar”)

Ryunosuke Akutagawa’s “The Flatcar” is an example of a philosophical and psychological novella in which artistic synthesis is the main characteristic of the writer’s individual style. During this period, Akutagawa still relied on realism, but he also actively embraced modernism and incorporated the achievements of Symbolism and Impressionism into his fiction.

The story “The Flatcar” has several plot lines: realistic (depicting the protagonist’s dream, the labor process, the boy’s journey on a trolley far from home and his return home); impressionistic (the dynamics of the protagonist’s impressions, under the influence of which changes occur in his consciousness); symbolic (the flatcar as a symbol of the protagonist’s difficult life path, who in adulthood realized the loneliness and alienation similar to his separation from home in childhood); philosophical and mythological (modern interpretations of the myths of Sisyphus, Apollo, Phaethon, Icarus, which allow the author to reveal the essence of human existence between a dream and the impossibility of its realization).

“The Flatcar” combines several points of view (that of the young hero, the adult hero, the workers, the hero’s parents, the peasants, and others). The synthesis of various narrative perspectives lends depth to the depiction and allows for interpretation of the story’s content from various perspectives. A minor episode from a boy’s life evolves into a psychological narrative about the journey of a young soul into a vast, alien world and a philosophical parable about human existence in general.

In this story, the hero’s impressions, thoughts, and dreams flow into each other; it’s like a stream of consciousness in which clear boundaries cannot be clearly established. Since Akutagawa knew European literature well, he undoubtedly knew the works of European modernists (Marcel Proust, Franz Kafka, the late work of Maupassant, etc.). The stream of consciousness, where memories, impressions, descriptions, and thoughts are combined into a single whole, is a sign of modernism (impressionism and symbolism).

Akutagawa made a significant contribution to the development of Japanese and world literature through his impressionist landscapes. He employed a synthesis of various colors and hues, sounds and scents, as well as the play of light, which allowed him to transform landscapes depending on the protagonist’s mood and impressions. Furthermore, Akutagawa’s landscapes are highly dynamic and picturesque, which also reflects impressionism.

The impressionists were very fond of depicting children in painting, because children gave them material for depicting momentary impressions and natural movements. The combination of the image of a child and the image of nature is done very organically in Akutagawa’s story. They seem to merge in a few moments.

Myths play an important role in Akutagawa’s story. Myths allow the author to reveal important existential themes: human dreams and their loss, fading; loneliness and the search for ways to overcome it; human alienation in the world; severance of ties between people and the search for lost ties; life as a heavy burden; loss (absence) of the meaning of existence, work.

There are binary oppositions (opposed concepts) in the story: dream – loss of dream; light – twilight, darkness; home – someone else’s unfamiliar space; loneliness – family; railroad track – free space of nature and others.

The adult hero is exhausted not only by hard work, but also by the burden of a life in which he is alone, lives without meaning, without real family ties, without spiritual warmth. Therefore, he feels that he is again and again making his way past shady groves along a narrow path. That is, the hero of 26 years does not have a clear awareness of what is wrong with his life. But he intuitively feels, this is his impression, that he is living in a wrong way and he should return to another space – native, familiar, warm, cozy. Therefore, in his memories, he runs again, looking for a way home.

Artistic synthesis determined the multiplicity of meanings in Akutagawa's story "The Flatcar", which became a true masterpiece of world literature and an example of a new Japanese style, combining realism and modernism, psychological depth and philosophical generalizations, past and present tense, impressionistic sketches and impressions, as well as words, paintings, and sounds.

Keywords: Akutagawa Ryunosuke, novella "The Flatcar", artistic synthesis, individual style, binary oppositions, realism, modernism, symbolism, impressionism, mythological motifs.

Problem statement. The scholarly foundations for studying the work of the Japanese writer Ryunosuke Akutagawa were laid in the 1940s–1960s. Since then, numerous monographs, articles, and dissertations have been written about him. Research on Ryunosuke Akutagawa's legacy has been particularly intensive in Japan. In 2006, the International Society for Akutagawa [Ryunosuke] Studies (ISAS) was established, and the field continues to thrive, with younger scholars such as Eisuke Kotani and others, playing a leading role. In Ukraine, the most well-known translations of Akutagawa's works are those by I. Dzyub. Specific genres of the writer have been explored by Ukrainian scientists (I. Bondarenko, M. Fedorishin, L. Mitina, M. Vardanyan, and others). However, far from all aspects of Ryunosuke Akutagawa's work have been fully explored. This primarily concerns the writer's individual style, which blends Eastern and Western traditions. Furthermore, Ryunosuke Akutagawa's legacy vividly demonstrates the transition from realism to modernism. Therefore, the writer's style intertwines elements of various literary movements and trends. This is clearly evident in Ryunosuke Akutagawa's short story "The Flatcar" (1922). However, the problem of artistic synthesis in this work, as in other stories by the writer, has not yet been the subject of dedicated research. This determines the relevance of our paper.

Purpose of the article. The main goal of our article is to study the characteristics of artistic synthesis in the individual style of Ryunosuke Akutagawa using his story "The Flatcar" as an example. This goal will be achieved by solving the following tasks: 1) establishing the interaction between elements of realism and modernism (symbolism and impressionism) in "The Flatcar"; 2) analyzing external descriptions (landscapes, labor processes, the hero's movement and portrait) in comparison with the depiction of the hero's psychological states; 3) identifying the main symbols in the story; 4) revealing the author's interpretation of mythological images and motifs and their role in the text.

Presentation of the main material. "The Flatcar" is one of Ryunosuke Akutagawa's representative works, alongside "The Spider's Thread." Because it contains strong elements characteristic of children's literature, it has long been included in Japanese junior high school textbooks for first-year students.

There are many aspects of this short story that could be cited as sources of its appeal. For example, in the following passage, readers can clearly appreciate Akutagawa's skill as a descriptive writer.

"They all let go and jumped up onto the flatcar. It slid down the track in a single movement and as it accelerated, the scenery ahead appeared to speed toward the boys and suddenly split away to either side. With the twilight wind against his face and the car juddering under his feet, Ryohei was almost in ecstasies" [1, p. 210].

It is excellent that the narration refers not only to the protagonist's sense of sight but also to his sense of touch. This conveys how he enjoys riding the flatcar with his entire body and how his emotions are lifted in the moment. The move of the flatcar and the change of landscapes correspond to not only the protagonist's physical movement but also the movement of his impressions.

If we follow the narrative in chronological order, they might be summarized as follows:

1. The growing intensity of the protagonist's desire to push the Flatcar.
2. The sense of frustration when his wish is partially fulfilled, only for him to be immediately scolded.
3. The joy of having his desire fully realized.
4. The process by which that joy turns into anxiety.
5. The moment he hears the laborer's words, plunges into despair, and begins to run, with a strong sense of speed.
6. The outburst of inexpressible disappointment upon returning home, followed by the protagonist's exhaustion in the present.

However, what is important in this short story is not the external sequence of events, but rather the pro-

tagonist's psychological state. In this short story, every aspect of the landscape, colors, and natural surroundings is depicted in close connection with the protagonist's state of mind; his impressions, thoughts, and dreams flow into one another; it resembles a stream of consciousness in which clear boundaries cannot be firmly established. We can say that this short story demonstrates a fusion of impressionism and symbolism in prose.

There are many perspectives in this story; the point of view of the child protagonist (8 years old); the point of view of the adult protagonist (26 years old or older), reflecting both on his childhood self and on his adult self; the authorial perspective; and, at times, the perspectives of people surrounding the protagonist (the workers, the parents, villagers, and others). The combination of all these viewpoints creates multiple psychological dimensions and layers of meaning. For this reason, the work cannot be interpreted in a single, unequivocal way.

Reflecting them, this short story contains several binary oppositions (contrasting concepts):

1. Dream / Loss of Dream: Mythic Implications
 2. Light / Dusk, Darkness: Colors and Nature
 3. Home, Family / Alien, Unfamiliar space – Loneliness
 4. Present / Past and Memory
 5. The Dual Nature of the Geographical Setting
- We will discuss them below.

1. Dream / Loss of Dream: Mythic Implications

For the protagonist, the flatcar belongs to a realm outside everyday life, because the construction site is located on the outskirts of the village. Broadly speaking, there are two kinds of objects that people long for: those they admire just because they often see them in our daily lives, and those they admire because they almost never encounter them in everyday life. For children, a bicycle would be a typical example of the former, while an airplane would represent the latter. For the protagonist, the flatcar clearly falls into this second category.

Akutagawa's narrative skill is excellent that the protagonist's dream shifts from something grand to something increasingly modest: "*Ryohei thought that he wanted to be a construction worker*", then "*at least he wanted to ride one time on the flatcar with the men*", and finally "*even if he never got to ride a flatcar, it would be enough to have the chance to push*" [1, p. 209].

The protagonist's dream is fulfilled, though partially or in a modest way, when he and two boys take turns pushing and riding the flatcar for a short time. However, this act entails the transgression of a certain

taboo, and the protagonist himself is aware of this. "*[T]heir combined strength set the wheels in motion the sudden sound filled Ryohei with dread.*" [1, p. 210]. The fact that he felt dread shows that he recognizes that touching it on his own initiative is wrong—that it would amount to violating a taboo. Does it not call to mind Apollo's chariot as it appears in Greek mythology, seen through the eyes of Phaethon? (Akutagawa was very familiar with European literatures.) The protagonist will be scolded soon after and, additionally, left feeling profoundly vulnerable and alone. In fact, Akutagawa's decision to set the story in February—the coldest time of the year in Japan—can be understood as a foreshadowing of the sudden turn toward unease in the latter half of the narrative. Furthermore, as we will discuss later, the decision to set the story between Odawara and Atami may also have contributed to shaping the tone of the novel.

Immediately after the protagonist is reprimanded, the text states that Ryōhei did not think of riding a flatcar. "*For some time afterward, when Ryohei saw the flatcars in the deserted construction site on the way back from errands, he didn't think of riding one*" [1, p. 210]. In reality, however, his interest in the flatcar continued. "*One afternoon, more than ten days later, Ryohei stood at the construction site alone again, watching the flatcars come in*" [1, p. 210].

It means that the former sentence contains a deliberate exaggeration. By employing this exaggeration, Akutagawa expresses the mental state of a child who does not want to be scolded for touching the flatcar, yet continues to long for his dream.

The protagonist subsequently approaches two young laborers and is finally able to push and ride the flatcar he has long dreamed of experiencing. In this sense, his wish is fulfilled. However, after becoming troubled by the anxiety that he has ventured too far from home, he is confronted with unexpected words from the laborers.

But when the laborers came out, they laid their hands on the ties on the flatcar and carelessly told him, "*You go home now. We're staying over here today.*" "*They'll worry if you get back too late*"

For a moment, Ryohei couldn't make sense of what they were saying" [1, p. 213].

At this point, the protagonist can be said to have felt betrayed, to have incurred a punishment akin to that suffered by Phaethon or Icarus, or even to have been subjected to a Sisyphian ordeal. Unlike the laborer who reprimands the protagonist at the beginning of the story, these two laborers have been friendly and kind toward him. It can therefore be said that the protagonist's sense of disappointment and shock is all the greater.

The protagonist perceives the flatcar not merely as a means of transportation, but as something like a magical object symbolizing his dream, which reminds us of the power over the world like Apollo's chariot. And when he rides downhill, his haori jacket is filled with the wind; and when he runs to his home, it is thrown away. It also reminds us of the wings of Icarus.

What is more, the following passage also appears near the end of the work:

"Worn out by the burden of the world's work, he felt as though he was still making his way past shadowy groves along a narrow sloping track that stretched out endlessly before him..." [1, p. 214].

The railway track along which the flatcar moves seems like a symbol of the life path—a path that initially seems joyful and full of hope, but later reveals itself as routine and burden, something that cannot be altered. The flatcar becomes a symbol of human life, which is often a heavy burden and sometimes devoid of meaning, reminding us of the myth of Sisyphus. In the protagonist's imagination, along a path through a natural landscape toward some other world. In his inner life and feelings, he does not move along the track (up and down and back again), but through the free world of nature. At work, he may indeed be confined to the track, with no alternative. But in his imagination and emotions, he has remained free—he has inwardly stepped beyond the rails.

2. Light / Dusk, Darkness: Colors and Nature

In this short story, the combination of the colors and the image of nature is rendered very organically. At certain moments, they seem to merge.

Let us examine the scene in which the protagonist first pushes the flatcar. Though the protagonist is so excited that he is almost beside himself with delight, the scene contains a number of dark and unsettling elements beneath the surface. The setting is an *"evening in early February."* Flatcars are *"plastered with mud"* and stand in a row *"in the dim light,"* while *"twilight wind"* brushes against the protagonist's face. These details may be read as foreshadowing the moment, shortly afterward, when he is scolded by one of the laborers—although the protagonist himself appears unaware of their significance.

"The vision of the laborer at that moment—dim in the half-light under the small, yellow hat—still remains somewhere in his head to this day. Even this memory, though, has faded over the years" [1, p. 210].

There has been research on Akutagawa's use of color imagery, that red often signifies harsh reality, blue recollection, black aversion, and yellow death [2, pp.148-149]. The fact that the laborer's cap was yellow may be seen as fitting this pattern precisely, since

it functions as a symbol of prohibition and warning. And the depiction in the final paragraph of the work that the protagonist as an adult corrects manuscripts with a brush and "red ink" may be regarded as an instance of the color red symbolizing the harshness of reality.

Although this may not be obvious from the translation, in the original Japanese, Akutagawa writes, *"Even that record seems to lose its color year by year"* [3, p. 49]. The choice to describe not memory itself but its "color" as fading, and to add the tentative "seems," subtly introduces the protagonist's subjectivity.

And, although this is not readily apparent in translation either, it seems that Akutagawa used the kanji letter 薄 "to be employed with unusual frequency in the scene where the protagonist pushes the flatcar and is reprimanded by the laborer. This letter is a commonly used letter, but of the eight instances of the character in *The Flatcar*, five occur in this single scene. This letter carries the sense of becoming thin, blurred, or dim. Given that the story concludes with the phrase 薄暗い藪 *"usugurai yabu"* (*"shadowy groves"*), this wording may also function as a form of foreshadowing. In fact, the light and the dim play very important roles in this work.

The next time the protagonist pushed a flatcar, it was in the afternoon, during the daylight hours, as expressed as follows: *"In the mandarin orchards on either side, yellow fruit glistened in the sun"* [1, p. 211].

Here, the color yellow may be associated with such meanings as hope, cheerfulness, and joy, rather than madness or death. The imagery associated with the mandarin seems consistently bright, as seen in such expressions as *"they climbed between the mandarin orchards"* and *"the car slid down the tracks through the aroma of mandarins."* Nevertheless, it also overlaps with the color of the straw hat worn by the laborer who forbade the protagonist from riding in the mine cart. As some researchers pointed out, the color thus continues to convey the message *"You must not go"* to the protagonist, even in this otherwise positive context [4, pp. 117–118].

Mandarins are commonly cultivated in the vicinity of Odawara. The mandarin orchards lie at a considerable distance from Ryōhei's village and thus outside his everyday sphere of life; however, the very existence of orchards implies that villagers often come and go there, marking the boundary of an area where familiar people may be encountered. Moreover, mandarins are grown in warm climates, and their yellow color can also be said to suggest human warmth.

In other words, at least in *The Flatcar*, yellow encompasses not only warning and prohibition but also human warmth; it is therefore a color that embodies dual or conflicting meanings.

Right after passing the mandarin orchard, the imagery shifts abruptly to darker tones: a bamboo grove, a wooded thicket, red rusted tracks, and fallen leaves. Other images—such as a lofty cliff, the vast and cold sea—also evoke a strong sense of unease. From this paragraph on, the protagonist begins to feel uneasy. Bamboo groves can be found all over Japan, but they are overgrown and dark, giving off an oppressive and gloomy vibe.

The text continues to evoke a somewhat dark or even somber atmosphere such as “a teahouse with a straw roof in front of a hill scarred by excavation work”, “Mud thrown up from the ground dried on its sturdy wooden frame” [1, p. 212]. The description “dried” indicates the construction workers’ and the owner woman’s lack of attentiveness or sensitivity. It also functions as foreshadowing of the workers’ words that follow shortly thereafter.

The sense of unease becomes much more pronounced.

“The light of the sun to the west was fading behind the plum trees in bloom outside the teahouse” [1, p. 212].

Although it is translated as “plum” (слива), it actually refers here to ume (Japanese apricot). This tree is traditionally regarded as an auspicious plant in Japan, because it is one of the first plants to bloom as winter comes to an end. And it is also the local specialty of the Odawara area, the setting of the story. Akutagawa appears to aim to create a contrast between this auspicious plant and the ominous atmosphere. It is also possible that the ume serves as foreshadowing for the protagonist’s subsequent fate, which is marked by endurance in the face of hardship during the winter. The protagonist, seized by frustration and desperation, kicked the wheels and shoved hard against the car, even though he knew he could not move it by himself. The flatcar may symbolize the fate in life that lies beyond one’s control. The eight-year-old protagonist has no idea whatsoever about his fate—either the fate that awaits him then or the fate that awaits him as an adult.

After being told by the laborer, “You go home now,” the protagonist is shaken and begins to run to his home. “The evening glow over Mount Higane was just fading when he ran past the bamboo grove” [1, p. 213]. Here the Ukrainian translation, “А коли добіг до бамбукових чагарів, вечірній серпанок у небі над горою Хітанеяма почав згасати” [5, p. 132.] seems to capture the literary tone of the original more effectively than the English translation. A bamboo grove and a sky from which much of the remaining brightness has faded—further heightens the sense of anxiety. The protagonist experiences the fear

of darkness itself and the fear of loneliness that he is far from home and from his parents.

“When he got to the mandarin orchards, it was growing darker and darker. “If I can only get back in one piece,” Ryohei thought, slipping and stumbling as he ran” [1, p.213].

At this point, the mandarin orchard reappears. Objectively speaking, he is considerably closer to home. However, the protagonist seems unaware of this fact, and his sense of anxiety appears only to intensify. In the darkness, the color of the mandarins is no longer a color of salvation.

Upon entering the village, he sees electric lights glowing, and the scene finally becomes brighter. These lights seem almost like a form of divine salvation or peace. Yet, despite the fact that there is now little objective reason for him to keep running, the protagonist continues to do so.

In fact, it seems that even achieving the long-awaited return home is not something that can be greeted with unqualified joy. *“The uproar drew three or four neighbor women to the dim doorway”* [1, p. 214]. The phrase “dim doorway” is likely a foreshadowing of the ending that the protagonist is “making his way past shadowy groves.” [1, p. 214].

Impressionists loved to depict the same objects under different lighting conditions, in different circumstances, and through different emotional states of the characters. At first, the flatcar seems to the boy like a magical object (like Apollo’s chariot). Later, however, when his psychological state changes, when the workers leave him alone and dusk approaches, he notices the dirt at the bottom of the flatcar. At this point, there is nothing magical left—because his inner state and impressions have changed. The dream has dissipated, and he feels lonely. Thus, Akutagawa paints with words as if with a brush. He captures impressions and shifts in the hero’s inner states, his inner life at a specific moment in time.

3. Home, Family / Alien, Unfamiliar space – Loneliness

The protagonist felt that the young laborers were friendly from the moment he saw them. By readily granting the protagonist’s request and even offering words of praise, the two construction workers appear to the protagonist as admirable and wonderful figures.

Ryohei privately fretted that at any moment one of the men would say, “You don’t have to push now”. But the two young laborers, their bodies straighter than before, just kept silently moving the flatcar forward. Unable to bear it any longer, Ryohei blurted out, “Can I keep pushing as long as I like?”

“Sure,” the two laborers responded simultaneously. “What kind men they are,” Ryohei thought [1, p. 211].

The first sentence is translated in the Ukrainian text as «Можеш перепочити, – почув Рьокей, та анітрохи не зважав на ці слова, хоч парубки вже

випросталися» [5, p. 130], but the English text is more faithful to the original. The Ukrainian translator presumably felt that modifying the text in this way would make it more effective, but it does seem somewhat puzzling. The depiction of the protagonist's unease—prompting him to ask whether he is being told that he no longer needs to push—is particularly effective. Likewise, the portrayal of his interpreting the construction worker's reply as an act of kindness vividly captures a child's emotional perspective.

As pointed out in the previous chapter, the protagonist fails to notice the warning associated with the mandarin orchard; likewise, he remains unaware of the true intentions of the laborer. For example, although the text says that one of the laborers praised him,

"You're a strong one." This praise came from the other, who had a cigarette tucked behind his ear [1, p. 211].

his words may actually have been largely perfunctory and merely a form of social politeness. However, the protagonist did not realize this.

As we have seen, the novel contains numerous descriptions of the landscape, and from the perspective of narrative technique, these descriptions function as representations of the protagonist's psychological state. Yet the reader has an impression that the protagonist himself pays little attention to the scenery around him. In this respect, Akutagawa depicted the protagonist's age and state of mind indirectly.

The laborers stop at two teahouses, but neither they nor the owners of the teahouses appear to show any concern for the protagonist. The protagonist grows increasingly irritated and eager to return home, yet his feelings seem not to be conveyed to them. The gradual intensification of the protagonist's desire to leave is skillfully depicted through both his inner thoughts and his outward behavior. *"Ryohei realized he'd traveled much too far from home," "Ryohei was no longer having a good time. "Why can't we just go back now?" he wished to himself as he looked," "Ryohei paced around the flatcar, watching them in solitary vexation," "Ryohei thanked him coldly," "Ryohei sat on the car, preoccupied with the thought of returning home," and "He tried kicking the wheels and shoving hard at the car, even though he knew he couldn't move it by himself"* [1, p. 212, p. 213]. These phrases contrast with the depictions, which we have already examined, where the protagonist's hopes and aspirations gradually become more modest.

The laborers are by no means unkind; on the contrary, they show a certain degree of consideration by allowing the protagonist to push and ride the flatcar, giving the protagonist sweets and telling him that his parents will worry if he does not return home soon. But they likely regarded the situation simply as a child tagging along at the work site and harbored no particular ill will. It seems he did not give much thought to considerations such as, "He's just a small child; I should tell him to go home early."

The depiction of the scene in which the laborer gives the protagonist some sweets is very effective. In particular, the mention of the smell of kerosene is effective in that the narrative also appeals to the sense of smell, as with the aroma of the mandarin orchard which we have seen earlier. They are impressionistic descriptions to portray the psychological state of the characters indirectly.

"After a while, when the men came out, the one with a cigarette behind his ear (although by now it was no longer there) handed over some cheap sweets wrapped in newspaper to Ryohei, who was standing next to the flatcar. Ryohei thanked him coldly, but then decided it wasn't kind to be so distant. Trying to make up for it, he put one of the sweets in his mouth. It tasted of kerosene, which must have been on the newspaper" [1, p. 212].

Here, the laborers show consideration for the protagonist. Precisely because of this small act of thoughtfulness, it can be said that the words they later utter come as an even greater shock to the boy.

At the same time, however (and this may be somewhat difficult to grasp without familiarity with Japanese social conventions), the fact that the workers give the child cheap sweets as a reward instead of allowing him to sit together with them at the teahouse also carries the implication of "You can go home now." The protagonist is unable to understand this kind of adult intention or unspoken exchange; in other words, this is a case of miscommunication. However, the protagonist has sensed this miscommunication to some extent here. As a result, even after receiving the sweets, he responds rather coldly and, as if to smooth over the awkwardness, does no more than put one of them into his mouth.

In the end, the laborers abruptly tell him, "You go home now," leaving him with a sense of having been betrayed (even so, he offers a somewhat perfunctory bow before leaving, which suggests that he had nevertheless recognized a certain degree of kindness in their behavior). The protagonist does not feel genuine warmth or care from them. This is why he thanks them only formally, and later throws away the sweet.

"For a while, he sped forward as though in a trance. When he found that the parcel of sweets in his jacket was slowing him down, he flung it to the side of the rails and threw his wooden-soled sandals there too. Sometimes pebbles stabbed into the soles of his thin tabi socks, but his feet were much lighter. He sensed the sea off to his left, while he scaled the steep slope. Sometimes his face would twist as the tears welled up. A constant keening noise escaped from his nose as he battled to keep them from falling" [1, p. 213].

The act of throwing away the sweets seems to carry the sense of a break with the workers—or perhaps with the protagonist's own former belief that they were kind people (there is also an interpretation that reads this story as depicting a transition from the world of childhood to the world of adulthood).

Once he has reached the village, there is, objectively speaking, no longer any real need for him to keep running. Nevertheless, he continues to run, which reveals the depth of his absorption and single-mindedness. He wants to be surrounded by loved ones: his mother, father, and caring neighbors. However, the feeling of fear and loneliness was so intense that he could not calm down. This can be seen as a foreshadowing of his future loneliness and alienation in adult life.

That said, just above this scene, we are told that the villagers are surprised because they cannot understand why the protagonist is running so desperately; likewise, neither his family nor the neighbors immediately grasp why he is crying. Although the confusion is soon resolved, this moment can also be described as a case of miscommunication.

The protagonist's current family circumstances and workplace environment are not made explicit in the story. Yet if his wife were a truly supportive partner and his superiors and colleagues at work were cooperative and understanding, would he arrive at a state of mind in the final paragraph of the work? In other words, the conditions of his home life and his work environment are implicitly suggested here. As an eight-year-old, the protagonist had a home with parents who could protect him; the twenty-six-year-old protagonist, lacking such a refuge, must continue to be tormented by a sense of loneliness and anxiety similar to—or even greater than—that which he felt on the return journey from riding the flatcar.

The adult protagonist is exhausted not only by hard labor, but by the burden of a life lived in loneliness, without meaning, without genuine family ties, without emotional warmth. Therefore, he feels as though he is again and again making his way past shadowy groves (the word “shadow” appears again, along with indistinct impressionistic landscapes) along a narrow path (indirect, again an impressionistic trait). He does not have a clear understanding of what exactly is wrong in his life. Yet intuitively—through impressions and feelings—he senses that he is living wrongly and that he must return to another space: familiar, native, warm, and comforting. This is why, in his memories, he runs again and again, searching for the road home.

4. Present / Past and Memory

It is not uncommon for a novel to make explicit at the outset that the entire narrative consists of a character's recollections. Akutagawa's handling of the device, however, is more restrained—indeed, more artful. Only after the story has progressed for some time does the reader come to realize that the narrative is, in fact, the protagonist's recollection. And the reader does not learn the protagonist's present circumstances until the end of the story.

I would like to get back to the phrase that I have cited earlier.

“The vision of the laborer at that moment—dim in the half-light under the small, yellow hat—still remains

somewhere in his head to this day. Even this memory, though, has faded over the years” [1, p. 210].

It is here that the reader first realizes the story is a recollection. The statement that memory of the protagonist has faded implies that the events described in the story may not correspond exactly to his actual experience.

In truth, there are considerable gaps between the events described in the novel and those that actually took place. The conversion work between Odawara and Atami—from a manpowered railway Zushō Jinsha Tetsudo to a light railway Atami Tetsudo—took place over several months beginning in August 1907. For this reason, some have pointed out inconsistencies with the novel, such as the setting being in early February, or the fact that a boy who was eight years old at the time of the construction would have been twenty-six years old by the time the work was published in 1922 [3, pp. 308-309].

These discrepancies may be due either to faulty memory on the part of the person who supplied the notes or to Akutagawa's own embellishment, but it is most likely the latter. Since the boy undergoes a harsh experience, even if only for a few hours, Akutagawa may have associated it with the coldest time of the year. It is also possible that by setting the story in February, he found it convenient to bring in symbolic elements such as mandarin and ume. And such discrepancies may also function as a device suggesting the fading or distortion of the protagonist's memory.

Furthermore, research by railway historians, as well as evidence from maps and other sources, suggests that the references to time and distance in the texts are not based on objective reality. For example, although the narrative appears to indicate that the protagonist boarded the flatcar after pushing it for 20 yards (ten ken), this distance is too short for him to ride for two or three minutes and become excited. Moreover, as will be discussed below, the work was produced on the basis of notes provided by an admirer of Akutagawa, and the protagonist's home was in Yugawara. Judging from the railway timetables and the distances between the stations at that time [6, p. 19, p. 35.], it would have been almost impossible for him to have made a round trip over a distance three or four times greater than that between his home and Iwamura. between afternoon and evening, even with breaks at teahouses.

The lack of objective accuracy in these distance figures may indicate that the protagonist's memories have faded over time. It may even suggest that he is mentally exhausted and therefore unable to reassess his recollections of the past in an objective manner. Although the protagonist does manage to make it home, his experience is by no means a pleasant one. The reason he repeatedly recalls such a painful memory is that he is exhausted.

By withholding the fact that the story is the protagonist's recollection until well into the narrative, and

by delaying the revelation of the protagonist's present circumstances until the very end, Akutagawa creates a powerful, lingering effect that remains with the reader long after the story has ended.

5. The Dual Nature of the Geographical Setting

Akutagawa set the story of this short novel between Odawara and Atami. The mention of the mandarin orchards and ume, which are local specialties, together with the descriptions "*They got on the car and rode under the trees, with the sea off over to their right*" [1, p. 212], and "*He sensed the sea off to his left, while he scaled the steep slope*" [1, p. 213] suggest that Akutagawa was conscious of the geography of the setting. A glance at a map of Japan around Atami and Odawara will make it clear that, when traveling from south to north, the sea is on one's right, whereas when traveling from north to south, it is on one's left.

This geographical choice derives from the fact that he completed the work on the basis of materials provided by a man named Heizō Rikiishi, an avid reader of Akutagawa and a devotee of literature living in this region. However, the very act of following Rikiishi's notes and placing the setting precisely there can itself be interpreted as foreshadowing: it intensifies the sense of loneliness that pervades the ending of the story and lingers over the life of the still-young protagonist.

Odawara is a central city in western Kanagawa Prefecture, and Atami is a well-known hot-spring resort. According to a railway historian, the line between Odawara and Atami appears to have been used mainly by spa visitors traveling for recuperation, and their business performances were good. However, in its day, the ride was notoriously uncomfortable, and fares were high. Its high business performance was mainly because it was almost the only way to reach the resort area. What is more, the trains often caused accidents, and especially after the railway switched from manpowered operation to steam locomotives, friction with nearby residents intensified because of the smoke and soot [6]. Notably, while *The Flatcar* was first published in March 1922 and appeared in book form in May 1923, some sections of the railway service were discontinued in December 1922.

The poor ride quality of this railway was mentioned by renowned writers such as Shōyō Tsubouchi and Sōseki Natsume. In 1921, Akutagawa had visited Yugawara, a known hot-spring resort town through which the aforementioned railway ran and where Rikiishi lived. It is therefore highly likely that Akutagawa rode this railway, and he must also have been well aware of its bad reputation. Furthermore, he must have anticipated that, if he wrote a novel modeled on the railway linking Odawara and Atami, not a few readers would think, "Ah, that notorious railway."

In addition, Odawara is well known for its defeat in a large-scale siege at the end of the sixteenth century, and for the repeated, protracted meetings held by the defenders in deciding their strategy and peace

negotiations—an episode that gave rise to the idiom "Odawara hyōjō" (literally, "Odawara meeting" or "Odawara conference"), meaning a long and fruitless conference. One might even say that, in Europe, Odawara could be compared to a place like Waterloo.

Seen in this light, the setting of *The Flatcar* can be said to be marked by a considerable degree of duality: despite being a famous resort area, it was also home to a poorly reputed railway, as well as a central city whose name became associated with an unflattering historical idiom. From this perspective, Akutagawa's decision not to use a fictional town but instead to specify real place names may be interpreted as foreshadowing the sense of loneliness that pervades the life of the still-young protagonist.

In fact, Rikiishi reportedly hoped that "*The Flatcar*" would conclude as a heartwarming tale in which the protagonist reunites with his family after running a long distance. He is said to have lamented the depiction of the protagonist as weary at the age of twenty-six, remarking that the story had "ceased to be mine forever." Indeed, the novel's ending may be read as a satire of Rikiishi, and one might even feel that Akutagawa lacked consideration for him; yet it is precisely this lack of consideration that allowed the work to emerge as a literary masterpiece.

Conclusions. Ryunosuke Akutagawa's "*The Flatcar*" is an example of a philosophical and psychological novella in which artistic synthesis is the main characteristic of the writer's individual style. During this period, Akutagawa still relied on realism, but he also actively embraced modernism and incorporated the achievements of Symbolism and Impressionism into his fiction.

The story "*The Flatcar*" has several plot lines: realistic (depicting the protagonist's dream, the labor process, the boy's journey on a trolley far from home and his return home); impressionistic (the dynamics of the protagonist's impressions, under the influence of which changes occur in his consciousness); symbolic (the flatcar as a symbol of the protagonist's difficult life path, who in adulthood realized the loneliness and alienation similar to his separation from home in childhood); philosophical and mythological (modern interpretations of the myths of Sisyphus, Apollo, Phaethon, Icarus, which allow the author to reveal the essence of human existence between a dream and the impossibility of its realization).

"*The Flatcar*" combines several points of view (that of the young hero, the adult hero, the workers, the hero's parents, the peasants, and others). The synthesis of various narrative perspectives lends depth to the depiction and allows for interpretation of the story's content from various perspectives. A minor episode from a boy's life evolves into a psychological narrative about the journey of a young soul into a vast, alien world and a philosophical parable about human existence in general.

In this story, the hero's impressions, thoughts, and dreams flow into each other, it's like a stream of consciousness in which clear boundaries cannot be clearly established. Since Akutagawa knew European literature well, he undoubtedly knew the works of European modernists (Marcel Proust, Franz Kafka, the late work of Maupassant, etc.). The stream of consciousness, where memories, impressions, descriptions, and thoughts are combined into a single whole, is a sign of modernism (impressionism and symbolism).

Akutagawa made a significant contribution to the development of Japanese and world literature through his impressionist landscapes. He employed a synthesis of various colors and hues, sounds and scents, as well as the play of light, which allowed him to transform landscapes depending on the protagonist's mood and impressions. Furthermore, Akutagawa's landscapes are highly dynamic and picturesque, which also reflects impressionism.

The impressionists were very fond of depicting children in painting, because children gave them material for depicting momentary impressions and natural movements. The combination of the image of a child and the image of nature is done very organically in Akutagawa's story. They seem to merge in a few moments.

Myths play an important role in Akutagawa's story. Myths allow the author to reveal important existential themes: human dreams and their loss, fading; loneli-

ness and the search for ways to overcome it; human alienation in the world; severance of ties between people and the search for lost ties; life as a heavy burden; loss (absence) of the meaning of existence, work.

There are binary oppositions (opposed concepts) in the story: dream – loss of dream; light – twilight, darkness; home – someone else's unfamiliar space; loneliness – family; railroad track – free space of nature and others.

The adult hero is exhausted not only by hard work, but also by the burden of a life in which he is alone, lives without meaning, without real family ties, without spiritual warmth. Therefore, he feels that he is again and again making his way past shady groves along a narrow path. That is, the hero of 26 years does not have a clear awareness of what is wrong with his life. But he intuitively feels, this is his impression, that he is living in a wrong way and he should return to another space – native, familiar, warm, cozy. Therefore, in his memories, he runs again, looking for a way home.

Artistic synthesis determined the multiplicity of meanings in Akutagawa's story "The Flatcar", which became a true masterpiece of world literature and an example of a new Japanese style, combining realism and modernism, psychological depth and philosophical generalizations, past and present tense, impressionistic sketches and impressions, as well as words, paintings, and sounds.

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Сакамото М., Ніколенко О. М. ОСОБЛИВОСТІ ХУДОЖНЬОГО СИНТЕЗУ В ІНДИВІДУАЛЬНОМУ СТИЛІ РЮНОСКЕ АКУТАГАВИ (про новелу "Вагонетка")

У статті розглянуто оповідання японського письменника Рюноске Акутагани "Вагонетка" (1922) як приклад філософсько-психологічної новели. Автори встановили, що художній синтез є провідною ознакою індивідуального стилю письменника. Як зазначено в статті, у 1920-ті роки Акутагава спирався на реалізм, але водночас використовував прийоми модернізму, зокрема символізму та імпресіонізму.

Відповідно сюжет новели "Вагонетка" має декілька сюжетних ліній: реалістичну (відображає мрію головного героя, трудовий процес, подорож хлопчика на вагонетці далеко від рідної домівки і його повернення додому); імпресіоністичну (динаміка вражень головного героя, зміни в його свідомості); символічну (вагонетка як символ важкого життєвого шляху головного героя, котрий у дорослому віці відчув самотність і відчуження, подібні його розлуці з домашнім простором у дитинстві); філософсько-

міфологічний (сучасні інтерпретації античних міфів про Сизіфа, Аполлона, Фаетона, Ікара, що сприяють розкриттю сутності людського існування між мрією та неможливістю її здійснення).

У статті відзначено, що “Вагонетка” поєднує в собі декілька точок зору (юного героя, дорослого героя, працівників, батьків героя, селян та ін.). Синтез різних наративних позицій надає глибину художньому зображенню і дозволяє його трактувати в різних аспектах. Незначний епізод із життя звичайного хлопчика перетворюється на психологічну розповідь про подорож юної душі у великий чужий світ і філософську притчу про людське існування загалом.

У новелі Акутаґави враження, мрії, марення героя плінно перетікають одне в одне, подібно потоку свідомості. Оскільки письменник добре знав європейську літературу, він, безумовно, був обізнаний зі здобутками європейських модерністів (Марсель Пруст, Франц Кафка, пізня творчість Гі де Мопассана та ін.). Потік свідомості, де враження, описи й думки героя поєднуються в одне ціле, є виразною ознакою модернізму (імпресіонізму і символізму).

Акутаґава зробив значний внесок у розвиток імпресіоністичного пейзажу. Він використав синтез різних кольорів і відтінків, звуків і запахів, а також гру (мерехтіння, зміну) світла, що дозволило йому трансформувати пейзажі залежно від настроїв і вражень головного героя. Окрім того, пейзажі Акутаґави відзначаються динамізмом і живописністю, що також суголосно естетиці імпресіонізму.

Художники-імпресіоністи любили зображувати на своїх полотнах дітей, оскільки саме поведінка дітей давала чудовий матеріал для відображення емоційних станів, миттєвих вражень і порухів природи. Поєднання образу дитини і природних явищ в новелі Акутаґави здійснено напрочуд органічно в певному моменті.

Важливу роль в оповіданні Акутаґави “Вагонетка” відіграють міфи. Вони сприяють розкриттю важливих екзистенційних тем: людські мрії й прагнення та їх втрата, згасання; самотність і пошук шляхів її подолання; відчуження людини і світу; розрив зв'язків між людьми і пошук втрачених зв'язків; життя як важкий тягар (чи повинність); втрата (відсутність) смислу існування та праці.

У новелі простежуємо бінарні опозиції: мрія – втрата мрії; світло – сутінки, темрява; дім – чужий далекий простір; родина – самотність; залізниця (техніка) – вільний простір природи та ін.

Дорослий герой виснажений не лише важкою роботою, але й тягарем життя, в якому він виявився самотнім, існує без сенсу, без справжніх сімейних стосунків, без духовного тепла. Саме тому він відчуває, що знов і знов повертається до епізоду з дитинства, який його надто схвилював: він згадує про вузьку стежину, якою пробирається крізь темний гай до свого села. Дорослий герой не має чіткого уявлення про те, що ж не так із його життям, але він інтуїтивно відчуває (це його враження в моменті), що живе неправильно, і прагне повернутися в інший простір – рідний, знайомий, теплий, затишний. Тому у своїх спогадах він знов біжить, шукаючи шлях додому.

Отже, художній синтез визначив розмаїття смислів в новелі Акутаґави “Вагонетка”, що стала справжнім шедевром світової літератури і прикладом нового японського стилю, який поєднав реалізм і модернізм, психологічну глибину і філософські узагальнення, минуле і сучасне, імпресіоністичні замальовки і враження, а також мистецтво слова, живопис і звуки природи.

Ключові слова: Акутаґава Рюноске, новела “Вагонетка”, художній синтез, індивідуальний стиль, бінарні опозиції, реалізм, модернізм, символізм, імпресіонізм, міфологічні мотиви.

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