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## Mythopoetics of Transition in Women's Prose in Kazakhstan (Based on the Works of Lili Kalas)

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**Abstract.** In modern Kazakhstani female prose written in Russian language the postmodern aesthetics with a pronounced parody, humor (ironic and self-ironic) origin, deconstructing traditionalist canons based on myth and folklore, have noticeably prevailed. Female prose is a soft force that determines a smooth transition to a new worldview that distances itself from tradition through the “oscillation composition”, the release of shadow impulses of the collective unconscious, previously suppressed by the clear organization of a homogeneous traditional society, adaptation characters with a “double bottom”, a labyrinth chronotope, delayed, incomplete initiation, carnivalization, releasing affects and illustrating the concept of natural and historical background associated with crisis, turning points in the life of society and man, etc.

Psychoanalytic literary criticism, together with artistic anthropology, feminist and mythological criticism, helps to decode the hidden processes in the modern Kazakhstani literature which are still ripening in the context of a period of incomplete social and historical transition.

**Keywords:** mythopoetics, female prose, change of periods, initiation, Kazakhstani literature, carnivalization, postmodernism.

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## Мифопоэтика перехода в женской прозе Казахстана (на материале произведений Лили Калаус)

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**Аннотация.** В современной русскоязычной женской прозе Казахстана в последние годы заметно превалирует постмодернистская эстетика с ярко выраженным пародийным, смеховым (ироничным и самоироничным) началом, деконструирующим традиционалистские каноны, опирающиеся на миф и фольклор. Феминистское письмо – мягкая сила, обуславливающая плавный переход к новому мировоззрению, дистанцирующемуся от традиции через «композицию колебания», высвобождение теневых импульсов коллективного бессознательного, ранее подавляемых четкой организацией однородного традиционного социума, адаптационных персонажей с «двойным дном», хронотопа лабиринта, задержанную, незавершенную инициацию, карнавализацию, высвобождающую аффекты и иллюстрирующую концепцию природного и исторического времени, связанную с кризисными, переломными моментами в жизни общества и человека, и др. Психоаналитическое литературоведение в купе с художественной антропологией, феминистской и мифологической критикой помогают дешифровать подспудные процессы в современной литературе Казахстана, которые еще только вызревают в контексте периода незавершенного социального и исторического перехода.

**Ключевые слова:** мифопоэтика, женская проза, период перехода, инициация, казахстанская литература, карнавализация, постмодернизм.

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### Introduction

As M. M. Bakhtin writes, “In the vast scientific literature devoted to ritual, myth, lyrical and epic folk art, it is laughter that is given the most modest place” (Bakhtin 1990: 2). Despite the wide corpus of studies on laughter discourse that have appeared in philology in

recent years, modern Kazakh literature in this context remains poorly studied, and the phenomenon of laughter culture in Kazakh women’s neo-mythological prose has not been thoroughly investigated at all.

At the same time, the process of so-called “postmodernization”, which actualizes parody,

play, laughter, debunking mythological canons, and dissembling their structure, is noticeably prevalent in the modern Kazakh "women's text".

"Irony, black humor, intertextuality and magical realism of Fairy Tales for Adults is a funny literary game" (Ayla, Sakavova 2013: 3), which is played, for example, by the famous Kazakh authors Elena Klepikova (pseudonym Elena Ayla) and Natalia Sakavova, using the psychoanalytical technique of a "return to childhood" the writers create remakes and stylizations modeled after well-known fairy tales, subjecting their form and content to deconstruction. As post-Soviet postmodernism blurs genre boundaries, deconstructs traditions and gravitates towards depressiveness (Glintershchik 2000), promising no progress ahead, their magical realism is lost:

- a happy ending, which is always in doubt (in the fairy tale "Squirrel and Rosochka" the heroines' mother marries the prince by mistake, thus displacing the traditional twin motif from the center of the fairy tale narrative);

- antithetical constructions and poetics of repetition (in the fairy tale "The Three Little Pigs" there are four piglets; the wolf with the fourth piglet adopts Taoism: "And enlightenment came upon the Big Gray Wolf: he became a vegetarian and a pigophile" (Ayla, Sakavova 2013: 19);

- goodness, which looks strange and abnormal in a predatory world aimed at consumption ("Everything in the world is relative, both good and evil. What is good for one is death for another" (Ayla, Sakavova 2013: 24), "The Greedy Monk");

- predictable, once and for all given view of the world (in the fairy tale "Dereza the Star of Vestiges" justice triumphs quite by chance, as the world is chaotic and unfair);

- The plot of initiation (in the fairy tale "The Shchuch's Will", Yemelya marries the Tsar's cook, who runs the state in his stead).

Modern Kazakh life seems to rule archaic plots on the model of forbidden folklore, in which it is not the good and right hero supported by the higher powers that wins, but the charming and clever scoundrel – the trickster

or simply the physiological nature of man. In this way, the writers invite their readers to look for the "second bottom" in their fairy-tale texts and their own lives, or at least to "change their glasses". And the main tools for deconstructing the traditional fairy tale form are humor and irony. "We were born to make fairy tales come true, to do good and to caress...". "A fairy tale backed by a sound plan risks becoming reality" (quotes on the cover of *Fairy Tales for Adults*).

### Statement of the problem

The mythopoetics of the Kazakh post-modernist novel, created by a Kazakh female author in both a feminist and parodic vein, is no less caricatured.

"Vampires, or other ghouls, are merry, laughing creatures, great imaginers and fantasists. Their meals are often accompanied by an amusing action, where there is a lot of music, songs and dances. According to Plutarch, before the catastrophes in Troy, Herculaneum and Chernobyl, residents saw dancing vampires, which they took for wandering traders, blind aedes or persons of Caucasian ethnicity. As Heraclitus wittily noted, they then realized what was going on, but it was too late..." (Koroleva 2004: 188–189).

This quote from Guli Koroleva (pseudonym Lili Kalas) "A Novel with Blood", a genre mixture of a parody of a thriller (horror novel) and feminist writing, very accurately conveys the retroatmosphere of the post-Soviet nineties, when the new trends of the era were keenly felt: desires overflowing, anxiety, total insecurity, various kinds of mystical premonitions, the caricature and unreality of what was happening. It was during this period that the shadowy impulses of the collective unconscious, previously suppressed by the clear organization of socialist society, were released. J. Baudrillard in his work "The Transparency of Evil" calls such a revolutionary state of society the state "after the orgy", and "the dump of freedom" (Baudrillard, 2000).

The moment of liberation of the political and sexual, the people and art, the period of confusion of ideological and moral values, provoked in Kazakh literature an appeal to affective genres, for which the genre-forming factor

is not so much the subject of the image, which at this time was undefined, as the state of mind of the reader: "...*the cursed physiology of fear pulls at our fleshpots!*" (Koroleva, 2004: 189).

Koroleva's "vampire novel" also becomes genre-correcting for the "composition of oscillation", the feeling on the border of the natural and the supernatural, the understandable and the obscure, the frightening and the ridiculous, which are equally experienced by both the character and the reader. In this kind of fantastic art forms, according to T. Todorov, the main genre principle democratically shifts to the area of interaction between the author, the hero and the reader, their fluctuations in the interpretation of what is depicted, since "the uncanny", according to R. Jackson's concept, is located on the threshold of the real and fantasy (Ulybina, 1999: 417). Thus, in the 1990s the mystical thriller acquired the power of the postmodernist super-demanded genre thanks to the structure of obscurity that universalizes its perception.

Ambiguity, instability, devaluation of moral values – the diseases of the growth of democracy in the post-Soviet society of the 1990s, whose main problem was intoxication with derivatives of freedom. "Max talked in a wistful voice about how he had been sick all last week with a strange disease that looked like leukemia, diabetes, and rabies all at once. Intoxication! – the nurses diagnosed him in one voice." (Koroleva, 2004: 183).

## Discussion

### *System of character images*

"The Composition of Fluctuation" also gave rise to a new type of morally gutta-percha character: "Viktor Grigorievich Semashko, a recently retired but still very sturdy fat man with many warts on his cheeks, dreamed of completing his dacha. He was rightly proud of the fact that all the building materials from cement to nails were stolen with his own hands" (Koroleva, 2004: 174).

It was a character with a "double bottom", an "indistinct shadow", who lived mainly to eat and reproduce her own kind. Potential vampire Lana Malinovskaya was a person with a double bottom. She could not be unraveled neither by

kindergarten teachers, nor by teachers, nor by her comrades in the Komsomol." (Koroleva, 2004: 174).

Nevertheless, in artistic terms, this multi-dimensional image turned out to be much more full-blooded and alive (similar to the new picture of reality) than the former Soviet types: exsanguinated maiden factory workers, somnambulistic poets, conservatory students at the last stage of exhaustion, and the most actively represented in the bygone reality of intoxicated citizens. "Like stoned dead people rushing to their graves at dawn, the neighborhood drunks crawled to the beer hall." (Koroleva, 2004: 177).

Vampires are cunning, strong, always dishonest, and possess mimicry and the fifth dimension; in a sense, they are anthropomorphic forms perfectly adapted to the age of change, with an immortal structure that fully recovers from any troubles. Against the background of physical and intellectual imperfections and the primitive life goals of ordinary mortal characters (to have children, to settle comfortably in life...), vampire goals look the most relevant: "I came to you, ma chérie, to help." (Koroleva, 2004: 185).

The author of the mega-novel G. Koroleva, like her vampire characters, has a similar postmodernist poetics of "double grasping" that unfolds the character in all its complexity, an adaptation mechanism in new literature adapted to the specifics of reader perception: "Ira was not the first choice of bride: 28 years old, lopsided nose and breasts, old blackheads mixed with new pimples, dull cow's eyes. But on the other hand, she is not promiscuous, does not drink, does not smoke and wants to get married very much" (Koroleva, 2004: 177).

This poetics of double standards also helped to explain the social connection between "machinations and freethinking" in the 1990s, as well as to legitimize a new artistic standard of the variegated character, to which a stably structured and conservatively unambiguous type living in one "real reality" is very far away. As the vampire Leva Axelrod says, "We have equal chances, but I have more possibilities" (Koroleva, 2004: 191).

The ordinary mortal characters in *A Novel with Blood* are inferior to the infernal in many

respects. Not only is the “taste of victory” fundamentally unknown to them, they are also conceptually bodily unaesthetic in comparison with the ideal bodily form of demonic images – for example, the only beautiful vampire Lana Malinovskaya, a gorgeous woman of 32, and the vampire Max, “a marvelous specimen with a promising constitution”.

The number of non-standard, even ugly characters in the novel was quite consistent with the postmodern depressive worldview. Either they are girls with hypertrophied exaggerated forms: bulky Lolka in loose tights and Tata Bobrova, who is overweight, shy, mouthing, whispering and stuttering, with a face resembling a teapot. Or they are their numerous girlfriends “with bony breasts”, truncated flesh and psyche: “Goltsova had the subtle constitution of a teenager, straw hair and the sullen psychology of Tarzan” (Koroleva, 2005: 153). However, as a rule, they choose American movie stars from the covers of glossy magazines as an object of identification, and therefore subconsciously hate their external sides even more. The artist Lolka “embodied in wax children’s crayons and felt-tip pens her own image with two noses and a charred hole in the place of her right eye” (Koroleva, 2005: 130).

Moreover, the scale of the flesh’s defectiveness in the novel is catastrophic. It is also “Inga with a mangled lip that gave her a duck-like expression” (Koroleva, 2005: 130). And Svetka the actress “with eight defects of diction, an immobile upper jaw and a complete lack of hearing and voice” (Koroleva, 2005: 130).

But the male characters in this “feminist” text are, of course, much more ugly both bodily and mentally. Rybakov’s is “mischievous baldness in a golden gunk and boar eyes with a spark.” The “charming” Stasik Zhuravlev from St. Petersburg is crooked-footed. Sanya Ufimtsev, a young “scary-looking” soldier, has big ears and disproportionately long arms. Gleb Pilgun is a bore. And Igor Turbin thus reveals his rich inner world: “About myself: since we parted in 1979, I graduated from school, then a technical school, army, correspondence school of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. It was difficult. Now I am almost a captain, with prospects for growth. I admit: I was married. Mistaken-

ly. I am ready for a new marriage” (Koroleva, 2005: 164).

Marry here, when even Ded Moroz in the novel – hopelessly drunk, and the whole “available man”, a chronic loser. “Tolik was unlucky. He had a squint-eyed wife, a thieving father-in-law, and his car was vomited up at the very beginning of the shift” (Koroleva, 2005: 18).

This is at first glance rather aesthetic, but in fact still attractive by their exuberant naturalness. The characters arise in literature periodically and precisely in transitional, revolutionary times. Strong psychological stress eventually leads to “biological traumatism” of the human organism (Vipoulis, 2017). Through the procedure of artistic punitive anatomy, according to Nietzsche, a person at such moments rediscovers himself. And “subjected to the author’s execution, this body executes in itself the Other, first of all, the social, discipline-controlled body” (Postmodernism. Encyclopedia, 2001: 828).

### **Feminist writing**

Feminist writing also, by definition, resists the established form of sociality. A woman, according to J. Baudrillard, cannot be understood and explained in terms of a male-dominated society. A woman is a bad conductor of the political and ideological. The female essence is instinctive, inertial, chaotic and unpredictable. It does not lend itself to informational processing and embodies “radical uncertainty”, in line with the postmodernist understanding of the environment. Practically, she coincides with nature. Woman is a very living “environment” with an eternally fluid internal organization.

This postmodern “rupture of structure” of the female character, its rhizomorphism, constant exchange of qualities with the environment, manifests the special creative potential of the female, defallo-centered world, its doubled stress resistance and increased adaptive potential (Antilogova, Dmitrieva, Ryadinskaya, 2021; Dmitrieva, Ryadinskaya, Hohleva, 2020). The author of the vampire-feminist novel clearly disagrees with the Freudian concept of woman as a “second sex”, an inferior man: “Let’s drink to men – they are all bastards, they will never understand us, the freaks. We’re clever, beautiful



women, you, Bestuzheva, sew beautifully, Lolka draws, I'm an actress. So we're lucky. Let's drink!" (Koroleva, 2005: 134).

According to J. Kristeva, woman eludes any definitions and any ideological bindings of the male world, as female self-consciousness is inherently dual, bisexual (Kristeva, 2004; 2013): "...In the incredible heat of July, in the kitchen scorched by the setting sun, between the boiling jam on the stove and the burping refrigerator, two close friends were playing table soccer" (Koroleva, 2005: 147).

A woman is able to look at herself from the outside, she is both the subject and the object of male intentions at the same time, which gives her a privileged position both in life and in art. Psychological flexibility, the duality of woman is a necessary condition for survival, because social and personal cataclysms only increase her appetite and general interest in life. "Under the monotonous reading of Kholodny's fresh poem 'Kholosas', Liza ate chicken and salad, drank wine with pleasure, gossiped quietly with Gulka and flirted with the electrician" (Koroleva, 2005: 151–152).

Women's mental plasticity allows them to resist the environment (by implanting into it) without losing their own structure, without destroying it, because the very organization of women's inner world is formless, structureless, thought of as a changeable and unpredictable process (Ivanova, 2021). The form must correspond to the content, therefore the grotesque inferiority of the bodily form in "An Affair with Blood" is only the reverse side of the desire to have not only an easily transformable psyche, but also an easily correctable body. As G. Deleuze writes, individual post-industrial freedom necessarily implies liberation from the imposed concreteness of the body. As A. Genis puts it, the postmodernist body is not destiny, but only the primary raw material in need of correction and processing (Postmodernism. Encyclopedia, 2001: 833). As, for example, in the never-aging vampire.

The hypertrophy of form, the accentuation of corporeality, is also one of the ways of expressing the inner "black hole", the mental *emptiness* of the postmodernist character – "the *empty-headed Zinaida Sinitsina with the*

*wolf's transparent eye*", a consequence of the "penetrating psychic wound" resulting from the social crisis. The transition to body language is the opening of a channel for the expression of repressed, painful psychic impulses and, at the same time, the rejection of a rational interpretation of reality, which is impossible to change anyway.

Society returns to the primary, corporeal, preverbal language in times of social collapse (Merlin, 2006). Corporeality is always a package concept; it introduces into culture not only gendered, heightened sensory specificity, but also such phenomena as affect, perversion, death, instinct (Safronova, Zhanysbekova, 2018). A body without a soul is asocial. The body is like the simplest mechanical construction, and in the version of the vampire character it is a dead organism in general, in essence, a Deleuzian "body without organs" that does not lend itself to traditional reflexive analysis and is inexplicable according to the schemes of traditional logic. That is, it is also analogous to the postmodern environment: "Its temperature was 20° degrees Celsius" (Koroleva, 2004b: 178).

A "dead" body, opposed to a strictly organized and pre-determined functioning living organism, is free from external control, but permeable to the external environment, has mobile boundaries, covers the deficit of adaptive mechanisms of the new Kazakh sociality of the 1990s. The excessive corporeality of the vampire-feminist novel is a fixation of the need to make more permeable the boundaries between the new world and oneself, the imprinting of the desire to build into the new reality, since we, thanks to the body, "have the world" and "belong to it" (M. Merleau-Ponty).

That's why women and vampires, who live according to the laws of the blood call, part of the environment of the bloody 1990s, creatures maximally adapted to the era of change, which was defined by material values and aimless movement without a glimmer of progress, are always depicted in Lili Kalas' text as aggressively chewing. In this way they try to drown out stress and fill the inner emptiness, to resemble an absorbed environment. "...in January there were: a fat milkman, a drunken soldier, three Turks (to buy a house)... but they

were not enough; they lived in starvation. In December there were eight people! There is no comparison" (Koroleva, 2004b: 178). Yes and "What good can be said about the cultural life of the living dead?... Sleep to the vampire, as is known, comes with the first rays of the sun. And so, having eaten and taken a walk, the prudent vampire returns home early, and languishes, wandering around his lair from corner to corner. He starts to polish the brass handles of the coffin, or to train his favorite spider, or to dig an underground passage to the nearest cemetery" (Koroleva, 2004b: 178).

According to Kierkegaard, the body is puppet-like; it is a passive instrument of instinct, its existential depth disappears, the body is superficial, it accumulates only the external. The bodies of G. Koroleva's characters are as impotent as the consciousness of the average man of the 1990s. The reality of such a character is a "dreamless dream", and life before his eyes is passing unreflected, as in the movies: "he hits me on the face without swinging, as in the movies" (Koroleva, 2005: 133).

In this case, all social associations turn out to be mythical: family ("What to hide, it was an exotic marriage with domestic fights, beatings and African passions"); friendship ("Well! (Koroleva, 2005: 147); friendship ("Well! I had hoped that at least her husband would leave her after that story... No! They coo like doves, it's disgusting to watch") (Koroleva, 2005: 128); and feminism itself: "These chronic single mothers, beggars, honest, highly educated, but worldly stupid, could not convey to Inga their harmonious feminist worldview, disgust for men" (Koroleva, 2005: 128).

In the philosophy of poststructuralism, the spirit is clear and transparent for expression, while the body denotes that "there is darkness in man". According to F. Nietzsche, the subject absorbed in corporeality, instead of experiencing its own identity, gets a shocking experience of non-identity with itself (Nietzsche, 2013). The society is in crisis, the family situation is unclear, there is a "mudflow" in the head. Only instincts, only the feeling of hunger, remain "non-identical" in such a situation.

And the only relatively satisfactory and saving possibility of self-identification for both the

author and the reader becomes total irony: "Are you embroidering parodies of me?" (Koroleva, 2005: 160). The communality of corporeality, the universality of bodily experience opens up possibilities for the variant construction of artistic information, including the self-construction of the reader's "virtual body", since, according to V. Podoroga, one cannot read without changing oneself (Podoroga, 1995). The body of the postmodern reader, both the female character and the vampire character, turns out to be not a final constructed formation, but only situationally significant and fundamentally transient, an intermediate version of its configuration, each time possibly a "new" body.

Despite the heightened sensuality of the postmodern image, the initial excitement, the ecstatic nature of bodily experience, the "body without organs" is always blank. "My life is a 'Mahabharata' without a hero." (Koroleva, 2005: 122), – summarizes the feminist heroine G. Koroleva. It is, as a rule, a sexless transmitter of desire, a machine of desire (is). The signs of gender for the vampire character are secondary in his relationship with the world. Therefore, the masculine and feminine in King's text keep drifting, exchanging functions and definitions. "A company of little swarthy Turks, shaking their fezzes, fought viciously with two burly Canadian feminists in men's suits" (Koroleva, 2005: 141). "Since childhood I could not understand why they hate us so much... – As Don Juan Castaneda wrote, all women are bitches" (Koroleva, 2004a: 190).

The instability of the environment not only makes the feminist (bisexual) character or an empty personified variable form – the vampire character, the infernalized process of eating (filling with the environment) – the most popular, but also determines the composition of the entire postmodern mega-novel, which repeats the synergetic structure of the character and the world.

### **Topos of transition**

G. Koroleva's character, chaotic, in eternal formation, deheroized (equated to the function of food and reproduction), is particularly strongly conditioned by the topos of her residence, also organized as a rhizome or laby-

rinth. The labyrinth as a universal world plan and, in particular, as a form of organization of the female personality with its incalculable behavior, in which there is no logic and therefore no way out, makes the royal character a “monster”, a trap of nature. “On one of these reserve Saturdays, after sitting all evening in her coziest kitchen in perfect solitude, Tata reached for her coffee cup, broke it, and suddenly cried. Beaver wanted love. There must be someone for whom she shaves her legs, gives massages and uses the amazing perfume “Minotaures”” (Koroleva, 2005: 103).

Composed of “innocence and crime” (G. Bataille), this “monster”, guided primarily by instincts, loses itself as a social being. It is not by chance that the labyrinth is a dream (subconscious) reality, the moment of initiation of all the characters who live by the voice of blood and have undergone bodily transformation (thrown out of the society lagging behind them so far) (Savelyeva, 2013), including the vampire fighter, “blood specialist” John Jeremiah Kozlowski – a man “with a whimsy” who “never had close friends, long romances and a permanent job” (Koroleva, 2005: 175).

The labyrinth-like House of Evil, where newborn vampires complete their internal reorganization, their cycle of change. “The terem a la russet seemed to be woven from a dozen differently shaped birdhouses. There were many doors in the hall leading to rooms, pantries, storerooms, closets” (Koroleva, 2004: 190). The labyrinth is a new emerging non-linear structure of the reality of the 1990s, because if the structure is “accelerated and rebuilt” from linear, it will eventually become curved (Postmodernism. Encyclopedia, 2001: 403).

And the whole labyrinth-like composition of the book with intertextually intertwined plot lines of the vampire novel and “feminist” novels, which should synergistically self-organize in the reader’s mind due to their non-parallel combination, resembles a computer-network hypertext, a new to literature fundamentally non-integrated whole. Such hermeneutic drive (a random reader’s selection of similarities and sympathies, according to U. Eco) as if democratically removes the author from the text, since the image of the creator of this labyrinth

is less significant than the image of the most universally significant and universal labyrinth of the unconscious.

### Language games

Only by comprehending the multitasking organization of the characters can we delve into the mystery of the mentality of the architect of the labyrinthine text, the mythical Gulya Koroleva, the falsified author of this demonic model of the universe, who initially, at the level of a pseudonym, split into the *Self* and the *Other*, as if jumping out of her own biographical body and finding herself “on the other side of herself. The author’s mask “Gulya Koroleva” is everything to herself: both subject and object, and I (a woman), and ONO (a vampire), and Super-I (a man, a writer, an indestructible supervisory body).

The author of these very cute “lame scratches” can be unmistakably identified only with language, with the poetics of wordplay – the analog of a new form of life, the only conventional basis of existence of the “newborn” Kazakh society of the domination of wild capitalism. The luxurious, truly royal style play is another capitalist temptation, a special form of sensuality of postmodernist writing: “The night city air, like a dagger, entered the chest with a triple twist” (Koroleva, 2004b).

Word play as an attempt to master and manage an increasingly complex reality fills the novel with an air of lightness, freedom, and pleasure, and gives the sought-after consensus with this frightening and obscure reality. The corporeality of the cityscapes, the parodic spiritualization of fears, displaces them from the text (and the unconscious) with ease. “It was midnight. Dzhabul Street, white and scary, stretched out like a dead man. The blue spots of lanterns trembled on its sunken sides, highlighting the venous entanglements of branches, the dimly flickering icy bloodcloth on walls, pillars, and benches.” (Koroleva, 2004a: 180).

The dynamics of the language game, unlike the reality of the troubled times of the 1990s, not only promises social evolution, but also immediately generates a lot of textual pleasures. Inversion of the full names of “proud figures of Almaty subculture”, famous representatives of



the local culture – Ninel Borisovna Mrakova, editor of a literary almanac and author of works on exorcism, Solomon Rubinchik, translator from Kazakh to German, the somnambulistic poet Vadik Kholodny with long hair, the Korean novelist and creator of the series “Traffic Light” Emmanuel Kang, the culture critic Abai Kadavr, etc. – invokes the creative potential of the reader (“Light”), appeals to the reader’s creative potential (“After all, what is valuable in communication? What is valuable in communication is partnership” (Koroleva, 2005: 142) and provides mutual author-reader pleasure from the invention and decoding of linguistic shifts, joyful discovery of the operationalization of language and the world.

It is the language of the book, its generative (transformational) grammar, that is the main carrier of the innovative; it contains the real catharsis, the cleansing of crisis consciousness, reconciliation with the world through irony – understanding the relativity, the possibility of ambiguity of assessments of what is happening, the statement of both the dramatic nature of the world and its cheerful caricature. “Little by little the drama was quieting down. Over the bloody battlefield, strewn with splinters, teeth, shreds of hair and clothes, were the screams of the victims” (Koroleva, 2004: 146).

### Rites of passage/carnivalization

According to a famous quote, which has become a meme, the transition period in the post-Soviet countries has stabilized.

Fairy tale images and motifs as echoes of myth, deconstructed in the style of postmodern irony and pastiche, are no less pronounced in Lili Kalas’s later cycle of short stories from the collection “Piñata” (2015), most of which are united by the cross-cutting image of the protagonist Sveta. Sveta’s elderly “stupid parents” turn into her metaphorical children. Undoubtedly, this reversal technique goes back to Bakhtin’s concept of carnivalization and Freud’s theory of the mirror-image of the unconscious, which “hides” traumatic images and events behind antithetical transference (parents/children).

In turn, carnivalization as a basic element of the poetics of literary fairy tales by Kalas

can also be interpreted from the perspective of modern psychological literary studies, in particular, the concept of V.P. Belyanin about the so-called “dark” texts, the aesthetics of which François Rabelais wrote (Belyanin, 2006: 100) and often creates the genre of literary fairy tale: there are many “dark” texts among ... fairy tales for children (B. Bragin “In the Land of Slumbering Grasses”, Brothers Grimm, R. Kipling, J. Korczak, S. Lagerlöf, N. Nosov, D. Swift, K. Chukovsky, S. Marshak and many others) (Belyanin, 2006: 84). It is not by chance that even the cover of L. Kalas’s collection “Piñata” is dark blue.

According to V.P. Belyanin’s classification, “dark” texts are produced by epileptoid writers who are prone to “fixation”, obsessive repetition in the poetics of their texts, “stuck” on some idea or emotion that controls their creative thinking for a long time. In the terminology of psychoanalysis, this is called rigidity of thoughts and actions, accompanied by the inability to change this style of thinking and the discourse that presents it. The genre of the fairy tale with its poetics of repetition, canonicity of images and motifs, and the “oscillation” of the artistic material allows us to respond to this psychological obsession caused by long-term stress and reaction to the violence of society over the individual.

A typical epileptoid was, for example, Dostoevsky, the fighter against tsarist authoritarianism, who serialised his texts in various magazines (W. Todd), with whom the protagonist of the fairy tale cycle Sveta parodically associates herself:

“Grandfather shuddered, blurred into a grin, bowed with a squeak:

– Fyodor Mikhailovich...

– Then I’ll follow you! – Sveta shouted out with a ringing voice and flopped down victoriously on the sofa” (Kalas, 2015: 225).”

According to M.M. Bakhtin, carnivalization has “an essential relation to time”. Carnivalization is always based on a certain concept of natural (biological) or historical time, associated with “crisis, turning points in the life of nature, society and man”. As a rule, these are moments of ‘death and rebirth’, change and renewal” (Bakhtin, 1990: 5). Carnivalization

covers the extra-state, alternative aspect of reality, man and human relations, parodying certain socially accepted canons – for example, social foundations.

The main characters of the laughter culture are jesters and fools, who are assigned the carnival beginning. The fool is appointed King, and the King is a paternal image in the interpretation of psychoanalysis: “Once upon a time there was a girl named Sveta, and she had stupid, stupid parents. They were so stupid that when they went to the doctor, they always took Sveta with them, because the doctor did not want to talk to them. Then Sveta herself gave them medicine, because Mama Ira could easily swallow a shoe lace instead of a pill, and Papa Yura could splash air freshener down his throat. Sveta fed them breakfast too, boiling semolina (the parents at that time were fighting in the bathroom over a pink toothbrush, and Sveta had to explain to them every time that the blue toothbrush was mom’s and the pink one was dad’s) (Kalaus 2015: 218) (“Sveta and Bultykh”).

Thus, in the cycle of tales by L. Kalaus the biological metaphor of “parents fell into childhood” is realized, inhibiting the heroine’s initiation – marriage and having her own real, not inverted children: “I will have to marry someday” (Kalaus 2015: 237). And the whole cycle under study by L. Kalaus eventually appears as a story of the delayed initiation of the heroine and her potential chosen one. The happy ending of the story about the heroine Sveta is possible only in a fairy tale. It is unrealistic, as there is no happy way out of this situation; the way out of it is only in death.

The interactivity of carnival, in which people live rather than observe from the outside, ensures the typification of carnival motifs and images, as all participants of the action are involved in its revival and renewal. Carnivalization sets the model of universalization of mythological motifs and images of L. Kalaus, deconstructing in a postmodernist way the persistent family stereotypes of duty to parents, unconditional respect for elders and a priori refusal to reflect on the established cultural traditions and family myths existing in Kazakhstan’s traditionalist society.

The strong play element (postmodernization of the text) allows the writer to comprehensively and fearlessly deploy the demythologization of parent/child relationships (mother/child archetypes) at different levels of “carnival poetics”.

Thus, Sveta’s depression and rigidity are explained by her parents as a result of the absence of her own pet/symbolic child, a necessary attribute of an Asian woman: “If Sveta had a pet, she would be more cheerful,” said her mother” (Kalaus 2015: 219). Small animals in fiction often become an analog of children (“Mumu” by I. Turgenev and others). It is with this archetypal function that Sveta’s puppy “Bultykh” appears, “concentrating on chewing on the TV remote control”, “golden, folded, with a wrinkled cunning face and small round ears” (Kalaus 2015: 69, 221).

#### Genesis of “dark text”

However, the total “bitterness” accompanying the “dark” text (“the disgruntled pike snapped its teeth cannibally” (Kalaus, 2015: 219)) has other, more essential motives. The mythological/storytelling opposition of good and evil in the “dark” text is realized in the confrontation between the *small protagonist* (“small, but you are rude” (Kalaus, 2015: 225)) and the big character (“soon the big body of the mother fell silent” (Kalaus 2015: 223)), the clever and dangerous (in the unconscious – mirroring stupid), who offends the small one (Belyanin, 2006: 82), like “a lioness devouring her cubs” (Kalaus, 2015: 223)).

Often the hero of the “dark” text is of small stature or shorter than other characters. This is a kind of “psychological complex” of the protagonist, who all the time wants to grow up, to become big and adult,” writes V.P. Belyanin (Belyanin, 2006: 86). In other words, he wants to undergo an initiation to break away, finally, from his parents/oppressors, from stifling traditions and family authoritarianism, repeating the social structure of society, and to establish himself as a separate person, an individual.

“Like a whale from the Mariana Trench” with a chest extended forward like a desk, another “parental” character with a speaking epileptoid name – class teacher Malyuta Ivanna

“with her marasmus” appears as well (Kalaus, 2015: 235), taking money from Sveta (an analog of love in the interpretation of psychoanalysis): “Come on, most! Three thousand to the class fund for curtains! A charitable, I say, contribution!” (Kalaus, 2015: 235).

The antagonist of the protagonist, “the negative character of the ‘dark’ text is a person who plots an evil deed, his mind is evil, treacherous ... The negative character in the “dark” (“simple”) text is as if attributed to the predicate “complex”, which has the following meaning: very clever, knowing a lot, observing, evil. The knowledge of this enemy is harmful knowledge that allows him to do some deeds” (Kalaus, 2015: 90). As a rule, this role in the “dark text” is assigned to a “mad professor”, for example, Professor Moriarty in C. Doyle’s “Sherlock Holmes”, pretending to be a “humble math teacher”.

Such an imaginative and motive series, revealing the uneasy but archetypal in nature mother-daughter relationship, is similar in its psychological depth, boldness and harshness of truth to the feminist concept of L. Petrushevskaya, who consistently develops the “Elektra Complex” in her work (“Time-Night”, “Wild Animal Tales”, etc.). “In dark texts, it is about existential truths” (Belyanin, 2006: 87). In a broader interpretation, the failed personal initiation parallels the stifling social fusion of generations of traditionalist society that inhibits individual evolution.

In the spirit of feminist demythologization is also given the image of the potential suitor of the protagonist Sveta, the alpha male Dimon, the leader of the boys’ “pack”, defeated, however, by Sveta’s father (the symbolic King) contrary to the main oedipal motif of the fairy tale – the initiation of the young man, his marriage to the King’s daughter and the replacement of the King on the throne (Kleptsov, Kleptsova, 2013). “Dimon has since then become quiet and thoughtful. He ceded to Petyan the place of the alpha male without a fight. He began to read books, to talk, to smile crookedly and mumble. He feared the light like a fire. And at the end of the third quarter, he disappeared altogether – they said he moved to the town of Lyusk. But Sveta got his new address and hid

it deep. It might come in handy. We’ll have to get married someday” (Kalaus, 2015: 237). The initiation of both the heroine and her potential lover is thus again postponed.

As V.P. Belyanin writes, “... ‘dark’ texts are very colorful in imagery and are saturated with repetitive semantic components, which are psychological predicates by function” (Belyanin, 2006: 97). In Kalaus’s fairy tales, the theme of family and ancestors becomes such a basic “psychological predicate”: the heroine’s grandmothers Sveta Karpykovna and Kyrdykovna go back to the image of Baba Yaga (a vestige of matriarchy) (Propp, 2000: 73), the main character’s understanding assistant, and the image of an elderly doctor-dentist – to the image of a strict “parent of parents”, the Tooth Fairy (Lili Kalaus’s father, incidentally, is a well-known dentist).

But especially important for “dark”, epileptoid texts, the essence of which is an underlying struggle for power, are the mythological images of falling, sinking down, water, parents falling into the water and their invariable resurrection: “And one day, on the third day, my parents drowned” (Kalaus, 2015: 222), “both parents walked slowly, with big steps, to the bottom” (Kalaus, 2015: 222), “both parents leisurely, with large steps, went to the bottom”. “Mom, swaying, drifted slowly towards the horizon line. But suddenly she came to life, snorted, howled and, like a mighty kraken, rose from the waves of the lake. Her back was covered with salt, seaweed and shells, her eyes were filled with scarlet blood...” (Kalaus, 2015: 223). “Spreading his hairy limbs everywhere, Papa Yura sprawled on Nyr-Kul. But suddenly came to life...” (Kalaus, 2015: 223). In the Eurasian community, the process of deprivation is never fully completed, the tradition is “immortal” (Tursunaliyev, 2022).

In myths, water often brings death, albeit temporary, and it is always synonymous with passing trials. According to Z. Freud, water is also a symbol of birth. Thus, in the fairy tale “How I Spent My Summer” the Christian mythological motif of death and resurrection unfolds, as a rule, repeating: “next year Sveta will definitely go to Lake Nyr-Kul and will definitely take her stupid parents with her”

(Kalaus, 2015: 22, 224). This is a motif characteristic both for the agricultural myth and for the realization of the psychological need to sacralize ancestors in general, important both for the religious mythology of Western peoples and for the modern Eastern consciousness, often inhibiting the formation of an individual personality outside the influence of society.

In the fairy tale “The Princess of the Pink Sea”, symbolically narrating the life journey of a woman, the image of time is similarly given in connection with the image of water and death: “The old man became sad. Then he sighed and said, looking away:

– ... Do you know how time flows? ... It flows in different ways ... Sometimes a winding, merry brook, sometimes a slow, wide river, sometimes a treacherous swampy current. I promise you that your time will flash with a small light waterfall, and before you know it, you will already embrace your loved ones ...” (Kalaus, 2015: 245).

Images of sadness, longing and twilight are no less frequent in “dark” texts, as the world for the hero of a “dark” text is hostile and full of fear of death. “Sveta looked out the window. It was gloomy there...” (Kalaus, 2015: 226); there were “cargo clouds and cheesy fog” (Kalaus, 2015: 231); “There was no one in the corridor of the polyclinic. And it was dark and cold. The open windows slammed and tinkled, the blinds rustled snakily in the wind...” (Kalaus, 2015: 221, 227–228).

Faced with a scary world, and the male hero, the coward, according to the feminist concept of L. Calaus, strives for his own death – about this, for example, the fairy tale “About a Boy Who Was Afraid”. “It turns out that our boy slept in the closet for twenty years”; “He grew up, went one night through the park, attacked him and killed” (Kalaus, 2015: 239).

And all the last texts that conclude the fairy tale cycle of L. Calaus and the whole book “Piñata” are about death: “There sits a baba...”. Eats.” (Kalaus, 2015: 247). However, death is described in a carnivalesque form of ritual laughter, mourning/mockering the deceased: “The priest looks at the ceiling. And there is a face. Huge, black, closer and closer. It opened its lips, breathed port wine” (Kalaus 2015: 24, 248).

The laughter of the “dark” text is associated with *schadenfreude* (“skirted pies for dinner” and “dumplings with fish scales”), which, however, releases the natural, physiological human nature, bringing freedom and renewal to life. Opening the basement of the unconscious, it is the evil laughter that helps to overcome the already dysfunctional social stereotypes, exposing some unflattering but important truth (Kvashenko, 2022). “Malyuta, not understanding why her eyes were watering, and the water was flowing down her mustache but not into her mouth, continued her speech...” (Kalaus, 2015: 235). “What I want to tell you, most of all ... It seems that our teacher’s share, I say, is such. You teach, you teach, and they, you know, look into the forest” (Kalaus, 2015: 234).

### Conclusion

As M.M. Bakhtin writes, “laughter has a deep worldview value, it is one of the most essential forms of truth about the world as a whole, about history, about man; it is a special universal point of view on the world; seeing the world in a different way, but no less (if not more) essential than seriousness; therefore, laughter is as admissible in great literature (while posing universal problems) as seriousness; some very essential aspects are available only to laughter” (Bakhtin, 1990: 78).

The neo-mythological prose of Kazakhstan, represented by its most prominent representative Lili Kalaus, both fixes the traditionalist connection of times and generations, and at the same time tries to deconstruct it, resorting to irony and sarcasm, in the language of the unconscious marinated as an expression of latent disagreement and its consequence – auto-aggression. As M. Grotjahn writes in his work “On the Other Side of Laughter”, aggression, hostility and sadism are at the heart of witticism, satire, and depression, narcissism and masochism, i.e. autoaggression, are at the heart of humor (Grotjahn, 1957). And depression, in turn, reflects an unconscious sense of guilt for the initiation in the broadest sense, the protracted transition period, both personal and that of the country (Blagoveshchensky, 2010).

Another thaw of the 1990s is over, but the poetics of transition has lingered in the texts

of contemporary women storytellers, experiencing not evolution but involution, becoming more and more metaphorized, profound, and “fairy-tale-like”.

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