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Between Loneliness and Selfhood: Dimensions of Existential Rootedness in H. Pahutyak's *Sunset in Urizh*

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У статті досліджено концепт вкорінення як ключового засобу опору онтологічному відчуженню на матеріалі повісті Г. Пагутяк *Захід сонця в Урожі*. У світоглядній моделі авторки вкорінення постає основоположною стратегією виживання та збереження цілісності індивіда в умовах хаотичного та знеособленого світу.

Мета статті – визначити специфіку художньої реалізації концептів «вкорінення» й «відчуження» в повісті Г. Пагутяк *Захід сонця в Урожі* та їхню роль у конституюванні людської самості. Робота спрямована на осмислення конфлікту цих онтологічних категорій шляхом експлікції різних сценаріїв проживання екзистенційної кризи: від відновлення автентичності через укріплення зв'язку з родовим простором (Жінка) до занепаду особистості внаслідок розпаду системи цінностей (Чоловік). Зокрема, приділено увагу аналізу міфопоетичних та оніричних образів, що візуалізують лімінальні стани героїв та маркують межі їхнього самовизначення. У роботі використано герменевтичний, онтологічний та феноменологічний *аналіз*, а також елементи психоаналітичного й екокритичного підходів.

У результаті дослідження з'ясовано, що категорії вкорінення та знекорінення у повісті постають маркерами реалізації людської самості: автентичної (Dasein) або неавтентичної (Das Man). Через образи Чоловіка та Жінки втілено дві полярні екзистенційні моделі. Перша (вкорінена) передбачає інтеграцію індивіда з середовищем, культурною пам'яттю та власною суб'єктністю. Друга (знекорінена) зумовлена униканням зв'язків та відмовою від відповідальності за власне існування. Доведено, що здатність Жінки встановлювати значущі взаємини з простором Урожа формує міцне підґрунтя для опору відчуженню. Схильність до продуктивної саморефлексії та внутрішніх діалогів дозволяє їй трансформувати самотність у досвід цілісного самостановлення. Натомість знекоріненість Чоловіка інтерпретовано як наслідок страху перед «тягарем буття» – необхідністю етичного вибору та зобов'язань перед «Іншим». Ця проблематика виражена через гострий конфлікт героя із замкненим локусом Урожа, який постає для нього концентрацією загроз, що деконструюють його ілюзорну автономію. Такий модус існування призводить до поступової дезінтеграції особистості та нівелювання власних ціннісних орієнтирів. Доведено,

що в контексті творчості Г. Пагутяк тяжіння до вкорінення забезпечує стійкість ідентичності перед зовнішніми впливами, оскільки створює умови для реалізації повноцінної суб'єктності та наповнює людське існування екзистенційним сенсом.

Ключові слова: вкорінення, відчуження, ідентичність, самість, лімінальність, локус, міфопоетичні та оніричні образи.

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Introduction

Contemporary literary studies increasingly turn to liminal states as sites where individual self-discovery takes on particular intensity. H. Pahutyak's intellectual prose presents an authorial mythopoetic model of the world, grounded in a synthesis of the real and the fantastic, that enables reflections on the liminality of human existence. The writer's poetic universe is organised around the opposition between rootedness and existential homelessness. Within this tension, the human being appears as part of a larger metaphysical whole. Spatial images such as the home, homeland, land, garden, and forest in her texts cease to function merely as the background to events and instead acquire ontological status as markers that define the character's spiritual axis. Through interaction with these topoi, the author models her protagonists' movement from the threat of depersonalisation toward the recovery of authentic being, grounded in ancestral memory and culture. In Pahutyak's narrative strategy, rootedness emerges not as a static attachment to place but as a dynamic process of self-definition that resists entropy and spiritual amnesia. By affirming the idea that the individual has a natural need for connection with meanings that transcend the self, the writer regards conscious "belonging" as a guarantee of autonomy and authentic selfhood in a world marked by chaos and alienation. Such an approach enables consideration of the phenomenon of rootedness as a foundational category that structures the writer's artistic world, opening broad perspectives for analysing her prose in the light of ontology and the mythopoetics of literary texts.

H. Pahutyak's work in the context of contemporary scholarly reception

Scholars have repeatedly turned to H. Pahutyak's oeuvre, noting both the philosophical depth of her prose and the distinctiveness of its mythopoetics. In academic reception, the role of belonging and connection to native land in shaping the writer's artistic world has been addressed, at least in part. For example, M. Ilnytskyi points out the author's conscious aspiration to discern in her own life and writing the traces associated with her lineage, "its roots as a sign of transition from kin to nation" [Ilnytskyi, 2023, p. 688]. Such markers of local identity are often embodied through a system of symbols and mythologemes, which becomes the subject of H. Boshkan's analysis. The scholar systematises the author's mythic world, in which local legends and demonological images function as carriers of collective memory and the continuity of cultural heritage [Boshkan, 2014]. By contrast, O. Holnyk explains the writer's inclination to create fantastic loci as a response to the crisis of contemporary culture, the hallmark of which has become "the loss of sensuousness and sensitivity and, as a consequence, the total loneliness of the human being" [Holnyk, 2015, p. 139]. The ontological dimension of the writer's work is also explored by I. Bila, who interprets protagonists' escape into utopian spaces as a consequence of self-alienation, that is, a condition in which the individual ceases to be the centre of their own world [Bila, 2011]. However, in the existing reception of Pahutyak's oeuvre, the phenomena of rootedness and alienation have generally been examined separately, as distinct thematic dominants or elements of poetics. What remains outside scholars' attention is the dialectical correlation between these states. To date, rootedness in the writer's work has not been interpreted as a key mechanism for reconstructing the integrity of the individual self.

The purpose of this article is to determine the specific features of the artistic realisation of the concepts of "rootedness" and "alienation" in H. Pahutyak's novel *Sunset in Urizh* and to define their role in the constitution of human selfhood. The study seeks to conceptualise the conflict between

these ontological categories by explicating different scenarios for experiencing existential crisis: from the restoration of authenticity through the strengthening of one's bond with ancestral space (the Woman) to the decline of personality resulting from the collapse of a value system (the Man). *The scholarly novelty* of the study lies in its systematic reconsideration of the categories of rootedness and alienation as structural mechanisms of the transformation of human selfhood in Pahutyak's fiction. Unlike previous studies, this article demonstrates for the first time that rootedness in *Sunset in Urizh* functions as the central existential strategy for resisting the ontological fragmentation of the self. It also proposes a new perspective on the characters' typology. The article argues that the opposition between the Man and the Woman is grounded in the dichotomy between authentic and inauthentic modes of being: the Woman's capacity for rootedness and ontological dialogue with space stands in contrast to the Man's uprootedness and inner isolation.

The study adopts an interdisciplinary approach. Its *methodological foundation* is a synthesis of ontological and phenomenological methods, which enables it to conceptualise rootedness and alienation as existential dominants in the text and to analyse the specific features of the characters' inner experience, particularly their loneliness and disconnection. At the same time, the hermeneutic method, combined with mythopoetic analysis, is employed to decode the work's imagery, including the sacred locus of Urizh, the symbolism of opyrs and liminal states. The methodological toolkit is further supplemented by elements of the psychoanalytic method, used to interpret oneiric visions and repressed fears, as well as by an ecocritical approach, which enables a consideration of the role of landscape in constructing existential belonging to the world.

Conceptualising rootedness and alienation in philosophical and literary-critical discourse

The problems of alienation and rootedness have repeatedly become the subject of scholarly discussion. Both belong to the philosophical conceptual sphere and appear as interdependent poles of human existence. Alienation is generally understood as an ontological rupture between the individual and the world, manifested in apathy, crises of meaning, and social isolation. In the 20th century, existentialist philosophers such as M. Heidegger [Heidegger, 1962], A. Camus [Camus, 2005], and J.-P. Sartre [Sartre, 1956] regarded it as a consequence of uprootedness and the absurdity of being. In sociology, M. Seeman [Seeman, 1959] interpreted it as a multi-component phenomenon associated with powerlessness and depersonalization. In literary studies, alienation has been examined primarily as an active response by writers to dehumanisation, the crisis of the modern age, and the loss of moral and spiritual coordinates. In particular, the Frankfurt School thinker T. Adorno associated this problem with the crisis of subjecthood in modern literature, arguing that literature itself must be "alienated" —difficult and fragmented—to bear truthful witness to this condition [Adorno, 1997, pp. 133–157].

At the beginning of the 20th century, the concept of rootedness also began to receive more systematic attention. K. Jaspers, for example, stressed the importance of relations with the "Other" [Jaspers, 1971], while J. Ortega y Gasset emphasised the role of circumstances and environment in the formation of personality [Ortega y Gasset, 2000]. In Heidegger, the primordial locus of rootedness is the homeland, which shapes thought, values, and the authenticity of creative work: "…does not the flourishing of any genuine work depend upon its roots in a native soil?" he asks [Heidegger, 1966, p. 47]. H.-G. Gadamer, in turn, considers rootedness the foundation of knowledge, emphasising that one's understanding of the world is impossible outside the context of one's cultural and historical belonging [Gadamer, 2004]. A coherent doctrine of rootedness was developed by S. Weil, who defined it as a basic spiritual need of the individual, who "has roots by virtue of his real, active and natural participation in the life of a community which preserves in living shape certain particular treasures of the past and certain particular expectations for the future" [Weil, 1952, p. 41]. E. Fromm, by contrast, sees rootedness as the individual's universal desire "to be": "to express our faculties, to be active, to be related to others, to escape the prison cell of selfishness" [Fromm, 1976, p. 82]. He also distinguishes between regressive rootedness, associated with the past and traditions and threatening the individual with dissolution into society, and progressive rootedness, focused on creating new bonds through responsible choice and fraternity. M. Merleau-Ponty supplements this understanding by emphasising the embodied mode of existence and the individual's involvement in an environment of interconnected relations [Merleau-Ponty, 2012].

Among contemporary studies, particular attention should be paid to C. Wampole's *Rootedness: The Ramifications of a Metaphor*, in which the author analyses the concept in relation to ideas of continuity, authenticity, and connection with nature [Wampole, 2016]. In Ukrainian scholarship, T. Tsymbal, in the monograph *The Existential Rootedness of the Human Being as a Socio-Philosophical Problem*, distinguishes two dimensions of rootedness—local and global. The former encompasses the individual's affinity with homeland, language, and traditions, while the latter functions as "an ontological and sociocultural category and an existential" [Tsymbal, 2019, p. 87]. Among other scholars, T. Vlasevych examines the phenomenon through the problem of uprootedness and the possibilities of overcoming it [Vlasevych, 2011]. Yu. Yemets-Dobronosova traces the dichotomy between rootedness and wandering [Yemets-Dobronosova, 2022], while L. Safonik emphasises its role in providing meaning in life, one that is necessary for overcoming disorientation [Safonik, 2012]. These studies affirm the status of rootedness as a multifaceted category that combines ontological, cultural, and axiological dimensions of existence and is expressed in diverse ways in literary texts.

The phenomenon of selfhood in the existential coordinates of *Dasein* and *Das Man*

To understand the conflict in the novel, it is necessary to trace the correlation between the categories of rootedness, alienation, and the phenomenon of selfhood. The concept of the self is grounded in the idea of the human being as a creature who, in Ch. Taylor's formulation, "is a being of the requisite depth and complexity to have an identity in the above sense (or to be struggling, to find one)" [Taylor, 1989, p. 32]. While in C. G. Jung's psychology the self appears as the *eidos* of wholeness and the centre of the interrelation of archetypes [Jung, 1968] —a notion that partially resonates with H. Pahutyak's oneiric prose—existential philosophy accords it, above all, an ontological dimension. In this context, the self is not conceived as a stable core of the psyche but rather as a processual structure of being realised in concrete forms of human existence. In this study, we draw on M. Heidegger's concept [Heidegger, 1962], according to which human existence is understood through the fundamental category of *Dasein*— "being-there," that is, a mode of existence for which its own being becomes an object of reflection.

In Heidegger's philosophical system, the self is not given in advance as a completed essence. It is formed through a process of self-understanding that unfolds within the everyday world of interaction with other people and things. For this reason, Heidegger emphasises the fundamental openness of human existence, which is always in a state of becoming. *Dasein* is characterised by the capacity to question its own existence, to experience anxiety in the face of "Nothingness," and to become aware of its own finitude. Through these existential experiences, the individual may approach an authentic form of selfhood. At the same time, this possibility is often muted in everyday life, since the individual tends to dissolve into the impersonal social environment.

It is precisely here that the second fundamental category of Heideggerian ontology emerges: *Das Man* ("the they," "one," or "everyone"), which denotes not a specific social group but an impersonal mode of existence in which the individual loses their own subjecthood. In the state of *Das Man*, a person thinks, speaks, and acts in accordance with established norms and expectations, without questioning them. Everyday life is organised according to the impersonal principle of "this is how things are done" and "this is what everyone does." Within this dimension, selfhood is reduced to a social role or a set of external characteristics, while genuine self-understanding recedes to the periphery of consciousness. Heidegger describes this mode of existence as a state of lostness in the world of publicity, in which the individual avoids confronting their own existential freedom.

The authentic mode of being (*Dasein*), marked in the work by the figure of the Woman, is formed through the acceptance of one's finitude and a readiness for responsible choice. In this case, selfhood emerges as the human capacity to be present in the world while acknowledging one's belonging to it. Authenticity in the Heideggerian sense presupposes a rejection of impersonal models of existence and a return to one's own inner possibility of being. This does not mean isolation from others; rather, it entails a conscious acceptance of one's own position in the world, where every choice acquires existential weight.

By contrast, the inauthentic mode (*Das Man*), represented by the figure of the Man, is a form of "escape from oneself" under conditions of alienation. It is presented "as the world of

everydayness, non-selfhood, lostness, and dispersion in publicity" [Lazareva, 2011, p. 74]. A person immersed in this dimension seeks to evade existential responsibility by replacing it with external reference points: social approval, rationalisations, or the illusion of autonomy. Yet such a strategy only deepens inner emptiness, since genuine selfhood cannot be formed without experiencing one's own freedom and finitude.

It should be noted that, for Heidegger, human existence is not a static given but a dynamic structure capable of transformation under the impact of existential choice. The transition from an inauthentic to an authentic mode of existence becomes possible through the experience of limit situations—encounters with anxiety, loneliness, or the threat of losing meaning. It is precisely such experiences that shatter the illusory stability of everyday life and open up the possibility of rethinking one's own being.

Seen in this light, rootedness appears not merely as a spatial or cultural category, but above all as an existential form of self-formation. It presupposes the individual's capacity to establish an authentic bond with the world by accepting their belonging to a particular place, history, and community. It should be emphasised that, in the artistic world of Pahutyak's work, rootedness, as a process of acquiring the self, becomes a mechanism of protection against an inauthentic (alienated) existence and a path toward affirming an integral selfhood. Viewed through this lens, the opposition between the two characters acquires an ontological dimension, reflecting a psychological conflict, as well as the fundamental dichotomy of human existence between lostness in the world of *Das Man* and the possibility of authentically inhabiting one's own *Dasein*.

The narrative structure of the novel *Sunset in Urizh*

In the novel *Sunset in Urizh*, H. Pahutyak continues to develop themes central to her oeuvre, including existential wandering, the search for identity, harmony, and inner renewal. The events unfold within the hermetic topos of Urizh, a space that, within the novel's artistic logic, emerges as an active narrative locus. It acquires an ambivalent status: for some characters, it is a "place of power" and a source of vital energy; for others, it is a destructive primordial element that catalyses spiritual disintegration. At the centre of the narrative lies the inner drama of a married couple whose relationship collapses due to mutual emotional exhaustion and the incompatibility of their strategies for engaging with the world. The specificity of this conflict is further deepened by the introduction of a mystical element: images of supernatural opyrs—chthonic, demonic beings that serve as both embodiments of the destructive impact of external chaos and markers of liminality and the dichotomy of being. The novel's narrative architectonics is realised through alternating monologues of two unnamed protagonists, the Man and the Woman, which immediately establishes the work's philosophical foundation. The refusal to use anthroponyms serves as an important ontological marker, emphasising the universality of the conflict and foregrounding the characters' existential depersonalisation. Pahutyak deliberately avoids biographical specificity, shifting the focus toward the phenomenology of consciousness, where the absence of names intensifies the sense of radical self-alienation—a disorientation about one's own "Self" under the pressure of social roles. This form of narration allows the author to explore the dialectic of uprootedness and rootedness through the juxtaposition of two types of selfhood: the inauthentic, embodied in the Man's alienated mode of existence, and the authentic, realised through the Woman's strategy of kinship with space. By contrasting patriarchal and matriarchal, rational and intuitive modes of perceiving the world, Pahutyak lends the work a complex metaphysical dimension in which rootedness is assigned the role of a key to inner salvation.

The cult of false autonomy and the ontology of alienation in the Man's world model

One of the defining characteristics of the Man is rational detachment and a tendency toward distance. He remarks of himself: "*I was born a loner, and no one can change me…*" [Pahutyak, 2016, p. 22]. In the novel, however, this solitude appears not as the result of a spiritual quest but as a destructive form of alienation. Intended to protect inner boundaries, it shields the protagonist from any encroachment on his vulnerable selfhood. The Man consciously minimises social contacts, including those with his parents. He legitimises his coldness toward his wife with the rhetorical question: "*Why should I let her into my inner world when I do not feel the slightest need for it?*" [Pahutyak, 2016, p. 16]. The Woman's emotional needs are perceived by the protagonist

exclusively as a threat to his independence, which gradually distorts his perception of her. Her image acquires grotesque features, while her behaviour seems intrusive or even "predatory." The Man's notion of the "ideal wife" is reduced to the model of a petty-bourgeois woman without emotional demands, since for him marriage is equated with the danger of dissolving into the "Other."

At the same time, his wife's genuine self-sufficiency, her independence from public opinion and from social expectations attached to her as a "woman" ("*All the household, that is, a dog and a patch of garden near the house. The village laughs at her*" [Pahutyak, 2016, p. 16]) provokes his latent irritation. His indignation is symptomatic, since it reveals the essence of his selfhood, which, unlike the Woman's, requires external legitimisation and public approval. This position exposes his cult of pseudo-autonomy, as the heroine perceptively observes, for behind the Man's fear of losing freedom there in fact stands "*a paltry sense of superiority and self-infatuation, which he cherishes above all else*" [Pahutyak, 2016, p. 23]. The Man's inability to reconsider his own position, as well as to recognise its danger, is fully revealed at the moment when the familiar order of married life begins to destabilise, specifically in his reaction to his wife's initiative to end the relationship. He perceives the prospect of divorce as an ontological defeat and the collapse of the illusion of control over his own being. His confusion and irritation reveal an inner disorientation caused by the disruption of his established self-image.

The symbolic and oneiric dimensions of the Woman's existential split

The female protagonist of Pahutyak's work is presented as a personality whose sense of the world is shaped by developed intuition, imagination, and an attraction to the mystical. Unlike the Man, whose alienation is rational, the Woman perceives the world through images, myths, and belief in the supernatural. At the beginning of the work, however, she is in a state of profound apathy. Her withdrawal and inertia appear as the result of prolonged spiritual exhaustion associated with the neglect of her own emotional needs. A rupture with her inner "Self" leads to a loss of vital energy, and as a result, the Woman adopts a strategy of minimal resistance. She consciously limits the scope of her aspirations, resigns herself to the Man's indifference, and sustains the distance in the relationship that he has initiated. Consequently, feelings of powerlessness and loss of control over her life become dominant emotions, turning existence into a meaningless process. Despite her awareness of her own helplessness ("*I know this is no way to live, that one must have either submission or the strength to destroy*" [Pahutyak, 2016, p. 17]), she lacks the courage for decisive action. Although the Woman secretly longs for something extraordinary, she remains passive, unable to move beyond her own existential stagnation. Such a strategy, however, only deepens her alienation, provoking a final split between the social role the Man desires and her inner self.

In the novel, the Woman's inner dichotomy is reflected in a division of being into two planes: routine, grey reality, and a vivid, mythological oneiric space. Her "daytime" existence, marked by apathy and the absence of meaning, contrasts with the "nighttime" dimension of dreams, filled with archetypal images. For the Woman, the world of dreams becomes a key channel for accessing her own selfhood. Her confession, "*I'd willingly sleep my whole life away*" [Pahutyak, 2016, p. 44], testifies not so much to escapism as to an attempt at ontological self-preservation under conditions in which reality has lost its meaning. In particular, the heroine intuitively chooses a psychoanalytic instrumentarium for self-knowledge: "*Freud says that dreams embody our desires. When properly interpreted, a dream can reveal much about who you are*" [Pahutyak, 2016, p. 42]. The oneiric space deconstructs the image of the Man, revealing the hidden dynamics of their marriage. The dream in which he appears in the zoomorphic image of an opyr threatening to devour her ("*He wants to arouse fear in me to satisfy his desire*" [Pahutyak, 2016, p. 42]) becomes a moment of truth for the heroine. This metaphor dismantles what, in reality, the Man disguises as "rationality" and the defence of personal boundaries. In fact, what is at issue is his drive for total control and emotional consumption of his partner. Thus, the mystical experience of the dream proves "more real" than everyday reality, because it allows the Woman to perceive the true essence of things.

Particularly diagnostic of the heroine is the recurring vision of a gigantic grey sphere that engulfs her in an empty, vacuum-like space. This image is associated with the Woman's acute sense of ontological insecurity: "*I was already choking on abandonment*" [Pahutyak, 2016, p. 52], she confesses. In this way, her subconscious visualises a profound existential dread of

depersonalization and dissolution into nothingness. These reflections are rooted in an early childhood experience of finitude ("*I really don't want to die. I don't yet know what death is. I can only guess that I will no longer see this wonderful summer evening.*" [Pahutyak, 2016, p. 14]), where death appears as the absolute loss of connection with the world. For a long time, it is precisely this paralysing fear of "Nothingness" that determines the heroine's life strategy. She chooses a destructive marriage as a form of refuge, in which the presence of the "Other" —even the alienated Man—sustains her belief in her own full presence in being. At the same time, her hypnotic dreams perform a prognostic function, signalling a new threat. Her struggle in a dream with a "*spiny creature*," whom the Woman later identifies as the Sailor, exposes the infernal nature of this character. Her subconscious warns her that escape with the Sailor is not salvation, but merely another form of engulfment and co-dependency.

The ambivalence of the topos of Urizh: the dialectic of alienation and rootedness

Despite their divergent worldviews, both protagonists of H. Pahutyak's novel are united by a condition of existential thrownness and inner disorientation. Their shared disharmony becomes most clearly visible through the prism of their relationship with Urizh, which emerges as a personified narrative locus. The space of the settlement is endowed with subjecthood and a kind of "consciousness of its own." If the Woman feels its irrational pressure ("*This village is like an opyr itself. It haunts you to the end of your days*" [Pahutyak, 2016, p. 47]), the Man perceives it as a sinister system ("*You think a village is just a gathering of people? It's an organism*" [Pahutyak, 2016, p. 53]). This enclosed space is an autonomous structure with its own logic of being, functioning as an active force that directly affects the thinking of its inhabitants and their existential coordinates. Urizh mystically intervenes in the protagonists' psycho-emotional states, testing the durability of their ideals and spiritual orientations. The settlement lives according to the laws of a hermetic ecosystem that can reject those who ignore or resist its rules. Life in Urizh therefore requires considerable inner resources, an ability to listen to its *genius loci*, and a willingness to align one's existence with it. This is confirmed by the fates of the secondary characters: Emilia Bandrivska, whose existential breakdown after the death of her fiancé led to personal disintegration, resonant with the Woman's own experience, and the Sailor's uncle, who became an object of opyr's persecution. Their stories serve as markers of the power of the space, which punishes those who transgress its customs. Yet each of the main characters develops an individual strategy of engaging with Urizh.

For the Man, living in the settlement is a forced compromise that determines his position as an outsider. He neither wishes nor knows how to integrate into a space he perceives as hostile a priori. The author aptly conveys his state of unrootedness through an astronomical metaphor. He describes his existence as "*circling around the orbit of Urizh*," where the greatest fear is of finally falling "*onto this treacherous little planet*" [Pahutyak, 2016, p. 16]. This image points to the deformation of the character's subjecthood: unrootedness does not become the equivalent of freedom but turns his life into an inert suspension above a village world that remains foreign to him. The Man's strategy of inhabiting Urizh consists of passive resistance to its established rhythm and spiritual foundations. In particular, he desacralises the settlement's mystical aura, which, for the Woman, is a source of strength and part of her ancestral history, reducing it to superstition. He remarks sceptically: "*My wife feels at home among ghosts and horrors... I myself only at times sink into the atmosphere of a dark Middle Ages*" [Pahutyak, 2016, p. 14]. By designating the local space as "medieval," he attempts to assert a putative civilizational superiority, opposing his "study-bound" reason to rural archaism. Yet this defensive mechanism fails: "*Urizh buried me as if in a grave*" [Pahutyak, 2016, p. 44], the protagonist concludes, holding the settlement responsible for his stagnation and failures. A semantic paradox becomes evident here: although the archaic quality of Urizh repels him, he is nevertheless drawn to the conservative patriarchal family model, itself a product of that same tradition. He longs for the social role of "master of the house," yet rejects the very environment in which such a role could be realised. In this context, what is primarily at stake is a life fundamentally unaligned with itself. The Man is dissatisfied with life with his wife in Urizh, yet the alternative of living in the city with his lover also fails to bring the satisfaction he expects. His conflict with the environment is a projection of his inner disharmony, which renders any setting for a bearer of inauthentic selfhood either a "*grave*" or a "*prison*."

The Woman's relationship with Urizh develops in diametrically opposite way, grounded in a profound sense of ontological belonging. In her perception, the settlement is transformed from a geographical point into a sacred space, a "*lost paradise*" or promised land that functions as an existential refuge. The heroine metaphorically identifies this locus with the mythologeme of the egg, a symbol of origin and protected enclosure: "*I live within this egg... and I nourish myself on what it feeds me—silence and dreams*" [Pahutyak, 2016, p. 12]. Such ontological hermeticism of Urizh is consonant with G. Bachelard's concept of the house. The philosopher emphasises: "In the life of a man, the house thrusts aside contingencies, its councils of continuity are unceasing. Without it, man would be a dispersed being. It maintains him through the storms of the heavens and through those of life" [Bachelard, 1994, pp. 6–7]. It is precisely her rootedness in the space of the settlement that enables the Woman to resist despair and alienation. If for the Man Urizh is associated with the grave and with regression, in the Woman's imagination, the dominant image is the vertical axis of Mount Laska, conceived as a world axis around which her personal cosmos is organised. Her sense of rootedness reaches the level of metaphorical kinship with the landscape: "*...my bones are the stones on Mount Laska and the house with the terrace from which you can see the sunset in Urizh*" [Pahutyak, 2016, p. 23]. The Woman does not merely live in this place; she becomes one with it, integrating the environment into her own corporeality. Beyond its spatial dimension, her belonging also has a pronounced temporal aspect. She is acutely attuned to the place's "*cultural code*," entering into a mental dialogue with abandoned houses—the manor, the house beyond the river, the Bandrivskys' home—and with the spirits of the past. She resists isolation by conceiving of herself as a link in the uninterrupted continuity of generations, not least through a mythological consciousness that transcends linear time. Seeing in the stones from the mountain the remains of ancient sacred artefacts, she reconstructs her ancestral heritage: "*Perhaps the blood of those who carved idols for the sanctuary from them flows in me*" [Pahutyak, 2016, p. 22]. Her ability to find a point of support in belonging to a great historical order becomes the principal means by which she overcomes fear of "Nothingness" and restores her authentic selfhood.

The liminality of Urizh: the diffusion of the real and the mystical as a mirror of the protagonists' boundary states

Within the novel's artistic world, the image of Urizh serves as a catalyst, activating the latent conflict between alienated (inauthentic) and rooted (authentic) models of selfhood. The hermetic nature of Urizh intensifies the protagonists' inner isolation, plunging them into a liminal condition in which old structures of being no longer function. In contrast, new ones have not yet taken shape. As L. Horbunova notes, liminality is a key stage in any transformation, since "against the background of chaos, freedom, and uncertainty, there occurs a creative movement of discovering and testing the possibilities and scenarios of further development" [Horbunova, 2018, p. 56]. In the novel, the opyrs—mythological creatures operating in the hidden dimension of Urizh—serve as the trigger of this "boundary situation." Their chthonic nature, marked by the possession of "*two souls*," serves as a metaphorical mirror of the protagonists' inner dichotomy and ontological split. Significantly, the protagonists project their inner fears onto one another precisely through suspicions of vampirism. In her dreams, the Woman sees the Man as an opyr seeking to engulf her and subordinate her to his will. Conversely, for the Man, whose boundary between reality and hallucination gradually begins to dissolve, his wife appears as a being intent on destroying and killing him. In these visions, each perceives the other as a predator striving to annihilate the Other to assert the self. This confrontation with the uncanny (*Unheimlich*) demonstrates the impossibility of continued existence in a state of inertia. By actualising the threat to the protagonists' lives, the opyrs set irreversible processes in motion, compelling both the Man and the Woman to leave the zone of comfort and enter a space of new ontological experience and existential choice.

Throughout the plot, the motif of persecution directed at both the Man and the Woman intensifies, reaching its apogee in the finale. Since, in Pahutyak's authorial mythology, the victims of opyrs are usually "*those whom no one pities*" ("*opyrs are orderlies, wolves!*" [Pahutyak, 2016, p. 53]), a peculiar competition unfolds between the protagonists over who should be recognised as the more alienated of the two. At the same time, this struggle is better understood as a juxtaposition of two existential trajectories, which may be illuminated through E. Fromm's concept. In a state

of alienation and total loneliness, the individual is confronted with a choice between "positive freedom," grounded in a connection with reality through love, work, and authentic self-realisation, and illusory freedom, which offers a phantom sense of security through detachment from one's surroundings. In the first case, the individual "can thus become one again with man, nature, and himself, without giving up the independence and integrity of his individual self" [Fromm, 1941, p. 160]. The second path, by contrast, leads into a closed circle of loneliness; it does not overcome the rupture with the world, but merely conceals it. In a crisis, therefore, the following scenarios are possible: either immersion in cynicism, apathy, and self-destruction, or the opening of prospects for the reconstruction of life based on renewed consciousness. In *Sunset in Urizh*, Pahutyak demonstrates both possibilities by focusing on inner reflection, the experience of crisis, and the capacity to resist alienation.

The opyrs' mediated action, embodied in the plot through the figure of the Sailor, reveals the conflict's unconscious level. For the Woman, the Sailor personifies her romantic fantasies, whereas the Man sees in him a rival. His appearance destabilises the characters' self-understanding: the Man begins to doubt his desire to free himself from both his wife and Urizh, while the Woman questions her willingness to remain dependent on the Man at the cost of suppressing her own desires. In this way, the domestic conflict grows into an inner struggle for authenticity. It is therefore no accident that by the end of the novel the question remains open as to who, precisely, will fail to withstand this pressure, since each stands on the brink of spiritual exhaustion. Escape from the closed circle of painful coexistence becomes possible only through an essential revaluation of one's own life. In the novel, this process of inner restructuring is symbolised by rain. The downpours intensify the plot's catastrophic dimension while also containing a subtext of renewal. The archetype of water marks the ambivalence of the liminal state, appearing both as the end of the old world and as the precondition for a new beginning. The opyrs themselves function similarly, embodying a challenge that has been long overdue. They are an important element of the novel's artistic universe, serving as catalysts that compel the individual to mobilise inner strength and engage in active struggle. Their intervention should not be understood as judges evaluating the moral qualities of the characters, because the decisive factor in the protagonists' fate lies in their own choices and actions. That is why, in the novel's resolution, the opyrs do not simply take the weaker one, but the one who has finally capitulated to emptiness and ceased to struggle for his own selfhood.

The trajectory of the "superfluous man": the man's ontological demise

By the end of the work, it is the Man who emerges as the one "*whom no one pities*," as a superfluous figure pushed beyond the sphere of meaningful being, whose presence in the metaphysical space of Urizh has lost its weight. His condition of alienation intensifies throughout the development of the plot, moving from emotional apathy, which he initially presents as the conscious choice of a pragmatist ("*Let her do as she pleases... Let her fill the void. I can give her nothing more*" [Pahutyak, 2016, p. 22]), to a complete sense of helplessness in the face of circumstances. Until the very end, the protagonist denies the possibility of separation from his wife, relying on stereotypical gender assumptions: "*The thought struck me that she might leave me... Men leave women, but women do not leave men—no way!"* [Pahutyak, 2016, p. 34]. For a long time, he sustains his fragile self-esteem through the role of "protector" of his supposedly helpless and infantile wife, convinced that without him, she is doomed: "*If I leave her, even a hen could trample her*" [Pahutyak, 2016, p. 16]. In an attempt to devalue the Women's rebellion, he resorts to the defensive mechanism of intellectual cynicism, ironically dismissing her actions as "*Madame Bovary's romantic foolishness.*" He interprets her decision to leave for another man as a loss of freedom, thereby projecting his own fears onto her. Yet behind the mask of rational judgment and misogynistic generalisations ("*women are flat creatures*") there lies not so much contempt as a desperate attempt to protect his own vulnerable self, suffering from stagnation and an inability to act.

The Man's inability to accept his partner's choice reflects a profound gender asymmetry in which the Woman is denied the right to an existence of her own. As V. Aheieva rightly observes, within the patriarchal paradigm, a woman is often deprived of "existential fullness and freedom of choice; she is denied even the aspiration to the transcendent, because this would affirm her

independence alongside the other sex" [Aheieva, 2004, p. 429]. When the wife manifests the will to leave, this becomes a devastating blow to the Man, as it destroys his last support—the illusion of control and his own superiority. Unable to recognise the subjecthood of the Other, he shifts the blame for the collapse of the marriage onto external forces, whether the Sailor or the opyrs, thereby definitively losing touch with reality. This crisis of identity is partly conditioned by the tragic dominance of the "mode of having" [Fromm, 1976], of which he becomes a captive. He evaluates his own significance in terms of material possessions and social success. His confession, "*I am hardly a brilliant match: by the age of thirty I have achieved nothing*" [Pahutyak, 2016, p. 44], reveals a moment of painful self-reflection and the extent to which his self-esteem depends on external attributes, all of which are unavailable to him in the environment of Urizh.

This oppressive situation is further intensified by an inversion of the traditional patriarchal family model, since it is the Woman who owns the house and the land. As a result, the protagonist acutely experiences the traumatic complex of the "live-in son-in-law," a wound to his masculinity expressed in feelings of secondary status and inadequacy within a territory where he cannot realise himself. In his worldview, the lack of property rights becomes equivalent to the absence of a right to being. Such fear of attachment makes dialogue with the *genius loci* of Urizh impossible and deprives him of any chance of becoming "one of its own" within this space. It may be assumed that the Man intuitively senses the sacred force of this place, but being incapable of mastering it rationally, he chooses a strategy of rejection. He perceives the settlement in utilitarian terms—as a resource that should satisfy his needs or secure public recognition, rather than as a source of existential strength. By treating life in the village as the cause of his stagnation, the protagonist falls into a self-deceptive trap, failing to realise that the surrounding environment merely mirrors his inner emptiness. Ultimately, the Man's alienation is above all the consequence of his inability to move from a consumerist attitude toward the world to an ontological mode of inhabiting it.

His incapacity for local rootedness also testifies to an inability to achieve ontological rootedness. The "freedom" proclaimed by the Man, which he understands as independence, is in fact merely a simulacrum masking his existential disorientation. Jean-Paul Sartre rightly insisted that true freedom "can be truly free only by constituting facticity as its own restriction" [Sartre, 1956, p. 495], that is, it presupposes a readiness for responsible choice. By contrast, the Man's "uncontrolled" freedom degenerates into a form of flight from responsibility, above all from responsibility to himself. Such a position becomes a direct threat to his selfhood, which loses its inner integrity and coherence. It is precisely his fear of any attachment, perceived as a trap, that predictably leads him into a state of existential homelessness—the inability to take root even within his own inner world. The uprooted existence of the character persuasively illustrates T. Tsymbal's claim about "the loss of a human being's fundamental consciousness through flight from problems" [Tsymbal, 2015, p. 16]. The consequence of such alienation is the Man's destructive behaviour. Time spent with his lover gives him only an illusory and temporary sense of restored "masculine dignity." At the same time, alcohol abuse becomes a way of silencing thoughts about the emptiness of being. In this context, the Woman's infidelity functions as a trigger that finally exposes his deep traumas associated with the collapse of his image of his own "Self." The prospect of separation from his wife might have prompted him to rethink his worldview. Yet, he lacks the spiritual resources necessary for inner transformation, resources depleted by his constant struggle for an imagined autonomy.

The Man's energy wanes because he lacks meaning-generating orientations capable of sustaining the will to live. His hypertrophied concentration on defending his own boundaries ultimately leads to absolute loneliness, which, in a moment of crisis, releases its destructive potential. Unable to find the strength for spiritual growth, he sinks into final nihilism. The Man notes that what his wife has done "*seems trivial compared with the total loneliness that dries out my brain and destroys my body*" [Pahutyak, 2016, p. 58]. Separation from the Woman no longer provokes resistance in him, because he realises that even her return would not alter the essence of their coexistence, a coexistence doomed to stagnation and emptiness. His unceasing alienation leads to the character's gradual dehumanisation. He finally ceases to be the subject of his own story, legitimising his passivity through the fatalistic conclusion: "*Everything is written out in advance for us*" [Pahutyak, 2016, p. 22]. In this way, the Man passes into the category of "superfluous people," expelled first beyond the sphere of existence and, within the mystical locus

of Urizh, beyond life itself. His physical death becomes the logical retribution for the choice he has made—or rather, failed to make. His final words, "*Let it be as it is. It is my karma – to love no one, not even myself*" [Pahutyak, 2016, p. 58] registers his ultimate defeat in the struggle for the right to a self-sufficient existence. They underscore the tragedy of a person who has reached the limit of self-reflection yet still failed to find within himself the resources required for inner transformation.

The Woman's rootedness as a path to selfhood: the experience of overcoming alienation

In contrast to the existentially broken Man, the Woman demonstrates a capacity to withstand the chaos of life and preserve inner resilience. The nature of her alienation is qualitatively different. Whereas the Man is paralysed by a fear of responsibility, which he disguises as a longing for "*ephemeral freedom*," the Woman is driven into inner stagnation by ontological anxiety arising from a rupture in her bond with the Other. Her desire for belonging does not imply a need for subordination of the kind the Man would expect; rather, it expresses a search for stable points of support in a chaotic world. It is precisely this kind of fear in the face of the abstraction of being that, as C. Wampole notes, "often guides a person's search for roots" [Wampole, 2016, p. 7]. For the heroine, these roots are found in Urizh, a sacralised space that provides, in Ch. Taylor's terms, the "frame or horizon" within which the self determines what is good, valuable, obligatory, endorsed, or opposed [Taylor, 1989, p. 27]. Urizh does not, of course, shield the heroine from external upheavals. Yet, it endows her with subjecthood and inner firmness, preventing her from dissolving into apathy and the meaninglessness of existence. Even the Man intuitively recognises this advantage in the Woman, remarking that she endures adversity "*in a biblical way*" —with dignity and acceptance. Yet what he is inclined to interpret mystically is in fact the result of profound rootedness. For the Woman, the daily rituals of interacting with the settlement's space—with the forest, the river, and the landscape—become a means of accumulating existential strength.

For the Woman, solitude in the natural world functions as an effective instrument of restoring inner equilibrium. Her bond with the environment also deconstructs the classical patriarchal opposition in which the natural world was traditionally conceived as passive matter subordinated to the "masculine," rational space of culture. Within this paradigm, the vision of a close connection between woman and the forces of nature merely reinforced her supposedly excessive emotionality and intellectual insufficiency. As Z. Shevchenko observes, such social groups are often marked as those "requiring subduing, constant control, and patronage" [Shevchenko, 2015, p. 167]. In Pahutyak's novel, however, this stereotype is reinterpreted: the heroine's closeness to the earth, rather than confirming expected weakness or submissiveness, affirms her self-sufficiency and sovereignty. Such solitude in nature, as K. Fomenko argues, should be understood "not as withdrawal, but rather as the establishment of a connection with the vast cosmos, the perception within oneself of its grandeur, unity, and harmony" [Fomenko, 2011, p. 130]. This gives rise in the heroine to a perception of the world as a cyclical system in which crisis is merely a stage preceding renewal: "*When I happen to sink to the lowest point of despair, I lift my eyes upward and begin to claw my way out*" [Pahutyak, 2016, p. 29]. Rootedness in the space of Urizh, unlike in the case of the Man, grants the Woman a particular ontological stability. Her connection with the sacred space, which becomes the metaphysical framework of her personality, enables her to distance herself from changing circumstances and the adversities of life. She is convinced that any external losses are secondary and recoverable so long as her inner foundation remains intact: "*Meanwhile, I am not afraid of losing anything. It will all grow back anyway, like flesh on bones, so long as the bones remain*" [Pahutyak, 2016, p. 23]. Accordingly, the heroine does not regard her present condition as a pathological dead end. Still, she interprets it as a natural phase—a time for self-discovery, maturation, and the affirmation of spiritual autonomy.

Within the novel's artistic structure, it is precisely the Woman who emerges as a figure capable of overcoming stagnation. The process of her restoration unfolds through her appropriation of the topos of Urizh, which allows her to constitute her authentic selfhood by accepting mystical experience and ancestral memory and overcoming existential fears. In this context, the figure of the Sailor should be understood as the embodiment of a symbolic impulse toward modification rather than as a real alternative to the Man. He leads the heroine beyond the confines of routine, activating her desire for spiritual and emotional renewal. The Woman herself aptly defines his role:

"*Like a black angel of death, he took me by the hand and led me to ease my passage into another life*" [Pahutyak, 2016, p. 44]. It should be stressed that this bond does not resolve the heroine's inner crisis; on the contrary, it intensifies it by making her internal split visible: *"...they divided me into two halves. One does not surrender the soul, the other the body*" [Pahutyak, 2016, p. 55]. At the same time, this experience becomes decisive for her. She realises that changing partners or spatial settings would only replace one form of co-dependency with another, thereby leading to yet another loss of subjecthood. Her refusal to flee with the Sailor proves the Woman's final transition to genuine autonomy, where freedom becomes not a movement "away from" but a movement "toward" herself. Such reflections correlate with Sartre's claim that "freedom, under any concrete circumstance, can have no other aim than itself" [Sartre, 2007, p. 48], since for a human being who has found herself in abandonment, freedom appears as the foundation of all values. What is at stake is the necessity of finding a true point of support within one's own existence. The heroine's transformation culminates in the metaphorical act of "shedding skin." This painful process embodies liberation from outdated modes of existence and leads to the restoration of inner wholeness: "*My thoughts were set free again, because they had enough space*" [Pahutyak, 2016, p. 59]. Thus, the Woman's final choice definitively affirms her transition from a condition of alienated loneliness to authentic selfhood—a form of ontological rootedness that grants being both meaning and spiritual maturity.

Conclusions

In H. Pahutyak's novel *Sunset in Urizh*, alienation emerges as a condition organically inherent to human existence, a philosophical challenge that demands continual self-creation. The study has demonstrated that, within the work's artistic paradigm, the key mechanism for resisting this condition is rootedness—a conscious strategy of constructing meaningful ties with being. Such ties connect the individual to space (home, homeland, environment), time (history, memory), and spiritual origins (culture, tradition, heritage), thereby forming the ontological foundation for affirming one's essential self. Through its mystical plot and its representation of liminal states, the novel models an ultimate choice in which rootedness and uprootedness signify two polar scenarios for the realisation of human selfhood: the inauthentic (*Das Man*) and the authentic (*Dasein*).

The figure of the Man demonstrates the trajectory of the "superfluous person," one whose path leads to ontological demise. His alienation is conditioned by the dominance of the "mode of having" and by a fear of responsibility that he disguises as a simulacrum of freedom. His refusal to establish existential bonds leads to an inability to find rootedness, as evidenced by his conflict with Urizh's *genius loci*. A space in which it is impossible to hide behind the mask of rationality and pragmatism becomes, for the inwardly enclosed Man, an environment that exposes his ontological groundlessness. His final defeat appears as the logical consequence of his inability to move beyond *Das Man* and as a definitive dissolution into inauthentic existence. On the artistic level, this type of selfhood is articulated through the motif of distance and psychological isolation, which underscores the rupture between the character and the surrounding world. The depiction of his behaviour, the particularities of his speech, and his inner reactions together construct the image of a person existing in a state of internal fracture. Symbolic details and an atmosphere of anxiety and disquiet intensify the sense of alienation, revealing the loss of connection with the authentic foundations of being.

By contrast, the figure of the Woman embodies a successful strategy of ontological rootedness. Her path is one of movement from passive loneliness to active subjecthood. Artistically, this is realised through the heroine's capacity to harmonise her existence with the mystical chronotope of Urizh. Her acceptance of ancestral memory and irrational experience enables her to transform fear of "Nothingness" into a source of inner strength. Her decision to break with the Sailor becomes the decisive act through which she affirms her authenticity, ultimately constituting herself as *Dasein* by choosing spiritual autonomy over co-dependency. Within the work's artistic structure, this type of selfhood is rendered through a range of poetic devices. Foremost among them is the symbolism of space and nature, which underscores the human being's organic rootedness in the world. Landscape descriptions, motifs of silence, natural harmony, and the tranquil rhythm of life create an image of a space in which the individual's inner integrity can be preserved. An important role is also played by the novel's symbolic system, in which natural images serve as markers of the character's inner equilibrium and spiritual self-sufficiency.

Thus, in Pahutyak's artistic model, the category of rootedness functions as a universal condition for the preservation of identity, wholeness, and fidelity to oneself. It is a mechanism that enables the individual to withstand the threat of depersonalisation by transforming the chaos of the external world into the structured cosmos of the self. A promising avenue for further research lies in applying this structural-typological model of authentic and inauthentic being to a systematic interpretation of Pahutyak's other works, particularly in light of the categories of rootedness and uprootedness. At the same time, the study's methodological grounding in the broader European philosophical canon—above all in the ideas of Martin Heidegger—opens the way for a comparative analysis of the Ukrainian writer's work within the context of world existential prose.

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Between Loneliness and Selfhood: Dimensions of Existential Rootedness in H. Pahutyak's *Sunset in Uriz*

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The concept of rootedness as a worldview paradigm and a key ontological need is becoming particularly relevant in the modern world, which is grappling with a global crisis of meaning. This crisis provokes a demand for the re-evaluation of values, the search for new paths to self-determination, and the affirmation of one's own existence. The oeuvre of H. Pahutyak, a prominent representative of Ukrainian intellectual prose of the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st centuries, focuses precisely on the liminal aspects of human existence. The problem of self-identification in her work is primarily illuminated through the lens of encountering the mystical "Other," which, in a crisis situation, prompts self-discovery. The role of rootedness in these processes is to form a solid base, an inner strength that allows the individual to remain within the boundaries of their existence. In the novel *Sunset in Urizh*, the motif of rootedness/belonging is

central, manifesting both as physical or geographical attachment and as a deep inner yearning for personal self-determination and a comfortable existence grounded in one's authentic principles. The article explores rootedness as a mechanism for resisting ontological alienation, analysing the impact of categories such as loneliness, selfhood, freedom, identity, abandonment, and homelessness on the formation of the characters' life strategies and their capacity for responsible and integral living.

The article aims to define the specifics of the artistic realisation of the concepts of "rootedness" and "alienation" in H. Pahutyak's novel *Sunset in Urizh*, as well as their role in the constitution of human selfhood. The study seeks to determine how, through the conflict of these ontological categories, the author explicates distinct scenarios of experiencing an existential crisis: ranging from the restoration of authenticity through the strengthening of ties with ancestral space (the Woman) to the decline of personality resulting from the disintegration of the value system (the Man). Particular attention is paid to the analysis of mythopoetic and oneiric imagery that visualises the characters' liminal states and marks the boundaries of their self-determination. The research employs hermeneutic, ontological, and phenomenological analyses, alongside elements of psychoanalytic and ecocritical *approaches*.

The research demonstrates that in H. Pahutyak's work, the phenomenon of rootedness becomes a key means for fostering internal resilience. Since alienation is an organically inherent state of human existence that cannot be fully overcome, the writer treats resistance to it as a philosophical challenge that requires constant self- and meaning-creation. The article substantiates how the phenomena of rootedness and uprootedness influence the life strategies of the novel's characters, particularly concerning their ability to form a viable system of life orientations and values. The rooted model of the Woman's existence displays a system of durable connections, expressed primarily through kinship with Urizh—a space of childhood and ancestral memory. This sense of belonging to a significant environment allows her to operate within a paradigm of stable, existentially meaningful relationships that foster self-reflection and internal dialogues, creating a foundation for resisting alienation. In contrast, the uprooted strategy of the Man's existence (devoid of spiritual support or a "place of his own") manifests an alienated model of being, characterised by apathy, fear of emotional involvement, and detachment. The work demonstrates why the protagonist's striving for non-belonging is a simulacrum of freedom that transforms into a state of deep alienation, ultimately leading to ontological collapse, disappointment, and a loss of meaning.

The analysis demonstrates that in the novel *Sunset in Urizh*, rootedness emerges as a universal existential need, essential for maintaining contact with one's origins and authentic nature. This capacity ultimately secures the stability of identity, creating conditions for the transformation of existential loneliness into genuine selfhood and restoring meaning to human existence.

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