

THE FEATURES OF NEW REALISM IN THE ARTISTIC WORK OF ROMAN SENCHIN

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Abstract

This article attempts to analyze the work of the modern Russian writer Roman Senchin. Literary critics attribute the writer's artistic work to the new literary trend «new realism». The following works of the author were analyzed: the short story «New Realism», «African Nights», the novel «Ice underfoot», the novel «Information». In these works, R. Senchin managed to put into practice the aesthetic requirements that the author himself imposed on the literature of new realism.

Keywords: New realism, short story, novel, documentary.

Introduction

R. Senchin's short story «New Realism» [2] is written in line with new realism, and at the same time it is a work indicating an artistic understanding of the problem of new realism. It shows the creative process, the writer's daily routine, his hopes and prospects, and, importantly, his opinion of his own works and style. The author pointedly tells the story in the third person, but it is clear what he is writing about himself: «Roman Valerievich rested his gaze on the laptop screen, continued thoughtfully, trying not to miss typos, stylistic blunders, and read» [2]. After reviewing an excerpt from the story «Ice underfoot» (the title of the story does not sound in the story), he notices: «The story, which I've been tormenting myself on for two years intermittently, has now turned out to be raw and stretched when read coldly. And, to be honest, not received... He himself noticed that he was not good at speaking in the third person, even if he was writing about himself. The first things where he called the hero directly — «I», in the late nineties caused some response, for which he was given a couple of literary awards — «bright debut», and they were happy to publish in magazines» [2]. This quote contains the fact that the work «New Realism» was created in the third person, is a self-reflection of the text, as well as an ironic device: the writer seems to inform readers that the story they are reading is bad.

Let's note that in the work «Ice underfoot» the hero Roman Senchin is only mentioned, and in the novel «Information» one of the leading characters (but not the main one, the main character narrates from the first person) is Oleg Senchin, who has a biography of the author of the novel. Another technique by which R. Senchin, in the text of New Realism, attempts to convey the profession of the main character to the reader in a reduced way is to seek a scrupulous account



on behalf of the latter about how there is an opportunity to earn money through writing. Despite the fact that «Ice is underfoot» and «it didn't work out», the hero worries a little about this case: «okay, they won't print it there» and they will pay «two or three thousand rubles in fees» [2]. The following is mentioned about literary prizes in the story: «And now Roman Valeryevich had several copies in his bag, plus a couple of books that needed to be reviewed by Monday. These books were sent to the prestigious literary prize competition, of which he was a member of the jury. It's hard to read, but it was worth a look under the cover. And unsubscribe. They paid for membership in the jury» [2].

When talking about the biography of the hero, R. Senchin makes a reference to his other text, to the story «Athenian Nights»: «at the institute, his friends called him «Khron» because he liked to drink» [2] (the characters in this story were artists, not writers).

The plot of the story is a meeting with foreign officials who ask the hero about his work, which he is very tired of:

« — Irena asks: Roman, why is everything so gloomy with you? Is life in Russia really that terrible?

He was constantly asked this question. At all the meetings, in every interview, and, what was unpleasant, in everyday life. Even my wife sometimes asked. And he learned to answer almost fluently. Without myks-pyks» [2].

So, the writer answers frequently asked questions in the text, thereby showing that it is pointless to ask him these questions later, since he is not going to say anything new about it. There is an irony over the term «new realism»: «Roman Valerievich caught his native words in a stream of English words — «new realism». He chuckled to himself, not without pride: Another worldwide term. «Sputnik, «perestroika», «new realism». And he began to prepare for the answer» [2].

The strict, almost pathetic tone of journalistic and critical articles is vividly expressed with the ironic tone of an artistic work, the title of which makes one expect a manifesto. Perhaps the writer's irony is aimed at exaggerated attention to the term, in the absence of penetration into the depths of the phenomenon. The story mentions an article by Roman Valeryevich, which was ahead of the publication of «denial of mourning» [2] by S. Shargunov, but was not of interest because it appeared in a small online magazine, and not in the prestigious Novy Mir [2]. The article in the story is titled «New Realism – the literature of the new century», in fact – «New Realism – the trend of the new century», and it actually appeared in the Online magazine of young teachers of Russia «Prologue» in 2001, and remained unnoticed. The irony of Kaznacheyev accusing everyone of stealing the term «new realism» can be traced to the fact that R. Senchin in the story three times calls «Roman Valeryevich» the leader/founder of a new literary trend.

Both R. Senchin and S. Shargunov use the phrase «new realism» to mean «the horrors of life». Let's resume in memory, in the story «Hurrah!» by S. Shargunov there is a phrase: «Alyosha died in the hospital. So much for new realism!» [3]. In the story «New Realism» by R. Senchin, there is a similar statement, not by the author, but uttered by one of the heroines: «This!.. Is this the new realism? Yes? Ana. This. Yes?» [3], - the heroine, a foreigner who was at a meeting with the writer, implies that one of the listeners named Ana had a miscarriage right during the



meeting¹, and while she was being taken to the hospital, the ceiling collapsed in the apartment where it happened. The writer Roman Valerievich gives an answer to this phrase.: «Not really. This is too much. — Roman Valeryevich felt excited by these screams, as pleased as by the praise. — This is already grotesque... Okay, let's get out of here. An emergency should be called...» [2]. R. As a critic, Senchin often accuses fellow writers of being grotesque, which he believes weakens the impact of the text. In the story, he continues the theme: «To describe it, they won't believe it, they'll say: I've exaggerated...» [2]. Thanks to this kind of framing, the reader believes in the authenticity of what happened.

The writer feels that it is difficult to create something new, but there is an opportunity. Extraneous texts interfere with creativity, but Roman Valerievich tries to get around them. For example, the author heard an eloquent dialogue in real life, where the doctor asks Anna for her middle name, and receives the answer: «Middle name?.. She doesn't have a middle name — she's a foreigner» [2]. This is followed by the hero's demonstrative reaction: «Roman Valerievich felt his fingertips prickle, as if with a weak current: «We must remember». And then he grimaced in annoyance. It seems that in the movie «Autumn Marathon», when Basilashvili was buying a Danish professor out of a drunk tank...» [2]. This statement repels postmodern aesthetics, in which everything is built on quotations. R. Senchin puts forward an alternative: «Take a break and go home. Something will happen there too» [2], which can be understood as a decision to consolidate direct observations without touching, as far as possible, their cultural connotations.

The phrase «something will happen there too», perceived by A. Rudalev as «the quintessence of the «new realism» [1], declares a random non-analytical selection of facts of reality. The use of the grotesque in the text of the story «New Realism» is caused not by a realistic, but by a naturalistic intention: realistic aesthetics allows for hyperbolization in order to more intensively express the historical content [1], the essence and meaning of social forces, while naturalistic aesthetics determines the use of such a technique by the fact that the author actually observed a similar phenomenon in reality. In other literary texts of the writer, we will see that he often does not follow this principle and in his artistic work carries out work on the selection and typification of life phenomena.

The problem of the technique of literary creation, the possibility/impossibility of objectified writing is touched upon in the novel «Information», where the hero, who does not act as an autobiographical character, attempts to write the story of his downfall. He had a well-paying and promising job, a beloved wife, but over time he loses everything, circumstances put pressure on him and encourage him to hide from the whole world. This novel is a kind of challenge, an attempt to tell about a successful person and use his example to reflect the same patterns that operate in the lives of impoverished losers. It stands out that the hero's fate is standard, but its inevitability is universal, not historical: «These millions and millions are coming, and everyone hopes that he will dodge the blows that the world sends him: from all

¹ Following Rudalev, we are not inclined to consider miscarriage as an allegory of the fate of new realism (see Rudalev A. "New Realism": an attempt at an apology // For you. A collection of works by the best writers of Russia, united by the Civic Literary Forum. Moscow: "Threshold". 2010, p. 422).



these envious acquaintances, hating relatives, greedy scammers, madmen of varying degrees of insanity and the like» [2].

The same technique is used again as in the story «New Realism» - the hero of the novel by R. Senchina expresses thoughts about the prose of O. Svechin, a minor character in the novel, in which the author's features are guessed. The hero notices that O. Svechin's prose is about heroes who were burdened by their poverty, whined and growled, but did not try to get out of it» [2]. The novel in which this is set out is about a different hero – an enterprising, positive-minded man who strives with all his might to become a prosperous, well-off person. Ironically, the hero remarks: «Svechin was very proud of an article about himself called «The Superfluous Writer», where a certain critic indignantly asked something like this question: «Who and why do we need books by an author who is unable to come up with the most elementary plot?!» [2]; «a healthy thirty-five-year-old man is sitting next to him, voluntarily in He's chronically semi-poor, and he keeps saying that the world and people are shit, that he's unlucky with fate and time... He doesn't know anything about shit; shit really happened to me, and fate gave me a surprise» [2]. Despite all the irony of the text, even in this case, R. Senchina does not change his conviction: well-being is illusory, attempts to teach a good life are futile. While the first trouble hinted at this to the hero, he is already ready to perceive O. Svechin's «whining» in a different way: «now that life has fucked me up, I listened to his grumbling and grumbling almost with pleasure» [2].

The work «Information» does not really tell about incidents, «life inside a catastrophe», as the annotation says, but about an attempt to describe this life, while sometimes we are informed that it turns out very badly: «there is some kind of summary, and the summary is not very fascinating story. To make it fascinating, you need to reduce the content, filter out the details and leave only the most basic, compress the events, exaggerate some things. But then you'll get some incredible action» [2]. The annotation notes that the novel is a «Chekhov-like laconic» text, but it is precisely the laconicism that the writer wants to overcome. In the reflections on creativity presented on behalf of the hero of the novel «Information», there is an idea that, as a rule, the main strength of the work lies in what critics like to call «water» - in the «deprived»: «Deceptively watery, stretched, loose, probably all books worthy of reading. It seems that there is a lot of excess in them, much can be cut out without any loss, but then it turns out - no, this supposedly water contains all the salt» [2]; «...I'm sorry to cut months out of my story when nothing important seemed to happen. Moreover, if you recall a certain period of existence, dig out a single day from under the mound of the smoldering past, and see yourself in that day, it turns out that there is so much priceless there that it is impossible not to insert this day into history. Without this day (and without the second, third, three hundred and sixty-fifth) it will not be complete, it will not be as reliable» [2]. The task that the hero has set for himself is to describe four years of his life completely reliably and truthfully, since even a simple division of the text already violates accuracy: «for some reason I structure the text, separating one episode from another with a space, I often break the chronology» [2]. Probably, with such arguments, R. Senchina shows critics how it makes no sense to accuse a writer of directly fixing reality, since with all one's desire it is completely impossible, even when one does not go beyond one's own memories. «Information» is a novel about how objectivity is unattainable.



At the same time, if you «invent, compose yourself and your thoughts the way they and I could be then» [2], then there is no point in creating.

In this kind of self-reflection techniques of the text, we do not observe irony. Rather, it appears because R. Senchin does not believe in the possibility of the absolute truth of any statement. This skepticism moves the writer away from realistic art, since it questions the essential feature of realism — epistemological optimism. However, in the end, the author does not come to the conclusion that there is no solid foundation, but approaches the search for an existence that will be preserved if the image of a person is freed from all social and cultural.

The work «Information» is also notable for the fact that in it the writer set out to depict transformations in the character of the hero, which, as we know, according to R. Senchin, are carried out very slowly in real life. In this connection, such a long period of narration (four years) became necessary. In many works, the writer demonstrates static characters that do not change even under the influence of exceptional external events (such as the landing of an airplane on an abandoned runway in the story «The Strip»).

Thus, in some of his works, R. Senchin actually managed to put into practice the aesthetic requirements that the author himself imposed on the literature of new realism. The writer's work, regardless of the sensitive influence of naturalistic, aesthetic intentions and (to a much lesser extent) the literature of postmodernism, is fundamentally realistic, and at the same time the race for documentary evidence makes the writer's work an example of a new realism.

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