

THE EXPRESSION OF «NEW REALISM» IN THE WORKS OF ZAKHAR PRILEPIN (USING THE EXAMPLE OF THE NOVEL SANKYA)

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Abstract

The article examines the trend of «new realism» through the prism of the work of Russian writer and publicist Zakhar Prilepin. An attempt has been made to analyze the author's novel «Sankya». The relevance of the topic is due to the modern approach to the description of pressing problems and acute social issues. «New Realism» is the literature of the young, which is perhaps becoming a new form of classical Russian literature.

Keywords: New realism, modern literature, novel, artistic world of the author.

Introduction

New realism is a literary trend that took shape in the late 1980-s and early 1990-s. His appearance was the result of a search for fresh ideological, intellectual, political and moral guidelines. This trend is characterized by a critical and sometimes harsh view of reality, as well as a conscious departure from the postmodern perception of modernity.

New realism can be considered as an out-of-system opposition to the previous tradition, which can be conditionally called «old realism». Although the term «old realism» itself does not exist in literature, proponents of new realism deliberately distance themselves from commercial pop literature, focusing on the truth, depth and authenticity of expression.

Sergey Shargunov's phrase became the motto of the direction: «I repeat the spell: new realism!». His enthusiasm and pathos resonated with many young writers and critics who are striving to update literature and create an image of the «new Russia».

Zakhar Prilepin, in the opinion of most critics interested in new realism, plays the role of a talented writer from a group belonging to this field.

If we compare the works about the Chechen War by A. Babchenko and the novel by Z. If we consider the author's «Pathology» to be a cross between literature and non-fiction, rather sincerely and barbarously - the writer's text, which directly relates to the genre definition of «human document», directly continues the traditions of Russian literature, solving the ultimate questions of human existence through concrete sensory images¹. The term «human document»

¹ In fact, the term «human document» has been known since the beginning of the 20th century, first used by Alexander Blok in The Diary of a Woman No One Loved. This is not a genre, but rather a negation of the genre principle. «It all starts with this: with the denial of any inertia, tradition, or past that could be relied



according to R. Senchina, applied to them very successfully, provides a genre definition proposed by Leonid Yuzefovich: «This, of course, is not prose. This is a human document». «In the 2000-s, the term «human document» came into use in fiction — almost devoid of fictional techniques, almost plotless, often written in the first person, very similar to the description of what really happened, very authentic prose», writes R. Senchin². The writer also calls the debut works of Arkady Babchenko, Ilya Kochergin, Denis Gutsko, Alexander Karasev, Irina Denezhkina, Dmitry Nesterov, Anton Tikholoz, Alexey Efimov, Vasily Avchenko «a human document». «Personally, after Ilya Kochergin's «Chinese Assistant» or Arkady Babchenko's «Alkhan-Yurt», it is very difficult for me to read works about the same thing, but obviously composed. Fiction is necessary, and it is present to a certain extent in any of the «human documents», but the fact is that it is a plausible fiction. Similar to the truth...»³. Later, the author began to state that writers, starting with a «human document», either retreat into self-repetition (hence stagnate) or into improbable fiction, when, according to R. Senchin, it is necessary to create truthful literary works. Thus, Z. Prilepin does not neglect the law of genre, verifies the composition of his works, works on the traditional attributes of the text, such as the gradual development of characters and situations from the beginning to the denouement, does not sacrifice these elements in the race for the nakedness of writing and the reliability of reactions.

Z. Prilepin, unlike R. Senchin, does not write about the «average», but writes about the typical in the sense to which this term has become well — established in Marxist literary criticism, which shows the essence of socio-historical processes with extreme force and poignancy. In this sense, the novel «Sankya» realistically shows the protest of the younger generation against the prevailing socio-political order of things (but at the same time, the author's position of the novel «Sankya» is inclined to mysticism, to objective idealism). The images of the writer do not integrate with the environment, but actively show the complexity of the relationships of various social and psychological types of modern man. The image of the special forces soldier Hassan in the novel Pathology, a Chechen fighting on the side of the Feds, does not represent the image of the average Chechen, but his image is typical in terms of the idea that not all Chechens consider Russians to be enemies.

In a review of the work «Sankya», the writer attributes the class character to the conflict of the novel: «Zakhar Prilepin, at least in literature, made it. At least on paper, he continued the eternal class struggle»⁴. In fact, the class reasoning behind the actions of the novel's protagonists is clear in such episodes as the robbery carried out by Tishin (the episode was preceded by Sasha's

upon. This means that any genre should be discarded even before the beginning of the statement», Vladimir Gubaylovsky said this well in a dialogue with I. Rodnyanskaya «Books of non—public use» (Rodnyanskaya I., Gubaylovsky V. Books of non-public use // Foreign Notes. 2007. No. 12 [Electronic resource] — URL: <http://magazines.russ.ru/zz/2007/12/ro8.html> (accessed 17.12.2024)

² Senchin R. Pets of stability or future rebels? Debutants of the noughties // Don't become an insect. Journalism. Criticism. Essay. Moscow: Literaturnaya Rossiya, 2011, p. 150. Senchin's reasoning has parallels with the "literature of fact" (also known as «factography» and «nonfiction»), which was promoted by the LEF writers. Nikolai Chuzhak opposed «any external glorification» [Literature of fact: The first collection of materials by LEF workers / Edited by N. F. Chuzhak [Reprint of 1929]. Moscow: Zakharov, 2000, p. 15], called for «declaring war on art» [ibid., p. 18] and replace «cheap symbols» [ibid., p. 18] with «the truth of a living fact» [op. cit., p. 18], spoke out against a fictional plot and used the phrase «human document» to designate the genre [the specified essay, p. 22, p. 61].

³ Senchin R. The glow in the swamp // «The Banner». 2005. No. 5 [Electronic resource] — URL: <http://magazines.russ.ru:81/znamia/2005/5/sen11-pr.html> (accessed 17.12.2024).

⁴ Senchin R. And the battle continues again // Literary Russia. No. 22. 2006 [Electronic resource] — URL: <http://litrossia.ru/2006/22/00411.html> (accessed 17.12.2024).



walk through the hypermarket, where he came across products on the shelves that he and his friends had not tasted)».

The work «Sankya», in comparison with «Pathology», is presented in the third person. And despite the fact that we observe only those events and objects that Sasha Tishin sees, nevertheless, the third-person narrative allows the novel to be polyphonic and provides the writer with more opportunities to characterize the hero than if the author had mixed with the hero and reflected only the world of his consciousness. For example, Sasha very rarely reflects (this is manifested in particular in the dialogue of two voices in the hero's mind, cynical and prudent on the one hand, and sentimental on the other), and the words «They undertook to answer for everyone — at a time when it became bad form to be responsible for someone besides himself themselves»⁵, already refer to the writer.

There is no transparency of images in the writer's work, which Maxim Sviridenkov called for in the spirit of the LEF doctrine. On the contrary, Z. Prilepin, in the words of M. Sviridenkov, «throws the work of revealing images onto the reader»⁶. Biblical reminiscences, the image-symbol of a village old man, the Silence of God-fighting, and the taste of the cross that Sasha will take in his mouth before storming the building of the administration captured by the heroes («At first he cooled his tongue, then he became warm. And then — bland»⁷), it is not possible to interpret unambiguously, but the symbolic meaning is undoubtedly present in them.

Z. Prilepin seeks not so much to give answers as to raise questions. But sometimes a writer still allows peremptory statements that do not benefit his works, because they are superficial and not based on a deep analysis of reality. For example, in the novel «Sankya» they include an assessment of the actions of the Communist Party, which is not present in the words of one of the characters, but comes from the author: «Over the years since the bourgeois coup, the protesters have finally cooled down and no longer scared anyone. On the contrary, members of the Union of Creators party (the prototype of which was the National Bolshevik Party) frighten others with their actions»⁸. Comparing the National Bolsheviks, reflecting the youthful energy of protest, and the Communists as unconditional «old men» who have completely lost their past passion. The writer uses the technique of hyperbolization, which is acceptable for realistic creativity, but from the falsity of the original idea, an image of reality is created that does not match reality, distorting it (as if young people of the left in those years definitely chose the NBP from the range of opposition forces, which is not true from the point of view of historical practice). While the author, instead of providing unconvincing journalistic answers, concretely and sensually portrays reality, seeking the truthfulness of images.

All available ideologies, primarily modern consumer ideologies, are presented in the novel as empty, superficial, and false. In addition to the communist position, the novel exposes unreasonably radical (terrorist) and fascist positions. The first is in the words of an armless

5 Prilepin Z. Sankya: roman. Moscow: OOO «Publishing House Ad Margin», 2006, p. 148.

6 Sviridenkov M. Hooray, a bulldozer ran over us! // Continent. 2005. No.125 [Electronic resource] — URL: <http://magazines.russ.ru/continent/2005/125/sv25.html> (accessed 17.12.2024).

7 Prilepin Z. Sankya: roman. Moscow: Publishing House Ad Margin, 2006, p. 367.

8 In connection with the result that the actions of the «allies» lead to, I would like to recall a phrase from Shargunov's novel «Hurrah!»: «And what about the anarchists in rotten leather jackets... What can they do? Scare an elderly, fat-shouldered, wandering passerby? They'll fart all together, but she'll obviously be scared: «Oh, my God!» She's normal" [Shargunov S.A. Hooray! // Novy mir. 2002. No. 6 [Electronic resource] — URL: http://magazines.russ.ru/novyi_mi/2002/6/shar.html (accessed on 12.18.2024).



Afghan who recommends throwing grenades instead of tomatoes. «As I understand it, you need everyone around you to shoot, then it's easier to start yourself. In the crowd, right? I hope that you will have such an opportunity later»⁹, Lyosha Rogov, one of Sasha's comrades, answers him very wisely, showing his understanding of the fact that revolutionary ideas still do not have broad popular support. In this episode, as in a number of others, the writer makes it clear that the protest mechanics chosen by the characters and their organization are previously doomed to failure, and a party of this type has no chance of winning.

The «brown» ideology, in turn, is debunked by the appearance of the image of a policeman who released the guys after a fight with Caucasians: «And also because it was a little disgusting that the policeman decided that the boys were with him against those whom he called «blackheads». But they weren't in league»¹⁰. Thus, the writer provides evidence that the ideology of the NBP (as well as the ideology of the real social force of the NBP) has nothing to do with fascist ideology.

The position of Leva (in whose image Dmitry Bykov is manifested) and the «patriot-pochvennik» Arkady Sergeevich are refuted not so much by verbal means as through reducing details. In a conversation with Lev, such a detail becomes a hole from a knocked-out tooth, which worries Sasha more than the contents of the words he utters in response to Lev's remarks. In a conversation with Arkady Sergeevich, the same function is performed by a «food metaphor»¹¹: Sasha is fascinated by the «turned out» lips of the interlocutor, as if covered with «a film of boiled milk, and therefore seemed too unpleasantly alive, made of meat» and in the most inspired moments Sasha is seized by the enjoyment of pizza, which the interlocutor treats him to: «Yes, Yes, Sanya, I see your indignation», Sasha was looking lovingly at the caviar sandwich at that time. «But it's true»¹².

The motives driving Sasha's comrades from the Union of Creators party have an objective social justification, which they understand: «A vile, dishonest and unwise state that kills the weak and gives freedom to the vile and vulgar—why should it be tolerated? Why should I live in it, betraying myself and every citizen every minute?»¹³; «I am ready to live under any government, if this government ensures the safety of the territory and the reproduction of the population. The current government does not provide. That's the difference»¹⁴. However, the most important reasons for a writer are metaphysical.

Sasha Tishin was accepted by critics as a new hero, a «hero of our time», as the heir to the images of Maxim Gorky's¹⁵ socialists, etc. He was born, apparently, in the mid-70s (events that served as the basis of the novel, such as the capture of the Tower of St. Nicholas). Peter was in Riga, it happened in the early 2000-s, and the hero was about twenty years old by that

⁹ Prilepin Z. Sankya: roman. Moscow: OOO «Publishing House Ad Margin», 2006, p. 82.

¹⁰ The above-mentioned essay, p. 93.

¹¹ That's what Julia Shcherbinina called this technique. See Shcherbinina Y. Where are Fima and Sasha going? // Continent. 2009. No. 140 [Electronic resource] — URL: <http://magazines.russ.ru/continent/2009/140/pu.html> (accessed on 12.18.2024).

¹² That's what Julia Shcherbinina called this technique. See Shcherbinina Y. Where are Fima and Sasha going? // Continent. 2009. No. 140 [Electronic resource] — URL: <http://magazines.russ.ru/continent/2009/140/pu.html> (accessed on 12.18.2024).

¹³ The above-mentioned essay, p. 114.

¹⁴ The above-mentioned essay, p. 193.

¹⁵ For more information, see Sukhoi O.S. Very timely books (About the traditions of F.M. Dostoevsky and M. Gorky in Zakhar Prilepin's novel «Sankya») // Bulletin of the National Research University of the Russian Academy of Sciences, 2008, No. 6, pp. 290-296.



time). He does not represent an ordinary young man, like his comrades, about whom the author writes: «Incomprehensible, strange, young, gathered one by one from all over the country, united by unknown things, some kind of mark, a notch set at birth»¹⁶. And in fact, the characters of the novel (Venka, Lyosha Rogov, Negativity and Positivity, Yana and other «allies») seemed to be born with a certain quality that others lack. The work even has a name for this quality: «an innate sense of inner dignity»¹⁷. Sasha reflects on himself several times that he has no choice whether to commit any act (for example, the murder of an unfair judge): «I felt a strange turbidity and heaviness inside - and at the same time I had a firm knowledge that nothing could be avoided, he, Sasha, would do everything to the end. It's like it's already beyond his will and beyond his power—like a sentence. The verdict is not subject to appeal. Subject to execution»¹⁸. Oleg also speaks about the lack of choice: «If we hadn't taken this weapon, we would have been killed with it, but unarmed. Despite the fact that we are right. But they don't. And they have a choice, and we have no choice»¹⁹. Therefore, the presence of an innate quality that could be deciphered naturalistically (people who are not capable of abstract thinking from birth, whose actions are based on instincts and directly perceived experience) receive a mystical meaning.

The novel «Sankya» is full of mythological and biblical allusions from beginning to end. Let's look at just a few of them. The novel contains 13 chapters, which is associated with a damn dozen; the uprising is carried out by 12 people who are compared to the apostles. The name Matthew is used, which refers to one of the evangelists. Sasha is directly compared to Jesus Christ in the beating scene: «he stands with his back to a tree with his arms unnaturally turned back, which resembles a crucifixion, a blow from a bottle under the right nipple refers to a spear piercing the ribs of Christ. If not with Christ, then the arrested Matthew is also associated with the holy martyr»²⁰, whose «joyful, bright eye shone in the bloody mess of his face».

The surrounding people (passers-by, witnesses of the last armed action) repeatedly call them «devils» and «demons», which undoubtedly refers to Dostoevsky's novel.

During the march, which was followed by a pogrom, the «grandmother»²¹ called Yana a «non-Christian». Regarding Veni, the writer repeatedly uses the adverb «demonically», the verb «raged», calls him «the devil is cheerful», Oleg also says «demonically». In the finale of the novel, the meaning that the writer places in the word «demon» — «cursed» - unfolds. "Russia is nourished by the souls of her sons — she lives by them. He does not live by the righteous, but by the damned. I'm her son, even if I'm cursed. And you're a filthy stray»²², Sasha says to his ideal opponent, Bezletov, who had no choice whether to be a «son» or a «stray». Another meaning of the concept of «demons» has a relationship with the God-fighting motive, with the motive of sacrificing one's own soul²³.

16 Prilepin Z. Sankya: roman. Moscow: OOO «Publishing House Ad Margin», 2006, p. 10.

17 The above-mentioned essay, p. 236.

18 The above-mentioned essay, p. 241.

19 The above-mentioned essay, p. 365.

20 The closest prototype for this hero was Anatoly Tishin, who headed the National Bolshevik Party during Eduard Limonov's imprisonment.

21 The above-mentioned essay, p. 11.

22 The above-mentioned essay, p. 363.

23 Prilepin Z. Sankya: roman. Moscow: OOO «Publishing House Ad Margin», 2006.



Thus, the novel «Sankya» shows the idea of new realism that all currently available value systems are not viable. In the artistic world expressed in the novel, all ideas have died, the village still retains its function of concentrating the Russian spirit, but it will die a little more, and only young people with a pronounced sense of Homeland can pick up the baton from the generation of grandfathers, whose vivid symbol in the novel is the village grandfather, who tells Sasha and his comrades about God. S. Shargunov spoke about inheriting from a «grandfather-soldier», passing by the «father» (postmodernism). In S. Shargunov's novel 1993, a grandson serving time in prison after the mass riots that broke out in Russia after the 2011-2012 elections of deputies to the State Duma and the President reflects on the fate of his grandfather, who died during the events of October 1993, and there is not a single word about his father's participation in public and political life. A similar ideological thought is expressed in the work of Z. Prilepin as a motive of «fatherlessness». The fathers either died, like Sasha's dad Tishina (and partly of their own free will, as Sasha's grandmother says, he became a drunkard), or they set him up, deserted, like Bezletov. Sasha's inner monologue is significant: «Fatherlessness in search of someone who needs them as sons. We are fatherless in search of what we need as sons. You're lying. There are also «allies» with the fathers. But they don't need fathers. Because — what kind of fathers are they? These are not fathers. That's why I'm not lying». The chain of generations was broken, there was no natural renewal, so the "children" found themselves in an empty place, where only skeletons of the past (communists, villagers) and decorations created during the timelessness (hypermarkets, McDonald's television, etc.) remained.

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