

## "NEW REALISM" IN THE LITERATURE OF 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

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### Abstract

The article is structured as a polemical response to a large-scale discussion about "new realism" in Russian literature during the first decade of the twenty-first century. The article considers S. Shargunov's "Denial of Mourning" (2001) and V. Pustovaya's "Manifesto of a New Life" (2004), as well as A. Rudalev's "Catechism of the New Realism", (2011) a summary of the literary decade. The author discusses the inconsistencies in the theoretical substantiation of "new realism" as a new literary direction. Young critics' attempts to find stratifiers between modern and old realism struggled. The "new realists" are a culmination of the convergence of these movements, ignoring postmodernism and dismissing the old tradition. Since it did not experience the Soviet era, when literature was a "state" issue dominated by the authorities, the younger generation who has come to literature has more freedom in terms of means and themes. The following are some of the key characteristics of the younger Russian realists: linguistic looseness; disrupted literary succession ('emptiness'); a combination of elements of socialist realism and postmodernism; fragmentation of the image of reality; autobiographical reflexivity; and the authors' use of wide range of PR methods to encourage their imagination. The concept of "new," which corresponds to our time's realism, does not denote the emergence of a new literary direction, but rather a new axis of time, from which new themes are inserted into the existing direction and values are modified.

**Keywords:** polemical notes; Russian literature; XXI Century; "New realism"; postmodernism; socialist realism; fragmentation; autobiographical reflexivity

### Introduction

The "post-decay" period of Soviet literature is approaching a quarter of a century, in the history of literature it is not as significant a period as in the life

of an individual. However, considering the change of milestones - centuries and socio-political paradigms, the collapse of the USSR, Soviet literature can be considered as Atlantis, still making itself felt, but at the same time, along with its traditions and values, is rapidly disappearing into oblivion. The Soviet Atlantis, which has grown up for several generations, still has its living witnesses - "accomplices" and spectators. The first are its creators, writers of the twentieth century. The second are readers of the XX and XXI centuries. The latter differ significantly in the perception of the written word in general. The book is increasingly being replaced by a visual image, and literature is removing the general's shoulder straps, once granted to it by the Soviet education system. Literary-centric perception of culture - the main characteristic of the middle generation that went through the Soviet school, today forms a chasm between the older / middle and new, born in the "post-decay" period, generations. The process of natural self-cleansing of nations from communist ideology, which began after the collapse of the USSR, in each country is associated with the formation of national identity - in general, this is a transitional period, a period of searches and constant changes in the picture of a changing world.

The lack of formalization of literature is reflected in the main directions chosen by the writers of the late XX - early XXI centuries. Postmodernism becomes an echo of the past and a bridge to the future. However, the very beginning of the 21st century testifies to the fact that young writers do not want to go with the flow, and navigators are turning the ship of Russian literature in the direction of realism.

"It seems to me that Russia, after all the perturbations, after all the civilizations, religious reforms and social revolutions that have passed through its face, is returning more or less to the same state. In a state of cozy dull half-sleep, in which all literature is written from the late 20s to the 40s, from the late 60s to the early 80s. This is the time for dreams about Silence, Fate and Happiness," [1].

The young generation of Russian writers, in their opinion, does not follow the mainstream of traditional realism, it creates a new realistic trend - "new realism." From the very beginning of the 2000s, the term "new realism" has become the subject of heated debate and discussion on the pages of newspapers and literary magazines. The desire of the younger generation of writers and

critics to put forward a new literary direction was based on a disregard for postmodernism, and more broadly on a denial of the old tradition.

This article is a kind of polemical notes to the manifestos of "new realism" that arose at the very beginning of the twenty-first century, its goal is to present contradictions in the desire to theoretically substantiate "new realism" as a new literary trend.

### **Main Part**

Russian daughter of a Soviet mother - the mores of a literary Youth. Throughout the Soviet era, criticism addressed the question of the nationality of literature. In the early post-Soviet period, the concept of the unity of the people disappears, it is precisely the idea of separation according to various parameters, more often social ones: the rich and the poor, the young and the elderly, those who remain and those who have immigrated, believers and non-believers, thinking and going with the flow are put forward. In principle, the Russian literary scene is becoming tolerant and democratic. "I regard the general literary situation in the country as simply excellent. Everyone is free to write whatever comes into his head, without fear of being put on a chain. Another thing is whether he will be able to print it <...>" [2].

Following the theory of V.B. Shklovsky: in every epoch in literature there are several literary schools at the same time, and one of them is its canonized crest - we can state that "new" realists, drunk with freedom, have risen to the crest of modern Russian literature. However, the problem is that on the crest there are only ambitious searches for oneself in realism, wandering, tests. This applies not only to those who are part of literature, but also to those representatives of the younger generation who received the corresponding laurels of literary prizes for their literary merits, of which there are many in Russia now.

"Each new literary school is a revolution, something like the emergence of a new class." V.B. Shklovsky noted that "the new hegemon is usually not a pure restorer of the previous form, but is complicated by the presence of traits of other elementary schools, and traits inherited from his predecessor on the throne, but already in a service role" [3].

The "new" realists are a fragment of the well-known realistic trend, which, according to Shklovsky's theory, at the end of the twentieth century represented the defeated "line". This line was not completely destroyed, but only strayed off

the ridge, “left” “down to walk under the steam and may rise again, being an eternal contender for the throne” [3]. The “new” realists are the fruit of a synthesis of socialist realism and postmodernism, although they do not consider the first and the second a full-fledged literature.

The new realists in the 2000s began to include everyone who did not categorically consider themselves to be postmodernists (S. Shargunov, Z. Prilepin, G. Sadulayev, L. Airapetyan, A. Babchenko, R. Senchin, D. Gutsko, I. Kochergin, A. Karasev, D. Novikov, I. Mamaeva, N. Klyuchareva and others). Among them, D. Bykov and Z. Prilepin are more experienced, but these are completely different figures. Their importance is emphasized, according to I. Frolov, "not by the power of their books, but by their active participation in public life and, not least, by their external, such opposite, images of the adult Amur and the beautiful-eyed Alyosha Popovich" [4].

Manifestoes of the "New" Realists: Proclaiming Idea and Denying Structure. Sergei Shargunov and Valeria Pustovaya became the ideologists of the “new realism” and the promotion of this term. “New realism” - according to S. Shargunov's definition - is “the password for that free generation that has overcome the sad delirium of the old patriots and old liberals. We love our country and are not afraid to be free-thinkers <...>” [5].

S. Shargunov says about himself: “If you like, call me a populist. Sociality is back. Postmodernism was replaced by a new appeal to realism, rejuvenated through avant-garde techniques. People are hungry for the "truth of life." Now novels about the fate of ordinary people - engineers, officers, taxi drivers will be in price. Against the background of the philological and glamorous surface, these are also extreme challenges”.

In 2001, S. Shargunov published a manifesto "Denial of mourning", which V. Pustovaya called programmatic, but both guardians of the introduction of the "new" term ignored his genealogy, or really did not know anything about it. The term, however, gained some popularity, and even began to dispute its authorship. S. Kaznacheev writes: “A group of middle-aged and young writers decided to hold a conference on the problems of contemporary prose. I suggested the title: "New Moscow prose". But they approved the theme formulated by M. Popov - "New Realism". In 1997, the first conference was held within the walls of the Moscow Writers' Organization”. In 1999 and 2000, two more conferences were held under the title "New Realism".

S. Shargunov stylistically echoes the textbook manifesto "Slap in the face to public taste" (1912), but constantly returns to his favorite method of denial-proclamation: it never happened ... Two older brothers (Pelevin and Sorokin) roaringly laugh at the helpless father Noah (traditional literature), but the youngest one does not want to laugh. A change of laughter is coming. A new realism is coming. "

And before S. Shargunov, few of those citing the manifesto of Burliuk, Kruchenykh, Mayakovsky, Khlebnikov dwelt on the phrase "Whoever does not forget his first love, does not recognize the last" both old and new. Shargunov calls the cultural transition of the post-Soviet era "the agony of postmodernism." "A person of the new Russian generation would not think to parody the surrounding reality, and even through the grimaces of the non-native Soviet period. This is the exclusive prerogative of the postmodernists. This is the regularity of their appearance, and their role is to break through, to cull the new historical time. Postmodernists watch with laughter. Laughing, they part with the past. Laughing, they are shy of the nascent present."

S. Shargunov offers many contradictory and controversial thoughts: "The most painful thing for the "mourners of literature" is the financial situation... Yes, in a non-ideologized society, literature is unprofitable. And in the ideologized one - they wrote even on the table."

## Conclusion

Developing E. Zamyatin's idea about the development of the literary process of the early 20th century, when a similar tendency was observed in Russian literature ("a phenomenon developed, then its opposite, and finally a combination of two opposite directions, from a combination of opposite currents - realists and symbolists, a neo-realist trend emerged" ), and agreeing with the opinion of S. Belyakov that "the new realism has never been a special artistic direction", and I. a natural denial of a bygone era, which has set the teeth on edge with its clearly established linguistic norm and communist slogan.

Realism in art is a skeleton that has no chance of drying out. As a framework welded together from eternal archetypes, it attracts new information fields, which are designed to relentlessly actualize archetypal images. The skeleton of realism, which is the basis of culture, in any epoch is based on real eventfulness, while the very "supporting structure" of a realistic building always fits into the

cultural architectonics of the time. Reacting to the social order of the era, it is the aesthetic interpretation of this order by specific writers. The subjectivity of the writer's position predetermines the choice of building material, external framing and internal improvement of the new "building".

The national language and literature, being communicating vessels in which the levels of the linguistic and cultural fluid are harmoniously comparable and invariably perform their functions, are renewed in every epoch - old experimenters leave and young experimenters come, naturally offering new material for their creative experiments. For "communicating vessels" of culture, the transitional era is the time when cultural layers of different "density" are placed in them. Thus, the height of the cultural "pillars" at this time in them will not be the same.

A generation that did not feel the charm of the Soviet era, when literature was an important state issue, takes its own place in literature. Therefore, there is more freedom in modern literature.

Formulating the main trends in the development of the current stage of the realistic direction, the distinguishing features of the younger generation of modern realists include the following:

- linguistic looseness;
- a combination of elements of socialist realism and postmodernism;
- interrupted literary succession ('emptiness');
- the fragmentation of the image of reality;
- autobiographical reflexivity - the principle of artistic reflection of reality is based on one's own biography and social socialization (Senchin, Kochergin, Prilepin);
- the use of various PR methods by the authors to promote their creativity.

Undoubtedly, the realism of the new era denies the ideological nature of Soviet literature, and criticism, following this idea of purification, seeks to somehow designate a new phase of realism. The definition of "new" supplements only a new time axis, from the standpoint of which new themes are introduced into the already existing direction and values are adjusted.

Realism is a cultural chronotype with a formed skeleton of existential themes and archetypal images, which at different periods of its life course reacts sensitively to what is happening and socializes in changing conditions. The

essence of realism, as a reflection of reality, does not change. Reality itself changes, and after it its reflecting literature changes.

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