



## MODERN MILITARY PROSE ABOUT THE AFGHAN AND CHECHEN CAMPAIGNS

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**Abstract:** *The article is concerned with the issues of the modern military literature of Russia and especially with the prose dealing with the recent wars (those of Afghanistan and Chechnya). In her article, the author marks out and generalizes the principal problematic and thematic elements (motives, images, genres, etc.) of the modern Russian military prose.*

**Keywords:** *war theme, image of the hero, image of the author, motive, genre, cycle.*

Modern military prose is the literature of the second half of the 80s of the 20th century – the beginning of the 21st century<sup>1</sup>, when, along with the theme of the Great Patriotic War (“Cursed and Killed”, “Merry Soldier”, “The Signaller” by V. Astafiev, “And the Detachment Left” L. Borodin, “Old Wounds Hurt”, “Among the Boulders” by A. Genatulin, “A Day in the Infantry” by E. Romanova, “Shooting near Smolensk” by E. Skobelev, etc.), the theme of new wars arises – Afghan and Chechen. In this regard, the composition of the authors changed (new authors came to literature, most of them participated in military campaigns), new ideological and thematic accents appeared in works about the war: an attempt to understand man, modern man in the conditions of a new war, in conditions of changing character and pathos of wartime (war is not as a defense of the motherland, but as a way to solve economic and political problems). In the Afghan war, the Russian policy of intervening in the civil conflict of another country, solving political problems through weapons, as time has shown, was wrong and cruel. “The result of a war on a foreign land will inevitably be an alienating experience,” such is the view from the outside on the Afghan conflict given by the English critic G. Schwartz, “after all, not the whole nation is fighting, but only a small part of it: and since the soldier is cut off from normal communication with others, in the homeland where he returns, what he experienced abroad remains almost unknown. Especially if reports of war are subject to political considerations, as was the case in the Soviet Union throughout almost the entire conflict in Afghanistan” [18, p. 235]. The theme of a senseless war, a war “hidden” from “extraneous” eyes - the eyes of Russians, the theme of absurdity and rejection of war in general permeate almost every modern work of military subjects. Episodic combat missions (“operations”) on foreign territory, skirmishes, conscription to “hot spots”, the horrors of an endless war, participants in the war who seek to serve their appointed days in inactivity so that they will





not be remembered - all this constitutes the new realities of modern warfare. At present, there is a shift in public consciousness, there is an understanding of the terrible consequences of modern "hidden" wars. "The Afghan theme and the demolition of military self-consciousness are not an accidental combination," says critic V. Pustovaya, "It was the recent wars, the Afghan and Chechen ones, not to mention the numerous other ethnic conflicts on the territory of the former Soviet Union, that led modern man to the idea of the precious need for peace, orienting him not to defeat another enemy, but to overcome the war as such" [16, p. 152]. In Russian prose of the late twentieth century, the theme of war continues to exist in the context of realism, which has overcome the "crisis and rethinking" in the modern literary situation [13, p. 521], and is an important literary material that requires detailed consideration and study. Modern military prose is defined and shaped by the works of young authors; a generation of those who fought in Afghanistan, the Chechen Republic, and participated in other interethnic conflicts comes to literature.

There are works about the war, the authors of which actively and differently comprehend the theme of the war. It is worth noting such works as "Stories", "Safe Return", "Afghan Tales", "The Last Story of the War", "The Bell Tower", the story "Return to Kandahar", the novel "The Sign of the Beast" by O. Ermakov; the story "He was my best friend" by O. Handus; a cycle of stories-sketches "Ten episodes about the war", the stories "Vzletka", "Alkhan-Yurt", the story "Argun" by A. Babchenko; "Afghan. Stories and a story "O. Blotsky; "Stories", "Chechen stories", "Queen" by A. Karasev; "Prisoner of the Caucasus" by V. Makanin; "Kandahar outpost", "Two stories", novels "Dream about Kabul", "Chechen blues", "A tree in the center of Kabul" by A. Prokhanov; stories and novels ("Four Lives", "Our Garden", "White Bride", etc.) by V. Degtev; the story "Battalion of extremists" by E. Loginov; "Trap", "Defector" by K. Tariverdiev; the stories "Thirst" by A. Gelasimov, "Lost Platoon" by S. Dyshev and "Reconnaissance Company" by A. Dyshev, "There, by the Rivers of Babylon" by D. Gutsko, "April" by A. Kirilchenko, "Lost Armored Carrier" by A. Segen, "In the Balkans the roads are narrow" by A. Kireev, "Karaganda Deviatiny, or the Tale of the Last Days" by O. Pavlov; novels "Pathology" by Z. Prilepin; "Afghan. A novel in 35 chapters" by E. Pustynin; documentary novels - "Zinc Boys" by S. Aleksievich, "War of Mothers" by V. Bakin, "The Hidden War" by A. Borovik and others. Works about the new war, different in their subject matter, pathos, genre and style orientation, tending to be documentary and publicistic, make up the general picture of modern military prose. Its main genres are the genres of the story and the story. A characteristic feature of the genre dynamics of the story in Russian literature of the late twentieth century is the process of cyclization. The literary cycle is historically one of the main forms of the artistic tendency to group works along with other forms: the traditional collection, an anthology, a book of poems, etc. Combining stories on the basis of cyclization is especially characteristic of modern military prose. Such, for example, are the cycle "Afghan stories" by O. Ermakov [8], the cycle of stories-sketching "Ten episodes about the





war” by A. Babchenko [5], “Chechen stories” by A. Karasev [12]. The inclination towards cyclization is already manifested in the titles of the texts: in addition to those named, we will mention “Stories” (“The Smell of a Cigarette”, “Captain Korneev”, “Own Position”) by A. Karasev [11]; “Stories” (“Baptism” and “Yellow Mountain”) by O. Ermakov

[10], “Two stories” (“Dear”, “Muslim Wedding”) by A. Prokhanov [14]), “Afghan. Stories and a story” by O. Blotsky [6] (two stories - “Socialist circumstances” and “Paisa”, the story “Dragonfly”). The above works about the new modern war are of different artistic levels. Not many authors achieve a high artistic understanding of the events they experienced. Critics are quite actively involved in the problems of modern military prose, highlighting works of the highest artistic qualification. Such are, in the opinion of most critics and researchers, the works of S. Aleksievich, who collected the Afghan memoirs of soldiers, and the talented writer O. Ermakov, who fought directly in Afghanistan. Critics note a high degree of truthfulness in Yermakov's depiction of the tragic, deep psychologism, philosophical understanding of events and characters in his works. The cycle “Afghan stories” by Ermakov is formed due to the problem-thematic unity (the theme of the Afghan “hidden” war, the theme of love, the theme of captivity, the theme of faith), the leitmotif of the narrative (motives of endless return, humiliation, loneliness, expectation, loss, unforeseen war, faith to salvation, biblical motifs), a single image of the hero and plot (leaving for war and the return of a soldier), a common title and image of the author. The named cycle includes 6 stories: “Spring walk”, “N-th unit conducted exercises”, “In the winter in Afghanistan”, “Mars and the soldier”, “Feast on the bank of the purple river” and “Snow-covered house”. The commonality of military themes initially connects these stories. They are also united by the image of a “cross-cutting hero” and a “single plot” [17, p. 56] - going to war and returning, an endless return to lost harmony or a return “in a zinc coffin”. “The endtoend hero of the stories has different names, but has a similar attitude” [17, p. 56], - says critic I. Sukhikh. The title of the cycle “Afghan stories” indicates the problem-thematic dominant of the text, the leading motive. In the story “Spring walk” a young man who is taken into the army and “can be sent to this war” [8, p. 89], travels for the last time to the forest, to his favorite places, enjoys nature and remembers how he drowned a gun bought for self-defense.

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