

THE IMAGE OF THE ARTIST IN CONTEMPORARY RUSSIAN AND EUROPEAN PROSE

Nematjonova Nafisa

lecturer, department of russian philology, FerSU

Abdujalilova Dilmura

2nd-year student, faculty of philology, FerSU

Abstract: The article examines the image of the artist in contemporary Russian and European prose as a reflection of the spiritual condition of a person in the postmodern era. Modern writers turn to the figure of the artist not only as a creator of works of art but also as a special type of personality whose destiny symbolizes the conflict between the inner world and external reality. Through the image of the artist, authors explore issues of self-identification, the meaning of creativity, the loss of ideals, and the search for spiritual harmony.

Key words: image of the artist, contemporary prose, Russian literature, European literature, postmodernism, creative personality, aesthetics, art and society, philosophy of art, existentialism, spiritual crisis, artistic consciousness.

Throughout the history of literature, the image of the artist has remained one of the most expressive and philosophically significant symbols of human culture. It concentrates reflections on the nature of creativity, the purpose of art, the spiritual mission of the individual, and their relationship with society. Writers and thinkers of different eras have interpreted the figure of the artist in their own ways - from the romantic genius of the 19th century to the ironic intellectual of postmodern times. As the perception of the world changed, so did the view of the creator himself, his role, meaning, and limits of freedom.

Contemporary Russian and European prose of the late 20th and early 21st centuries reflects a deep crisis of traditional values, which also manifests itself in artistic consciousness. In an era when art has lost its sacred status and the boundaries between truth and fiction have blurred, writers turn to the image of the artist as a means of understanding the spiritual condition of modern humanity. The artist-protagonist becomes a mirror of the times: he doubts, searches for meaning, and experiences an inner conflict between creativity and reality, between the ideal and the everyday.

In Russian literature, the spiritual and moral dimension of the creator's image is preserved. The artist still appears as a person endowed with a special sense of responsibility toward truth and culture. In European prose, by contrast, there is a tendency toward philosophical and aesthetic experimentation: the artist becomes a symbol of postmodern play, intellectual exploration, and skepticism toward absolutes.

Thus, the return to the theme of the artist in contemporary literature is not merely a continuation of an old tradition — it becomes a way of comprehending global cultural transformations, the crisis of spirituality, and the evolution of human consciousness in the postmodern era. Studying this image allows a deeper understanding of how modern prose reflects philosophical, aesthetic, and ethical problems of the individual in a world where the boundaries between art and reality have become increasingly fluid.

The Image of the Artist in Contemporary Russian Prose

Modern Russian literature continues the tradition of philosophical and moral reflection on creativity. After the collapse of Soviet ideology and the loss of collective ideals, writers turned

to the themes of personal responsibility and spiritual quest. The artist became a symbol of a person striving to preserve individuality and inner freedom in a world of mass culture and spiritual instability.

In Lyudmila Ulitskaya's novels *Medea and Her Children* and *Sincerely Yours*, Shurik, creativity is seen as a form of spiritual service. Her characters, often not artists in the literal sense, possess a special sense of beauty and harmony, making them "creators" of human relationships. For Ulitskaya, art is not only the creation of aesthetic values but also the ability to perceive goodness, compassion, and meaning in the world.

In Viktor Pelevin's novels *Generation "P"* and *Chapayev and Void*, the artist appears as a person who has lost connection with reality. His heroes live in a world of illusions and simulacra, where art becomes part of the mass industry. Here, the artist is not a prophet but an ironic player creating copies without originals. Pelevin exposes the crisis of modern culture, where creativity has lost its authenticity and become a tool for manipulating consciousness.

Mikhail Shishkin, in his novels *Maidenhair (Venus Hair)* and *The Letter Book*, represents the opposite perspective. For him, creativity is a path to spiritual purification and a connection with eternity. The artist in Shishkin's works strives to comprehend the language of being, to express the inexpressible, and to unite love, word, and immortality. His creativity carries a salvific mission — it restores faith in the spiritual essence of humanity.

Thus, in Russian prose, the artist retains the traits of a spiritual seeker. Even in a postmodern context, he does not lose his ethical dimension: creativity remains a form of service, a way to resist the destructive forces of time and depersonalization.

The Image of the Artist in Contemporary European Prose

European prose of the late 20th and early 21st centuries portrays the artist through the lens of intellectual and aesthetic experimentation. Unlike the Russian tradition, which maintains faith in the spiritual mission of art, Western writers often depict the artist as a figure of doubt, a participant in a philosophical game with reality.

In Patrick Süskind's novel *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer*, the artist turns into an obsessed creator striving to produce the perfect work - a fragrance that can control human will. However, his creativity leads to the destruction of humanity itself. Süskind raises the question of the ethical boundaries of art: where does inspiration end and madness begin? The artist becomes a symbol of creative freedom turned to tragedy.

Umberto Eco, in Foucault's *Pendulum*, presents the artist as an intellectual exploring the secret codes of culture. His hero seeks truth through the text but falls into the trap of his own interpretations. For Eco, the artist is one who realizes the relativity of all meanings and plays with them, turning art into a metaphor for knowledge.

In Orhan Pamuk's novels *My Name is Red* and *The Museum of Innocence*, the artist becomes a mediator between East and West, tradition and modernity. His creativity is a search for identity in a world of cultural intersections. Through his artist characters, Pamuk reflects on how art connects the past and the present, the personal and the universal.

Ian McEwan's *Atonement* portrays a writer whose creativity becomes both the source of guilt and the path to redemption. Here, the artist becomes aware of moral responsibility toward life, giving art an ethical dimension.

Thus, European prose represents the artist as a figure of philosophical inquiry - a person for whom creativity is both a game and a trial, a space of freedom and responsibility.

Comparing Russian and European traditions, we can note that both literatures are aware of the crisis of art and spirituality, but they approach this issue differently. Russian writers often see the artist as the guardian of spiritual values, someone capable of resisting chaos.

European authors, in contrast, turn to the creator as an intellectual phenomenon, emphasizing his solitude, irony, and loss of faith in absolute truths. Russian prose maintains a connection with religious and humanistic traditions, viewing creativity as an act of moral self-discovery. European literature, influenced by postmodern philosophy, portrays the artist as the center of play, doubt, and infinite interpretation.

Despite these differences, both traditions converge in one idea: the artist is a mirror of the epoch - a symbol of crisis and, at the same time, of hope. Through him, literature speaks about the destiny of a human being who has lost spiritual orientation but continues to search for meaning.

Conclusion

The image of the artist in contemporary Russian and European prose occupies a special place, reflecting the spiritual quest of the individual in the postmodern era. At the center of the writers' attention is the creative personality caught in complex relationships with society, culture, and the self. Unlike classical 19th-century literature, where the artist was often perceived as a bearer of a high mission and spiritual light, in contemporary prose he appears as an internally conflicted figure seeking harmony between art and reality.

In Russian literature, he retains a moral mission, a striving for truth and spiritual depth. In European literature, he embodies intellectual skepticism, the play of meanings, and the awareness of art's relativity. Yet in both, the artist remains a symbol of human search — the desire to preserve inner freedom and faith in the transformative power of creativity.

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