



CENTRAL ASIAN JOURNAL OF LITERATURE, PHILOSOPHY AND CULTURE

eISSN: 2660-6828 | Volume: 04 Issue: 09 Sep 2023
<https://cajlp.centralasianstudies.org>

The Theme of War in Narine Abgaryan's Collection of Stories "Long on Living"

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Received 4th Jul 2023, Accepted 5th Aug 2023, Online 22th Sep 2023

ANNOTATION

this article is devoted to the analysis of the theme of war in the work of the modern Russian-language writer Narine Abgaryan. The study examines the first story in the collection "Long on living" - "Merelots" and its main plot elements.

KEYWORDS: story, theme, collection, plot elements, retrospective.

Among the bright names of the modern Russian literary process, the work of Narine Abgaryan, a Russian-speaking writer of Yarmenian origin, laureate of the "Yasnaya Polyana" Prize and nominee for the Big Book Prize, author of the famous stories "Manyunya", "Semyon Andreich. Chronicle in Doodles", "Mura's Happiness", novels "Manyunya Writes a Fantastic Novel", "The One Who Comes in Large Numbers", collections of stories "Zulali", "People of Our Court", "Silence of Color" and others.

The theme of the writer's work is multifaceted - the theme of childhood memories, the theme of friendship and relationships in the family, the theme of continuity of generations, the theme of war and many others.

The theme of war, which occupies a special place in the work of Narine Abgaryan, is considered as a destructive force that destroys the human race and creates a gap between the present and the future.

The collection of stories "Long on living" is dedicated to the theme of war, consisting of short stories telling about the fate of peaceful citizens of Armenia who encountered the war and its consequences. The collection opens with the story "Merelots", which is based on the memories of the Armenian middle-aged woman Metaxia about personal and at the same time general grief - like many other residents of the border town of Omarbeyli, the heroine loses her stepson Razmik, who has become her family.

The plot of the story is the chronotope (time space) of the main character's path to the cemetery, which becomes a time of deep reflection on the bloodthirstiness of the war and its scale: «Кажется, совсем недавно могила Размика была крайней, а теперь к ней через три ряда пробираться»/ «Люди уходят так, словно соревнуются» ("It seems that just recently Razmik's grave was the last one, and now you have to make your way to it through three rows" / "People leave as if they were competing") [1, p.7]. The heroine is overcome by thoughts about the transience of life and the suddenness of death, so Metaxia chooses a place for herself next to her family: «...уже договорилась и даже деньги вперед могильщику Цатуру отдала» ("... she has

already agreed and even gave the money in advance to the gravedigger Tsatur”) [1, p.8], that the war takes the young: «Семнадцать лет, жить и жить» (“Seventeen years, live and live”) [1, p.9].

A retrospective look allows the author to reveal the events of the past in more depth. The heroine recalls her completely unexpectedly late marriage, her selfless act: refusing to become pregnant by her husband so as not to turn away from her stepson, her husband’s death in the middle of the night from a stroke, and much more.

The main internal plot of the story is Metaxia’s recollection of the unforeseen of military events: «Когда случилась война, в приграничных деревнях особо не тревожились – люди десятилетиями дружили семьями, ездили друг к другу в гости» (“When the war happened, there was no particular concern in the border villages - people had been friends with families for decades, went to visit each other”)[1, p.10] and its consequences: «Размика нигде не было, но он нашелся, на заднем дворе – наспех закиданный комьями земли и садовым инвентарем» (“Razmika is nowhere was not there, but he was found in the backyard – hastily covered with clods of earth and gardening tools”) [1, p.10]. The picture of the brutal murder of her stepson that she sees is described by the heroine in a generalized form, but is filled with symbolic details: crusty laundry hung on the street, a dent on the gate, a handful of earth eaten by the heroine, unusable shoes for crushed feet, a cart with a dead body. All of the listed artistic details enhance the tragedy of the theme of war, its meaninglessness and mercilessness.

The climax of the story is, although filled with tragedy and great sorrow, the heroine’s caring bathing of her dead stepson: «Мыла осторожно, не дыша – словно боялась разбудить» (“She washed it carefully, without breathing - as if she was afraid to wake her up”) [1, p.11], in which the central place is occupied by the heroine’s unanswered dialogue with the deceased: «Сообразив, что никогда раньше не видела его голым, заговорила шепотом, скрывая смущение: «Какой ты статный, мой мальчик, какое у тебя красивое тело. Какое все у тебя ладное – для жизни, для радости, для счастья» (“Realizing that she had never seen him naked before, she spoke in a whisper, hiding her embarrassment: “How handsome you are, my boy, what a beautiful body you have. How good everything is for you - for life, for joy, for happiness”) [1, p.12]. It is these words of the heroine that become key not only for the story “Merelots”, but also for the entire collection of stories “Long on living”. The heroine is convinced that the human race is accompanied by life, joy and happiness, which is irrevocably taken away by war. The war itself is absent from the story as a description, but there are consequences: the accelerated filling of the graves in the cemetery, the emptying of the streets, a description of Razmik’s funeral.

The denouement of the story is the farewell words of Metaxia addressed to Razmik’s grave: «Размик-джан, на той неделе снова приду» (“Razmik-jan, I will come again this week”) [1, p.13], pronounced in the same style - an unanswered dialogue during ablution. This element also enhances the tragedy of the theme of war and shows that people cannot accept the death of their relatives and friends.

The story “Merelots” is filled with the heroine’s religious and philosophical reflections on the priority of visiting the graves of the deceased on the day of remembrance of graves or the performance of the liturgy. The heroine, who has lost a loved one, realizes that she wants to break the traditional order: «...к чему им литургия, когда они находятся в том из миров, где все людское не имеет значения» (“... why do they need liturgy when they are in that one of the worlds where everything human does not matter”) [1, p.7], going first to the graves of their relatives. For the heroine, the path to the dead is an opportunity to spend a little time in a past life, to feel complete and needed. That is why the heroine chooses, first of all, not the liturgy for the dead, but a trip to the graves. It becomes noticeable in the text that the heroine describes the grave of her

stepson and addresses him, and not the grave of her husband. In this we also see the heroine's insubordination in the face of the fact that the war is taking away young people who would have a long life ahead of them.

Let us note that there is a semantic unity between the title of the collection and the title of the first story in the collection. The words "continue to live" are a kind of answer to the question of a simple person wounded by the events: what to do next and how to be? The title of the first story complements the title of the collection itself, clarifying that it is necessary to move on with life, but at the same time remember about departed relatives.

Thus, we have come to the conclusion that the first story in the collection "Long on living" by Narine Abgaryan, "Merelots," is a story about enormous human loss, about the suddenness and mercilessness of war, about young dead people and the broken destinies of the living. The story is written in a retrospective form, which allows the heroine to highlight the main, but most tragic moments of the consequences of the war.

References:

1. Abgaryan N. Long on living [Dal'she jit']. – M., 2021.