

GENESIS OF THE «WOMAN'S» WAR IN CREATIVITY OF SVETLANA ALEXIEVICH (BASED ON THE MATERIAL OF THE NOVELS «THE UNWOMANLY FACE OF WAR» AND «ZINKY BOYS»)

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Abstract: The article examines the features of a fiction-documentary comprehension of the German-Soviet and Soviet-Afghan wars in the novels of Svetlana Alexievich «The unwomanly face of war» and «Zinky Boys». It occurs through the perception of a woman as a direct participant in the war, a mother, wife, whose war took away the most expensive – son, husband, father. The presence of archetypal images to combine separate chapters is common in both novels.

In both her novels, S. Alexievich gave the archetypal image of a woman-keeper of modern sound, individual features, convincing the reader that this image is always relevant because each talented artist revealed not only its original meaning, but also created something new that was close to the man of each century.

Keywords: images-archetypes, woman-mother, German-Soviet war, Soviet-Afghan war, Soviet propaganda.

1 Introduction

Many famous writers worked in the genre of literary journalism (or non-fiction). Among them are the American journalist John Silas Reed, the author of a series of reports on the Mexican revolution (published in 1914 under the title «Insurgent Mexico») and the book «Ten Days that Shook the World» (1919), devoted to the events in Petrograd in October 1917. Nobel laureate Ernest Hemingway paid considerable attention to literary journalism. Traveling the world, he described his impressions in the books «Death in the Afternoon» (1932), «Green Hills of Africa» (1935), «A Moveable Feast» (1964), etc. It is worth mentioning in this context the Czechoslovak journalist Julius Fučík as the author of «Reports Written Under the Noose» (1945), written in 1942 in Nazi torture chambers. A characteristic feature of these works was a strong and uncompromising position of the author.

A notable milestone in the development of fiction was the novel of Truman Capote «In Cold Blood» (1966). In this work the writer managed to hide his voice with the help of stylistic means and maximize the objectification of the story.

The traditions of factual literature were continued in the works of the Nobel Prize winner in literature Belarusian writer Svetlana Alexievich – author of fiction and documentary novels «The unwomanly face of war» (1984), «Last Witnesses. Unchildlike Stories» (1985), «Zinky Boys» (1989), «Enchanted with Death» (1993), «Chernobyl Prayer» (1997), «Secondhand Time» (2013). In modern Ukrainian literature, a literary experiment in the field of non-fiction, performed by O. Mykhed in the work «I will mix your blood with coal. How to understand the Ukrainian East» dedicated to the conflict in Donbass can be considered creative style of the Belarusian author.

The works of S. Alexievich are based on the memories of the participants of the events or their relatives (for example, the mothers of those who did not return from the war in Afghanistan). They distinguished by polyphony. The author consciously stays behind the scenes, giving the narrators the opportunity to express their thoughts freely, involving them in the creation of the text. S. Alexievich defines her text as a «history of feelings» (Usmanova 1998), while literary critics tend to consider it in the context of the «genre of voices» (Ihnativ 2018), «the genre of testimony» (Lugarić Vukas 2014).

2 Literature Review

The literary heritage of S. Alexievich is constantly in the spotlight of researchers, especially after the writer was awarded

the Nobel Prize. Scientific interest confirmed by a number of publications. Among them – K. Górska «“The unwomanly face of war” of S. Alexievich as a cyclic documentary-fictional prose: structure and poetics». In this article, among other things, the author reveals issues related to the archetype of the mother, in particular, the mother who accompanies her daughter to the front and who is willing to sacrifice her child's life for victory (Górska 2018).

In this context, could be mentioned the PhD thesis of the same author – «Fictional-Documentary Prose by Svetlana Alexievich (problems of poetics)» (Górska 2019) – where the subject of research was the novels «Zinky Boys» and «Secondhand Time». However, if in K. Górska research «The unwomanly face of war» by S. Alexievich as a cyclic documentary-fictional prose: structure and poetics» the issues revealed by or research did not receive a deep and comprehensive analysis, in the above-mentioned PhD thesis they do not correlate with each other at all.

In the article of B. Waligórska-Olejniczak «On feminine myths and images in Svetlana Alexievich's prose» (Waligórska-Olejniczak 2016), the poetics of S. Alexievich is analyzed on the example of works «The unwomanly face of war», «Chernobyl Prayer», «Secondhand Time», the images of women are interpreted through the prism of female myth, which is the basis of Russian culture.

D. Lugarić Vukas in the work «Witnessing the Unspeakable: On Testimony and Trauma in Svetlana Alexievich's The War's Unwomanly Face and Zinky Boys» (Lugarić Vukas 2014) on the example of two works of the Belarusian writer considered the «genre of testimony», identified features of narrative traumatic experience in testimony collected by S. Alexievich.

J. Rodgers in research «Making space for a new picture of the world: Boys in Zinc and Chernobyl Prayer by Svetlana Alexievich» (Rodgers 2019) studied the genre-compositional specifics of Alexievich's work, considered the writer's innovation in using interview recordings, the correlation of elitist and non-elitist voices, the place of the author's voice in the works, etc.

Thus, the vision of the war essence and its impact on the human being through the prism of women's consciousness, the definition of archetypal female images in the works of S. Alexievich has not yet been the subject of a scientific research.

The aim of the article: to study the features of fiction and documentary comprehension of the German-Soviet and Soviet-Afghan wars in Svetlana Alexievich's novels «The unwomanly face of war» and «Zinky Boys» through the perception of a woman as a direct participant of the war, a mother, a wife who lost the most important persons – son, husband, father – in the war.

3 Material and research methods

The research is devoted to the analysis and interpretation of S. Alexievich works «The unwomanly face of war» and «Zinky boys». The structure of archetypal female images of a *woman-mother* and a *woman-wife* is revealed through the confessions of the narrators, which are actualized and creatively reproduced in the novels of the Nobel laureate. In addition to the analysis, methods of generalization of the obtained results, cultural-historical, partly – psychoanalysis and archetypal criticism were used. The theoretical studies of C. Jung are the theoretical and methodological basis of the work.

4 The unwomanly face of war

The documentary novel «The unwomanly face of war» as other works by S. Alexievich, is based on interviews. The author's

attention is focused on the peculiarities of the perception of war through woman's eyes, as a direct participant in those terrible events. According to writer's viewpoint, World War II has been written about much earlier, but since the authors of these works were men, the idea of war was one-sided. In fact, the tendency to interpret war as a man's business was inherent in the memories of women veterans. The notion of «male» but not «female» war corresponded to established ideological canons. The special frankness of former nurses, snipers, anti-aircraft gunners, machine gunners, pilots, tank women, and partisans in an informal setting was striking. Such memories followed by a completely different war, and unknown to the public (Alexievich 2016a, 9-10). In straight talk, the women focused on their own feelings, details of life, mentioned the harassment of men, as well as inconveniences related to physiology, hygiene, etc. (BBC News Ukraine 2015). However, after some time, after such candid memories, many of them naturally had a «hangover», and, lost the desire to publish their «atypical» thoughts. This decision dictated not only by fear of the authorities. In part, the veterans did not want to ruin themselves in the eyes of their children, grandchildren, acquaintances, to destroy the myth of their heroic past. «I am a heroine for my son. Deity! What will he think of me after that?» (Alexievich 2016a, 133) – one of the veterans was looking for an excuse. Self-monitoring, as an internal filter, did not allow «substandard» material. The women veterans carefully edited their memories, deliberately removed details related to the immediate impressions of the difficult everyday life on the front. The living story replaced with clippings from newspapers and magazines, and notes, subjected to severe Soviet censorship. As a result, the war was generalized, it did not seem terrible (Alexievich 2016a, 133). Under such conditions, S. Alexievich set herself the goal of writing a history of a real, unrefined «women's» war.

The stories of the heroines of «The unwomanly face of war», of course, did not much correlate with the official interpretation of the war, where the obligatory elements were heroism, feats, unconditional loyalty to the «socialist homeland», the leading role of the «native» Communist Party. These memories were striking in their frankness, due to the terrible difficulties that a woman (and these were usually 18-20-year-old girls) always faced at the front. It is not only about cold, hunger, mud, blood, death – the characteristic attributes that accompanied any participant in the war – but also, as already noted, about specific women's problems: unsuited to such tests, the female psyche (woman shot, killed, constantly saw death, fell under bombs, was in other extreme situations for a long time), colossal physical activity (had to lift heavy shells, make long marches, including in bad weather, constantly malnourished and sleep deprived), inability to be alone in the male team, men's uniforms, and, as a rule, much larger in size and so on. «I was ready for a feat, but I was not ready to put on a size forty-two instead of the thirty-fifth» (Alexievich 2016a, 96), – recalled the former anti-aircraft gunner Nona Smirnova. During the war, a woman was deprived of almost her most important female attributes – braids, dresses and even lingerie (Alexievich 2016a, 108). All these led to the fact that a woman stopped feeling like a woman, including physiologically. For a while, she even loses the ability to get pregnant, she had no female desires, her body seemed dead (Alexievich 2016a, 13).

The novel «The unwomanly face of war» lacks a clear structure, and a stable plot. To systematize the material (the work included more than 200 memoirs), the author divided it into 17 chapters (chapters), some of which have subsections. The first chapter – «A man bigger than war (From a diary-book)» – became the foreword of the writer, included in the 2004 edition. The author narrated about the difficulties she faced during the preparation of the book for publication in the Soviet era. Additionally, the section includes interviews that have not been published before. The names of the divisions became eloquent: «Seventeen years later», «From what the censorship threw out», «From what I threw away myself». The titles of other sections are self-explanatory: «I don't want to remember...», «Grow up, girls... you are still young...», «Only I returned to my mother», «We didn't shoot...», «A soldier was needed ... but I also wanted to be

beautiful . . . », «Young ladies! Do you know: the sapper platoon commander lives only two months», etc.

5 Zinky Boys

The novel «Zinky Boys» (1989), dedicated to the memory of those who returned from the Soviet-Afghan war in the zinc coffins, agrees with the suffering of their mothers and widows, who could not accept the loss of their sons and husbands. This novel is similar in structure (consists of six separate chapters) and in the form of material presentation (interviews with people affected by this war) to the novel «The unwomanly face of war». Common to both novels are the presence of archetypal images, which primarily serve as a combination of separate chapters.

6 The archetype of a woman-mother (wife) in the novels of S. Alexievich

The concept of archetype was introduced into scientific circulation in the twentieth century by swiss psychiatrist, educator and philosopher Carl Jung. According to the scientist, the archetype is the initial, oldest image embedded in the collective memory, which is manifested and transmitted over a long time (Jung 1991, 98-99).

The archetype of woman-mother (woman-wife) found its expression in the fiction and documentary novels «The unwomanly face of war» and «Zinky Boys».

As you know, the cult of the Great Mother played a major role in the history of different peoples. According to Greek mythology, both the whole world and the immortal gods, in particular the Earth-Gaia, arose from the boundless Chaos. Gaia gave life to everything. She gave birth to the blue Sky, the high Mountains, and the eternally noisy Sea – to everything (Kun 1993, 7-8).

In work «Psychological aspects of the archetype of the mother» Carl Jung emphasized its typical forms: «mother or grandmother of a particular person, godmother or mother-in-law, any woman with whom a person has some relationship, as well as a foster-mother and nurse; it can be the ancestor or representative of the white race – in the highest, figurative sense – a goddess, especially the mother of a God, a Virgin (for example, Demeter or Cora), Sophia (as a beloved mother...») (Jung 1996, 217).

The image of the mother in world literature is one of the traditional images. In Ukrainian, Russian and Belarusian literature, it became threefold: the image of the mother – the image of the Mother of God – the image of the Motherland. Being common in the mind of the reader, it creates an archetypal paradigm.

The novel «The unwomanly face of war» often describes an image of suffering mother accompanying her daughter to war. She does not want to let her go, but is forced to accept the terrible reality because she understands that the Motherland, which is in mortal danger, needs protection. «They did not cry, our mothers, who accompanied their daughters, they screamed» (Alexievich 2016a, 64), – says Eugene Sapronova, a former sergeant, a specialist in aircraft mechanics. The daughters run away from home to the war against the will of their mothers, as in the case with the former nurse Lidia Butko: «She cried, I also cried at night. However, ran away from home... Wrote to my mother from the military base. She could not bring me back from there...» (Alexievich 2016a, 63).

The average suffering mother consciously risked the life of her child for the sake of saving the Motherland because she understood that without her sacrifice it was impossible to perform an important combat mission. In the mass consciousness, such behavior of a woman-mother justified by the well-learned ideological attitude of that time, due to the appropriate upbringing in the family, kindergarten, school: «Motherland and we are one and the same» (Alexievich 2016a, 91-92). In this context, it is clear why the memories of the former partisan courier that she had to carry medicine and

bandages for the wounded in the diapers of her baby from the city to the forest many times do not cause any dissonance (Alexievich 2016a, 84). It was perilous, as she could be arrested at any time by the Nazi or the police, who usually seriously checked things, stuff, items, property, personal effects, personal belongings who entering and leaving the city. «When we pass the checkpoint, I will reach the forest, crying, crying. I'm screaming! – the woman shares her memories. – I feel sorry for baby. And in a day or two I will go again...» (Alexievich 2016a, 85). And another mother (an underground worker) carried her little daughter through the Nazi checkpoints, with body wrapped in postcards under the little dress (Alexievich 2016a, 91). It was striking when pregnant women carried mines «sidewise near the beating heart of the unborn child» (Alexievich 2016a, 91-92).

However, risking the life of her baby, such a mother still hoped for a happy end, unlike a woman who was forced to take her own child for the sake of the Motherland. She was pushed to take such a step by the desire to avoid or prevent more casualties. One of the heroines of the novel «The unwomanly face of war» recalls a horrible case in a partisan unit, when a radio operator had to drown her baby in a swamp do not attract the attention of the punitive expeditioners to the cry of a hungry child.

The grief of this mother is boundless, but her deed also fits perfectly into the paradigm of the then communist upbringing: both the woman herself and those who expected such a sacrifice from her. Although under those conditions, it was impossible to find another way out: «Punitive expeditioners are nearby. With dogs. If the dog scented, we will all die. The whole unit consists of thirty persons.< ...> The commander decides... No one dares to give an order to the mother, but she understood what to do» (Alexievich 2016a, 30).

The image of the Mother Keeper, which is associated with the Mother of God, cannot be ignored. She is a mother who is ready to protect, to give the warmth of her great soul not only to her own, but also to other people's children – defenders of the Motherland. Former nurse Olena Varyukhina tells how in 1942, in the bitter cold, the head of the hospital decided to organize a horse-drawn carriage to evacuate the wounded. «In the morning the carriage came. Only women rode horses. Home-woven blankets, covers, and pillows lay on the carriage, and some even had featherbeds. <...> Each woman chose her wounded, began to prepare for the trip and quietly shouted: «My dear son!» «Well, my darling», «Well, my pretty one!». Each brought some homemade food, even warm potatoes. They wrapped the wounded in their household items and carefully put them on carriage. I still have this prayer in my ears, it is a quiet female cry...» (Alexievich 2016a, 260-261).

The grief of a woman who lost her dearest in the war was also boundless. Many such mothers and widows did not want to believe the terrible truth and continued to wait for their son or daughter for the rest of their lives. However, even worse were women whose relatives or friends were «missing». They both did not receive any assistance from the state and were suspected that their husband or father had become a traitor. One of the interviewees shared her memories with the author of the novel «The unwomanly face of war». It was not until forty years after the war that the woman got know that her father had died heroically in battle, and that her mother had died with the label «enemy of the people» (Alexievich 2016a, 38-39) without waiting for the true information about her husband.

An important place occupied by the archetype of the mother, the wife-keeper and in the documentary fiction novel «Zinky Boys», in which the author told the story about the tragic pages of the unjustly silenced, misinterpreted Afghan war, which was twice as long as the World War II.

The «spirit of time» reflects through the disclosure of human psychology in «Zinky Boys». One review stated that «the material collected by the writer recreates a true epic of the

Afghan war – a chorus of voices that tell the truth about the tragedy» (Howard 1992, 236).

Unlike the novel «The unwomanly face of war», where the interviewees are mostly personalized, in «Zinky Boys» the names of narrators remain unnamed. The heroes of the novel are not only the young soldiers mentioned in the metaphorically formulated title, yesterday's boys, whose actions directed by absurd Soviet orders, ideology, but they died in Afghanistan in bloody clashes with those who defended their land and returned to their homeland in zinc coffins. Along with them, in the pages of the novel, the author presents women's images, which highlighted the problem of the trials that befell women during the war and in the postwar period. In the annotation to the book S. Alexievich translated into Ukrainian emphasizes that the novel «... Described the grief of “Zinky Boys” mothers who tried knowing the truth about how and for what their sons fought and died in Afghanistan» (Alexievich 2016b, 2).

Women in the works of S. Alexievich characterized by contradiction, self-sufficiency and inner strength due to difficult life experience (Waligórska-Olejniczak 2016, 98).

In «Zinky Boys», the writer revealed not only the images of suffering mothers and wives who tried in vain to find answers to the questions for which ideals their sons/husbands died and what were the factors of moral damage to the survivors. The novel also includes images of self-sacrificing doctors, nurses, and servicemen in Afghanistan, who, like soldiers, were haunted by a feeling of uselessness and redundancy in society after returning from a «foreign» war. J. Rodgers highlights, «the world which Alexievich describes is one in which everything was changing. That which was valued before, that which was trusted, was disappearing» (Rodgers 2019, 9).

The perspective of the events in the novel is through the subjective prism of their narrators. Peculiarities of women's texts were specific emotionality, disclosure of personal feelings, confessional tone. Most of them are mothers' confessions, which intertwine touching and tragic themes. In «Zinky Boys», the archetypal image of the mother is associated with care, protection, kindness, wisdom, spirituality, and higher justice.

However, in the analyzed text we do not consider it expedient drawing a parallel between the image of a Soviet mother and the macroimage of the Motherland, as in the book «The unwomanly face of war» because mothers gave birth to sons, gave them life, and the Motherland doomed them to death for elusive ideals, for a war «that no one needed» (Alexievich 2016b, 118). It is no coincidence that one of the narrators, a former soldier, called the Afghan war a “mothers” war: «Whose war was it? Mothers’ war, they fought. They nursed, prayed for our souls. However, all the people did not suffer. The people do not know...» (Alexievich 2016b, 143). After all, mothers who were the personification of spirituality for the children were first to realize the injustice of the state system, which had sported away their sons, making them partners in the crime.

The confirmation is available in several mothers' confessions, which testify to the fact of deep emotional trauma in the narrator. One of the mothers, a teacher, a socially and politically conscious person, desperately accuses the authorities: «I was proud of him... Additionally, now they say: a fatal mistake, no one needed it – neither we nor the Afghans. I used to hate those who killed Sasha. Now I hate the state that sent him there...» (Alexievich 2016b, 98).

The narrator-mother in the fiction-documentary novel «Zinky Boys» combines selfless love for sons, motherly prayer for them, hard awareness of loss, desire to keep the memory of children, as well as unspeakable pain and uncontrollable desire to know the truth about their death, feelings of resentment for their children. The fact that over time their sons ceased to be considered heroes, and instead, unlike World War II veterans, they were called victims of political error caused pain.

The archetypal image of the mother in the novel by S. Alexievich primarily is based on the texts narrated by the «voices» of women mothers. We can identify various variations, models in the described life experiences, emotional experiences, associations, feelings, moral and psychological characteristics associated with life before and after the war as follows: happy mother, sufferer mother, mother-prophetess, mother-rescuer, mother-keeper, etc. They associated with motives for happy motherhood, pride and, conversely, shame for the child, unrecognizable son, enlightenment, mother's prayer, anticipation of death, waiting for a son/daughter, refusal to believe in his / her death, the motive of petrification of the mother's soul, her alienation from society, the search for truth, feelings of love for another's child. Let us consider in more detail the archetypal image of the mother, its possible variations and related motives in the fiction-documentary novel by S. Alexievich «Zinky Boys».

The prologue of the book describes an impressive story about the suffering mother whose son, a veteran of the war in Afghanistan, committed murder after returning to the Soviet Union (Alexievich 2016b, 4-11). The author begins the synthetic biography of suffering mothers from the image of this mother, her image appears both close and at the same time opposed to others. The tragedy that occurred in the woman's family reflects the damaging effect of the war on the mental state of man, which consequences provoke moral degradation, and at the same time allows the writer to reveal the special essence of the image of the mother.

The binary opposition «son – murderer» does not fit into the mind of a woman who did not teach her child to kill. The antithesis of the image of the son before and after the war sounds the most tragic in the confession of this mother. The young man, who was fond of ballroom dancing, learned to kill during the war, and after that he applied this skill in a peaceful life. S. Alexievich deeply revealed the psychology of a mother through details: her kitchen hatchet is an instrument of murder, dog barking is an association with the prison, where the son was, a dream that foretold separation, the singing of night birds as an alternative to human voices, which a mother who was ashamed of her murderous son was hard to hear.

The drama of this suffering mother intensified by the tragic gap between her desire to send her son to the army, despite the postponement, dreams of seeing him mature and cruel reality in which she eventually did not recognize her own child: «Another person was returned to me... It was not my son» (Alexievich 2016b, 7).

The grief of a woman takes on a different hue than the misery of mothers who lost their sons in the war. She suffers from the moral death of her child. The inability to come to terms with the terrible crime of the dearest person and the reaction to this act of society or the desire to remove the murderous son from his own living space makes her even jealous of those mothers whose children died. The woman wishes herself «happiness», which is a heavy grief for others: to sit near her son's grave, to carry flowers to the cemetery.

In subsequent motherly confessions, which evoke the strongest feelings, the pre-war past or the past, not associated with a sense of imminent war, the mortal danger that awaits their children, is contrasted with modern life, permeated with the unspeakable pain of loss.

The image of a happy mother emerges from the memories. Often mothers' confessions in «Zinky Boys» begin with mentions of the fact of the birth of a son for a happy life, which, unfortunately, ended early. Women remember the smallest details related to the childhood and adolescence of their sons, their first achievements, successes (motif of happy motherhood), repeatedly emphasize the tenderness of temperament, unpreparedness for brutal war of their children, future soldiers, one of whom, for example, feared childhood spider, the second loved to dance and collect stamps, the third – a fragile boy –

played with girls. It was hard for mothers who themselves embodied peace, mercy, and great love, who knew their children were homely and affectionate, that they were capable of killing «He was not for war. We loved him very much, cherished him» (Alexievich 2016b, 168).

The image of a single suffering mother who, without male support, sacrificing her personal life, raising her son and losing him in Afghanistan, is the most dramatic. A refrain in one of the confessions of single mothers is the address to the deceased son: «You are my sun!», which emphasizes the great maternal sacrificial love and tenderness, hope for the child as a support in life and loneliness of a woman for whom the only son was the center of the Universe and his loss made her life senseless.

The motive of maternal selfishness, possessive attitude to the child in some stories of single mothers became an expression of ambivalence, mental state of dichotomy: «Probably because we loved each other so much that we had no one else. I do not know how I would give him to the wife. I would not have survived...» (Alexievich 2016b, 136-137). The coexistence of opposing feelings, in this case, maternal sacrifice and selfishness, is perceived in this narrative as a woman's search for peace of mind in thinking about a probable but already impossible future.

The archetype of Mother Keeper is conceptualized in the work of S. Alexievich in the images of mothers who patiently waited for their children, created home comfort for them, worried about house chores («he had a month left until the end of the service. I bought shirts, scarves, shoes. They are still in the wardrobe» (Alexievich 2016b, 81)). And at a time when the Motherland has dishonored the names of their sons, they have become their defenders (Alexievich 2016b, 338) and keepers of the historical memory of Afghan soldiers.

The image of the mother keeper, who was kneeling in front of the military enlistment office, kneeling in front of the military commissar, begging not to send her single son, not ready for military service, Afghanistan, but never waiting for humanity and mercy, echoes the image of the Mother of God who was always afraid for the life of her Son. Like the Mother of God, the mothers of the perished young men carried their cross with dignity, bravely overcoming their grief, telling about the lives of their sons, praying for them.

«Tears and prayers are typical female means of counteracting evil and violence» (Yacenko 2013, 187). However, as S. Alexievich convinces with the life tragedies revealed in the book, in the conditions of state dictatorship and war, they did not save soldiers from death. In today's mercantile world, a mother, forgetting everything but her child, «did not understand that money should save her son, <...> saved him by soul» (Alexievich 2016b, 186).

The image of the mother-prophetess should be revealed in S. Alexievich's novel «Zinky Boys» who is associated with the mythical Cassandra, who foretells misfortune, becomes a harbinger of truth. An educated woman, a librarian, this heroine S. Alexievich taught her son spirituality, raised him on ideal patriotic artistic images, but when she learned about going to Afghanistan, she uttered prophetic words: «You will be killed there not for the homeland, you will be killed for no reason. ... Just for nothing. Can the motherland send its best sons to their deaths without a big idea» (Alexievich 2016b, 53). However, the ideology imposed on the Soviet youth, the upbringing in a patriotic spirit, guided the young man's path to the Afghan war, contrary to the tragic truth revealed to him by his mother.

The image of another woman, whose son was not trained in the army and died in the first month of service in Afghanistan, has a motive of insight: «To whom did I give my son? Who did I entrust he to? Didn't they even make him a soldier?» (Alexievich 2016b, 171).

Common to the confessions of suffering mothers in the book «Zinky Boys» were the motive of anticipation of child death.

One of the narrators, watering the flowers every morning, dropped the pots, which broke, and the house smelled of damp earth (Alexievich 2016b, 171); the second took off her earrings and ring on the day of her son's death (Alexievich 2016b, 171), and the third, not yet aware of the tragic news, could not wear a light dress going to work (Alexievich 2016b, 272).

Maternal premonition of tragedy is expressed not only at the level of the conscious (in thoughts, actions), but also the subconscious – in dreams, which acquire not only psychological but also philosophical and symbolic meaning – eternal separation from the dearest person: «On March 4 I had a dream ... A large field, and white flashes all over the field. Something explodes ... And long white ribbons stretch ... My Sasha runs, runs ... Rushes ... There is no place for him to hide ... And there it broke out ... And there ... I run after him. I want to overtake him. I want me to be ahead, and he is behind me ... <...> But I did not catch up with him...» (Alexievich 2016b, 98).

Expressive in the confessions of the narrators were the transition from a restrained tone in the list of real life facts to dramatic speech that conveys tense scenes: the arrival of the mother of the military with terrible news, the funeral, the existence of a woman after losing a child. These scenes are etched in the minds of the narrators forever, leaving an incurable psychological trauma.

Each mother, due to individual psychological characteristics, perceived the news of the child's death differently. The woman first tried to escape, to escape the «truth» brought to her by the military, to postpone the irreparable tragic message, and realizing what she heard, like the mythical Fury, she shouted at the person she considered the first offender, the personification of grief – the military commissar, recently indifferent to her pleas, and now openly sympathetic to her: «You are all in the blood of my son! You are all in my son's blood!» (Alexievich 2016b, 188). A strong-minded mother, like the Mother of God, went out to meet the bearers of irreparable disaster with the words: «Do not say! Do not tell me anything! I hate you! Give me only the body of my son...» (Alexievich 2016b, 172). The woman who represented the mother-keeper, in her sacrifice «was once again ready to give them one son to save another» (Alexievich 2016b, 54).

The image of a mother burned and angry in her misfortune is presented through the prism of the consciousness of a gray-haired major, battalion commander. The woman he met in the cemetery near the «Afghan» graves seemed annoyed to him that he had survived. Instead, her young son has never shaved and will never do so again.

The death of children deprived mothers of dreams of the future, took away the desire to live. With their irreparable grief and his inner experience, which led to external changes, women in the book of S. Alexievich associated with the image known in Roman mythology and world literature Niobium, who after the death of their own children turned to stone. Thus, the motive of petrification of the mother's soul, her alienation from society, unable to deeply comprehend personal tragedy, is present in the confession of a woman who lost her single daughter-nurse in the war: «My soul is closed... I do not want to see people. I prefer to be alone» (Alexievich 2016b, 231).

Authorities' interference in the funeral rites, the inability of mothers to see for the last time children whose bodies had returned home in zinc coffins, deepened the psychological trauma: «I could not kiss him one last time. Stroke his hair. I didn't even see what he was dressed» (Alexievich 2016b, 140). Zinc coffins and non-disclosure of military details of the soldiers' deaths caused alienation, self-deception, hope for a mistake in reporting the death of a son / daughter and further mental torture of suffering women in vain waiting for the return of children: «It seems to me that I buried an iron box and my son is alive somewhere...» (Alexievich 2016b, 134). The writer recorded the suffering of mothers after the burial of children. They are comfortable near graves, where they communicate with children as if they were alive.

Weaker physically but stronger spiritually, women were forced to support their husbands, who could not always overcome the feeling of loss and ended their lives by suicide. Instead, burned mothers had no right to weak-mindedness, as they remained the Keepers of their families, preserving the memory of their dead children. Someone's emotional wounds healed by love for an adopted child, similar to his own. Thanks to this love, the woman regained her lost happy motherhood and protected it from possible encroachments: «We have regained our son ... Do you understand me? But I swore and forced my husband to swear that he would never be a soldier ... Never !!» (Alexievich 2016b, 99). The most painful for mothers, as confirmed by the memoirs collected by S. Alexievich, was the lack of confidence that the death of their children was not senseless, as well as the futility of finding the true answer, whether their children were really heroes and why they died (Alexievich 2016b, 249).

The writer did not miss the images of Afghan women, suffering mothers, whose children were dying, became innocent victims of the armed conflict. The episode of a young Afghan woman crying over a murdered child was impressive (Alexievich 2016b, 19). Afghan women are given much less attention in the pages of the work, they appear only in episodic memoirs of soldiers, nurses, the author herself, who visited Afghanistan and saw their suffering with her own eyes. However, the book states that every mother gives birth to a child for a happy and peaceful life, so they all deserve deep respect and compassion for their irreparable grief.

According to S. Alexievich in her work «Zinky Boys», a difficult fate befell not only the men who fought. Many trials befell their wives, who accompanied their husbands to imminent death, faithfully waited for them, prayed for their lives and salvation, took care of their children, parents, and so on. These are archetypal images of a woman-keeper, suffering woman, who in the work «Zinky Boys» is represented through the images of wives who accompany men to war, but later receive news of their death, live alone for the rest of their lives, remaining faithful to their dead husbands. These patriarchal images symbolize the traditional «weakness» of a woman whose fate is specifically female.

One of the women-wives mentioned that her husband «was a man loyal to the army», did not discuss the orders and did not hesitate to go to Afghanistan, leaving his young wife with a child. She devotedly waited for her husband's return, raised a daughter and wrote three or four letters a day. She desperately pushed the servicemen who brought her the news of his death out of the apartment, did not believe in her husband's death, that his body lay in a zinc coffin. In desperation she cried: «What for? What have you done wrong to anyone?» (Alexievich 2016b, 165). This «incomprehensible» war for the fallen soldiers ended, and for their wives and children it continued: «Our children are the most unhappy, they will be responsible for everything» (Alexievich 2016b, 167).

Wives were not even told where their military husbands had been sent. One such woman told her story to S. Alexievich. Fate presented to her only five years of happy marriage, and then a military husband was sent to Afghanistan. His wife learned to wait, prayed, kissed his letters. During one of his vacations, she recalled, he said: «I do not want to die for another's motherland» (Alexievich 2016b, 254). When the news of her husband's death came, she did not believe, did not say this fact aloud, hoping for a mistake. The horrible thing, according to the woman, was then – «to get used to the idea that you do not have to wait, there is no one to wait for ...». Remaining a widow at the age of twenty-four, she never married, raised a daughter herself, and had no place or time in the house for the holiday. The woman sadly mentions that she «loved the dead for eight years» (Alexievich 2016b, 255).

7 Conclusion

Thus, in her documentary novels «The unwomanly face of war» and «Zinky Boys» S. Alexievich through the prism of the women perception represented two wars in which the former Soviet Union participated at different times: the German-Soviet and Soviet-Afghan. These wars separated more than three decades, but on the one hand, they were in many ways similar (the crippled psyche of the women who took part in them, the emotional pain of mothers and wives due to the loss of a loved one, the absurdity of war as the fact that for many centuries people have not learned to resolve conflicts peacefully), and on the other – had a significant difference. This difference is primarily because participation in the German-Soviet war, which in the Soviet Union was called the Great Patriotic War, was usually perceived as a sacred civic duty related to the protection of the Motherland, while participation in the Soviet-Afghan military conflict was forced and in some places provided for the solution by its participants of their own problems of a material or personal nature.

Thanks to the organic combination of realistic details with deep reproduction of impressions, the most subtle feelings of the interviewees, the writer conveyed the idea of a strong-minded, treacherous woman-keeper (mother, wife) about the dead.

It is worth noting that in both novels – «The unwomanly face of war» and «Zinky Boys» – S. Alexievich gave archetypal image of a woman-keeper of modern sound, individual features, convincing the reader that this image is always relevant, because every talented artist revealed not only its original meaning, but also created something new that was close to the man of each era.

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