



**THE TEST OF CHARACTER BY WAR AND TIME: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS
OF V. RASPUTIN'S «LIVE AND REMEMBER», CH. AITMATOV'S «FACE TO FACE»
AND S. AHMAD'S «HORIZON»**

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Abstract

This article undertakes a detailed comparative analysis of three notable works of Soviet literature created during the Thaw and Stagnation periods: Valentin Rasputin's novella «Live and Remember», Chingiz Aitmatov's novella «Face to Face», and Said Ahmad's novel «Horizon». The primary focus is on the problem of moral choice that the characters face in the difficult circumstances of wartime and in subsequent historical periods. The spatio-temporal characteristics of each work are examined. The article notes how the authors depict the internal conflict between a sense of duty and the voice of conscience, and what artistic means they use to convey this drama. The theme of changes in human character under the influence of trauma and upheaval, both military and social, is also considered. By analyzing these changes, we strive to understand what remains immutable in a person and which values prove to be the most resilient.

Keywords: War prose, moral choice, chronotope, desertion, conscience, memory, Rasputin, Aitmatov, Ahmad.

Introduction

Our research leads us to the conclusion that, despite the differences in the national cultures represented by the authors, they are united by a common humanistic position. All three writers place the individual at the center of their attention - their inner world, their moral quests. They show how difficult it can be to make the right choice, how easy it is to stumble, and how crucial it is to preserve one's humanity even in the most inhuman conditions. The works «Live and Remember», «Face to Face», and «Horizon» provide an opportunity to see different facets of a single great historical era and to understand its contradictions and tragedies through the prism of personal destinies. Studying these works not only helps to better understand Soviet literature but also encourages reflection on the timeless questions of morality, responsibility, and human dignity.

Literature about the Great Patriotic War plays a decisive role in the culture of the post-Soviet space. While composers in the 1940s emphasized heroism and patriotism, in the 1960s and 1970s, literature became more realistic and profound. This period is often called «lieutenant prose» or the «prose of trench truth». It delves into the inner life of a person confronting death and moral dilemmas [1]. In this context, a comparison of works by authors from different national schools, united by a common cultural language and similar existential questions, is of particular value.

The object of this study consists of three works: V. Rasputin's «Live and Remember» (1974), Ch. Aitmatov's «Face to Face» (1957), and S. Akhmad's «Horizon» (1970s). These works are connected by a shared cultural language and vital existential questions. We examine how these authors depict the trials of the individual in the face of war and time.

The goal of our research is to identify commonalities and specific features in the interpretation of a person's moral responsibility to humanity and conscience in these works. To this end, we have set three objectives:

1. To analyze the motivations behind the main characters' actions.
2. To investigate the role of the chronotope in revealing the characters' psychology.
3. To identify the specifics of the author's position on moral decline and redemption.

We employ the comparative-historical method, the cultural-historical approach, and elements of psychoanalytic criticism [2].

V. Rasputin's novella «Live and Remember» is a pinnacle of Russian «village prose» that touches upon military themes. The main character, Andrey Guskov, deserts and becomes an outcast in his community. Rasputin explores the ontology of betrayal, showing that desertion is not merely a criminal offense but a severance of ties with one's kin, land, and ancestral memory.

Rasputin models a situation of total isolation. After returning home, Andrey finds himself cut off from society: «He became, as it were, not a person, but a shadow, a ghost, living alongside people, but not among them» [3]. The writer explores the ontology of betrayal. In the context of the work, desertion is not simply a criminally punishable act, but a metaphysical severing of ties with one's kin, land, and the memory of one's ancestors.

The character of Nastya, Andrey's wife, plays a central role in the novella. Her tragedy is compounded by the fact that she must both conceal her husband's crime and become his accomplice. Rasputin establishes an unbreakable moral bond between the spouses: «The husband's guilt became the wife's guilt, for they were one flesh» [4]. The novella's chronotope is closed: the action takes place in the remote Siberian taiga, which symbolizes the dead-end path of the deserter. For Andrey, time stands still; he is removed from the historical process. The author's position is unequivocal: a life built on betrayal has no right to exist.

The author's position is unequivocal: a life purchased at the cost of betrayal has no right to exist. The work's finale, in which Nastya loses her child and her sanity while Andrey remains alive but spiritually dead, confirms the thesis that physical survival is not equivalent to a moral life. As researcher V. Oskotsky notes, «Rasputin judges not by a military court, but by the court of conscience, which is more terrifying than any tribunal» [5].

The conflict between duty and humanity in Ch. Aitmatov's novella «Face to Face». Chingiz Aitmatov's early novella «Face to Face» (1957) raises similar questions, albeit in a different cultural context. The main character, Kasym, also finds himself in a situation where he must choose between military duty and personal circumstances. However, unlike Guskov, Kasym does not desert in the full sense of the word, but rather finds himself in a situation where carrying out an order conflicts with humanism.

Ch. Aitmatov's novella «Face to Face» raises universal questions, but in a different cultural format. The main character, Kasym, finds himself in a situation of choosing between military duty and personal circumstances. Aitmatov focuses on the psychology of a person caught «between a rock and a hard place». The situation is exacerbated by the presence of the enemy, who also turns out to be a man not

devoid of strength. The work expresses the idea: «War tests not only the strength of weapons, but also the strength of the spirit» [6].

Unlike Rasputin, Aitmatov demonstrates a greater degree of psychological subtlety. Kasym is faced with the necessity of choosing between formal duty and an easy life.

The novella's chronotope is open: the action takes place in the mountains, a space that symbolizes both freedom and danger. Time flows linearly, but moments of choice are stretched out in the hero's perception. Aitmatov uses the technique of internal monologue to reveal the character's doubts: «What is duty? Blind obedience or a conscious choice?» [7].

Researcher L. Anninsky notes that «in this novella, Aitmatov lays the foundation for his future philosophical realism, where the national grows into the universal» [8]. The ordeal of war is shown here as a catalyst for personal maturation, even if this maturation is accompanied by tragedy.

S. Ahmad's novel «Horizon» represents the Uzbek school of war prose. While Rasputin and Aitmatov focus on the moment of greatest trial, Ahmad develops a broader temporal perspective, considering the consequences of war in peacetime. The title of the work is symbolic: «Horizon» signifies a goal, an approach, but also the semblance of a boundary.

Ahmad's heroes have passed through the crucible of war, but serious trials await them in the post-war era. The writer explores the problems of memory and forgetting. The war recedes, but the scars on the soul remain forever, defining the horizon of human potential. [9]. The novel raises the theme of a soldier's return to peaceful labor and the difficulties of adaptation.

A specific feature of S. Ahmad's work is its heightened attention to the collective principle. The hero's personality is revealed through his connection with the mahalla, his clan, and society. Individual betrayal or heroism is viewed through the prism of public opinion and traditions. This distinguishes his work from Rasputin's more individualistic prose.

In «Horizon», time acts as both a healing and a judging force. Years pass and generations change, but the moral lesson of the war remains relevant. Ahmad writes: «A person is measured not by years, but by what they leave behind» [10]. Researchers of Uzbek literature note that S. Ahmad's work is characterized by «deep psychologism and a commitment to humanistic ideals» [11].

A comparison with «Live and Remember» shows that while for Rasputin memory becomes a punishment (Nastyona cannot forget), for Ahmad memory becomes the basis for restoration and creation.

The analysis conducted makes it possible to identify common features and significant differences in the three authors' interpretation of the theme of war and time.

Comparative Analysis of Works

Parameters	V. Rasputin «Live and Remember»	Ch.Aitmatov «Face to Face»	S. Ahmad «Horizon»
Type of conflict	Internal (conscience vs instinct)	External and internal (duty vs humanism)	Social-temporal (past vs future)
Chronotope	Closed (taiga, isolation)	Open (mountains, road)	Extended (years, generations)
Selection result	Tragic (the death of the soul)	Dramatic (creation)	Constructive (coping)
Role of memory	Punitive	Formative	Saving



[12]

What was common to all three was a rejection of immorality. War reveals a person's true nature. However, the authors view this differently. Rasputin believes that betrayal cannot be justified. Aitmatov seeks the cause of actions in the complexity of human nature. Ahmad considers it important not only how a person behaves during the war, but also how they live after it.

The role of women is also important. In Rasputin's work, a woman becomes the victim of a male perpetrator. For Aitmatov, women are often the bearers of moral authority. For Ahmad, a woman is the keeper of the hearth, ensuring the continuation of life despite the war [13].

The philosophical depth is conditioned by an appeal to eternal questions. Literature about war becomes literature about life when it rises above descriptions of daily existence to make broader generalizations [14]. All three authors achieve this level.

The language also drew attention. Rasputin uses rich, colloquial speech, which defines the connection to the land. Aitmatov weaves in Kyrgyz proverbs and legends, resulting in a cohesive, mythological narrative. Ahmad draws on the traditions of the Eastern parable and the Uzbek epic, which imbues his prose with a particular wisdom [15].

The theme of time is common to all three authors. In «Live and Remember», time is cyclical, but for the protagonist, it is destructive. In «Face to Face», time is compressed into the moment of the gunshot, of decisions. In «Horizon», time epically reflects the destinies of several characters.

Memory in military prose is not just a recollection; it is an active moral effort [16]. For Rasputin, memory is a pain that does not subside. For Ahmad, memory is the foundation of the future.

The works of the 1960s-70s can be seen as early artistic attempts to reflect on post-traumatic stress disorder. The heroes cannot return to a «normal» life because the war has changed them [17].

The comparison shows that Russian, Kyrgyz, and Uzbek literature of this period developed within a single cultural field, addressing common humanistic problems. National character did not create division, but rather enriched the overall worldview. As E. Dobrenko points out, «the Soviet literary canon allowed different voices to be heard within the framework of a single symphony» [18].

The comparative analysis of V. Rasputin's novella «Live and Remember», Ch. Aitmatov's «Face to Face», and S. Ahmad's novel «Horizon» allows us to draw the following conclusions:

1. In these works, war is considered not as a backdrop, but as an existential test that reveals the true essence of the individual.
2. The heroes' moral choice is determined by the category of conscience, which prevails over formal law or the instinct for self-preservation.
3. The chronotopic models differ: from the confined space of isolation (Rasputin) to extended historical time (Ahmad), reflecting different aspects of the perception of war trauma.
4. Despite their national specificities, the authors are united in their main assertion: that a person is accountable for their actions before eternity.

The works of V. Rasputin, Ch. Aitmatov, and S. Ahmad remain relevant documents of their era, warning against the danger of moral degradation. They affirm the priority of universal human values over ideological dogmas. Further research could be directed toward studying the reception of these works in contemporary popular culture and educational practices.

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