

Signs of the Collapse and Social Transformation of Russia in *The Killer and His Little Friend* by Zakhar Prilepin

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After leaving behind its golden and silver ages (19th and 20th centuries), Russian literature entered a new stage. The events of the 80's and 90's of the twentieth century in Russia greatly affected literary events, which was reflected in the works of many writers of this period. In this paper, with a semiotic analysis of the story *The killer and his little friend* by Zakhar Prilepin, the status of the society after the collapse of Russia is examined. Several articles have been written about contemporary Russian literature and its features. *Norouzi in the article Developments in Russian Literature in the 20th and 21st Centuries* presented a general overview of the 20th-century literature structure, focusing on the last three decades of the 20th century and the threshold of the 21st century. In her article *The Literary Process of Today*, Alla Balshakova examined the literary results of the first decade of the twenty-first century. Another article by Alla Balshakova, entitled *Russian Literature on the Borders of the 20th and 21st Century: New Priorities*, is important in recognizing the status of literature in the era of parastria. Zakhar Prilepin is a contemporary Russian writer. In his nationalist stories, every attempt to

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save the fatherland is praised. With his first novel, *Pathology* (2005), Prilepin seriously entered the field of literature and soon became famous. In his works, Zakhar Prilepin criticizes the many abnormalities that occurred as a result of political and social developments in Russia. Zakhar Prilepin is also very active not only in the field of literature, but also in politics and social issues of the day. In September 2014, he traveled as a war correspondent to the republics of Duntec and Lugansk. From February 2017, Prilepin assumed the position of deputy commander of the Special Forces Police Battalion in the Dynasties People's Army. Prilepin's social and political activities and concerns are reflected in his stories and novels. Only some of the works of Zakhar Prilepin have been studied in the Russian literary space. So far, no independent research does not seem to have been done on the story *The killer and his little friend*, especially in terms of semiotics. In the story *The killer and his little friend*, issues such as the Chechen war, the importance of Russian identity in the new Russia, the loss of national identity, hope for a clear future for Russia are presented. This story is the story of three special forces of the Russian Police who, during the war between Russia and Chechnya, spent some time as helping forces in Grozny, the capital of the Chechen Republic. The narrator, who is one of these three, is witnessing the actions and the adventures of his two contemporaries: Neanderthal and Gnome. Neanderthal is a vigorous soldier, humorous, fearless, sometimes desperate and devoted, sometimes friendly, while his friend, Gnome does not look like him in terms of appearance or morality. Gnome loves the entertainment of his great friend and loves him with interest and always accompanies him. This raises the anger of Neanderthal's wife, who never has a positive view of the dwarf and his friendship with her husband. The judgment about Neanderthal is very dual. He easily kills the captured Chechens and at the same time endangers his life to save his friends. Neanderthal was killed before he returned home, after he was hit hard after a hard operation.

A few months after the funeral, Neanderthal's property is stolen. All the money, including Neanderthal blood money, and a car parked in the garage. The stealer is found: Gnome! Neanderthal's wife, after knowing this, kept her calm despite her constant hatred of this person, and ignores his guilt solely because Gnome was a friend of her late husband. After a semiotic analysis of this story, the reflection of the social and moral collapse and the necessity of the emergence of new heroes to save Russia is evident. For Zakhar Prilupin, serving Russia and preserving Russia's

identity is the highest goal, and any means to achieve it can be justified. Because of this idea, the death of humans is ignored by Prilepin in *The killer and his little friend*. In this story, he talks about the Chechen war, the Russian identity and its significance in contemporary Russia, the lack of national identity for many Russians, and hope for a clearer future. The author draws the readers' attention to the hope that sprouts in the heart of the hero's wife. From the beginning, the author insists on Neanderthal's identity by giving him his name and repeating it throughout the story. The Gnome, with the introduction as the father of Neanderthal, attempts to joke and seeks to compensate for this poverty of identity. Gnome and Neanderthal's friendship despite their obvious moral, personality and behavioral differences remain a key question. Between identity and lack of identity is a narrow border, and the author points to this issue by showing Neanderthal's proximity and friendship with the Gnome. He is trying to alert contemporary humans of the danger of falling into the abyssal abyss. Gnome and the likes of him who suffer from identity crisis can be dangerous to a home, that is Russia, and appear in traitorous clothes. The story *The killer and his little friend* with all the dark and bright points has an optimistic end.

Keywords: Contemporary Russian Literature, Zakhar Prilupin, The Killer And His Little Friend, National Identity, New Heroes.