

Title: Finding Existential Wholeness Outside of Ideology in Boris Vasil'ev's *Tomorrow Was the War*

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Abstract:

Following the film adaptation of his novel *A Zori Zdes' Tikhie* (*The Dawns Here Are Quiet*) by Stanislav Rostotsky in 1972, Boris Vasil'ev became one of the most popular writers in the Soviet Union. However, this popularization of Vasil'ev's oeuvre through film adaptation also resulted in a stereotypical and simplified view of his prose. While Vasil'ev's works, like the novel *Zavtra Byla Voina* (*Tomorrow Was the War*), which is frequently adapted for the theater, remain popular and seem to communicate important messages to contemporary Russians, currently, Vasil'ev's scholarship is very limited both in Russia and in the West. In this paper, I aim to fill this critical lacuna by exploring the novel *Tomorrow Was the War* through a psychoanalytic lens. As I suggest, Vasil'ev eschews the conventions of official Soviet literature by exploring problems such as the relationship between body and language, the phenomenology of memory, and the impact of parental image on the formation of personality. Using the theoretical constructs developed about post-Holocaust narratives by Lawrence Langer to study the predicament of narrative gaps, I investigate unfinished utterances and time dislocations in Vasil'ev's *Tomorrow Was the War*. I argue that both the narrator and the main heroine, Iskra, are seeking existential wholeness: while the narrator is trying to restore the wholeness of memory disturbed by traumatic war experiences, his heroine seeks the wholeness of consciousness in defiance to the official message of Stalinist propaganda.