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**ALEXANDER FAYNBERG'S SURVIVAL NARRATIVE IN THE PAMIR MOUNTAINS:
HUMAN ENDURANCE, INSTINCT, AND ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITY**

ODILOVA CHAROSXON SHAVKATJON KIZI

UZBEKISTAN STATE WORLD LANGUAGES UNIVERSITY

ENGLISH FACULTY №2

ANNOTATION

This article provides an in-depth literary analysis of Alexander Faynberg's survival narrative set in the Pamir Mountains. The study examines the story within the framework of Soviet adventure literature, focusing on themes of survival, instinct versus discipline, human–animal relationships, and nature's indifference. Through close textual analysis, the article explores narrative techniques, symbolism, and psychological dimensions, highlighting how Faynberg challenges the traditional Soviet ideal of absolute human control over nature. The research draws on literary theory and scholarly sources to demonstrate the story's lasting relevance in contemporary discussions of resilience, environmental awareness, and human vulnerability.

Keywords

survival literature, Alexander Faynberg, Soviet adventure prose, human and animal relationship, nature symbolism, instinct and discipline.

АННОТАЦИЯ

Статья представляет собой глубокий литературный анализ повествования Александра Файнберга о выживании в Памирских горах. Исследование рассматривает рассказ в контексте советской приключенческой литературы, сосредотачиваясь на темах выживания, противостоянии инстинкта и дисциплины, взаимоотношениях человека и животных и равнодушии природы. Путем тщательного анализа текста рассматриваются нарративные техники, символизм и психологические аспекты, подчеркивая, как Файнберг ставит под вопрос традиционный советский идеал полного контроля человека над природой. Исследование опирается на литературную теорию и научные источники, демонстрируя актуальность рассказа в современных дискуссиях о выносливости, экологическом сознании и уязвимости человека.

Ключевые слова

литература о выживании, Александр Файнберг, советская приключенческая проза, взаимоотношения человека и животных, символизм природы, инстинкт и дисциплина.

INTRODUCTION

Survival literature traditionally investigates the fragile boundary between human resilience and the indifferent forces of nature. Within this genre, Alexander Faynberg's story set in the harsh and mountainous terrain of the Pamirs occupies a significant place. Rather than portraying nature as something to be fully conquered through knowledge and discipline, Faynberg presents survival as a continuous negotiation between professional training, instinctive behavior, and ethical responsibility. The narrative centers on a young topographer whose internal conflict mirrors the external dangers of thirst, exhaustion, and loss of control. Through vivid imagery and first-person narration, the story transforms a scientific expedition into a psychological and

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philosophical exploration of human limitation. This article expands upon the original analysis by deepening thematic interpretation, broadening contextual discussion, and integrating scholarly sources directly into the text (Karimov, 2015).

Background

Alexander Faynberg and Soviet Adventure Literature Alexander Faynberg is widely recognized as a writer who bridged poetic sensitivity with documentary realism. His works frequently depict young professionals engaged in scientific or exploratory missions in remote regions, emphasizing perseverance, responsibility, and collective effort. Such themes align with the broader tradition of Soviet adventure literature, which often functioned as an ideological medium promoting dedication to progress and mastery over nature (Oripov, 2005).

However, Faynberg's prose distinguishes itself by its attention to psychological fragility. While Soviet literature traditionally highlighted discipline and control, Faynberg allows space for fear, doubt, and instinct. According to Yo'ldosh (2016), this human-centered realism marks an important shift in late Soviet prose, where characters are no longer idealized heroes but individuals shaped by error and experience. The story analyzed in this article exemplifies this tendency by portraying topographic surveying not as triumph, but as endurance under constant threat.

Summary of the Story

The narrative follows a young topographer traveling through the Pamir Mountains with his companions Anvar and Borya. Their mission involves conducting precise land measurements using professional surveying equipment. The group travels on horseback, carrying provisions calculated for a ten-day expedition, including food and water for both humans and animals.

As the journey progresses, environmental conditions grow increasingly severe. The high altitude, dry climate, and steep terrain gradually exhaust the expedition members. Thirst becomes the dominant challenge, undermining physical strength and mental clarity. When the group finally reaches a water source, desperation overrides professional discipline. Ignoring established hydration rules, they drink greedily.

The horses, driven by the same overwhelming thirst, rush toward the watering trough. This loss of control culminates in a violent fight between the two stallions, Vorobey and Festival. The protagonist experiences intense anxiety, aware that he bears official responsibility for the animals and could face disciplinary consequences. With collective effort, the companions manage to restore order and prevent disaster.

After completing their mission, the group returns to base and drinks directly from the river with desperate relief. In the final scene, the protagonist notices the horses watching them attentively, interpreting their gaze as an expression of shared endurance. This symbolic ending emphasizes the unity of humans and animals in the face of natural hardship (Faynberg, 1986).

Literary Analysis

Themes Survival and Human Endurance The central theme of the story is survival under extreme conditions. Faynberg depicts survival as a process marked by vulnerability rather than heroism. Physical exhaustion and dehydration reveal the limits of human endurance, while reckless behavior at the water source demonstrates how survival instincts can overpower rational decision-making (Quronov, Mamajonov & Sheraliyeva, 2010).

Instinct versus Discipline

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A key tension in the narrative arises between professional discipline and primal instinct. Although the characters are trained specialists, thirst compels them to abandon caution. The horses' instinctive aggression mirrors human loss of control, suggesting that under extreme pressure, the boundary between rational human behavior and animal instinct becomes indistinct. This idea subtly challenges the Soviet ideal of absolute discipline (Yo'ldosh, 2016).

Human and Animal Relationship

The horses are portrayed as active participants in the expedition rather than passive tools. They endure the same hardships as their riders, and their suffering is closely linked to human survival. The final scene, where animals and humans share a moment of relief, reinforces an ethical perspective that emphasizes responsibility and interdependence between species (Meliqo'ziyeva, 2023).

Nature's Indifference

Nature in the story is vast, powerful, and emotionally indifferent. The Pamir Mountains neither assist nor oppose the characters; they simply exist according to their own laws. Sudden darkness, scarce water, and unpredictable danger highlight the necessity of respect and adaptation rather than domination (Karimov, 2015).

Narrative Techniques and Symbolism

The first-person perspective allows direct access to the protagonist's psychological state, intensifying emotional engagement. Rich sensory imagery—cracked lips, burning thirst, and the violent struggle of horses—creates a vivid and immersive atmosphere. Symbolically, water represents both life and danger, while the mountains symbolize the eternal presence of nature observing human struggle (Oripov, 2005).

Psychological and Philosophical Dimensions

Psychologically, the story reveals the mental strain of responsibility and fear of failure. Philosophically, it suggests the fundamental equality of all living beings before nature's forces. The shared act of drinking at the end symbolizes humility and acceptance of human limitation (Faynberg, 2005).

Discussion Faynberg's narrative extends beyond traditional adventure prose by questioning the notion of complete human control over nature. While aligned with Soviet themes of perseverance and exploration, the story emphasizes instinct, vulnerability, and ethical responsibility. It also carries a modern ecological message, warning against underestimating natural forces and highlighting the importance of environmental awareness (Meliqo'ziyeva, 2023).

CONCLUSION

Alexander Faynberg's story stands as a significant contribution to survival and adventure literature, offering a nuanced and deeply human portrayal of life in extreme natural conditions.

Through the depiction of a scientific expedition in the Pamir Mountains, the narrative moves beyond a simple account of physical hardship and instead reveals survival as a complex interaction of discipline, instinct, responsibility, and ethical awareness. Faynberg demonstrates that endurance is not defined solely by strength or professional training, but by the ability to recognize human limitations and adapt to uncontrollable circumstances.

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One of the most important achievements of the story lies in its balanced representation of humans, animals, and nature. The expedition members and their horses are portrayed as equally vulnerable beings, united by shared suffering and dependence on scarce resources. This parallel experience emphasizes the moral responsibility humans bear toward animals, particularly in scientific and exploratory contexts. The final symbolic scene, in which humans and horses alike find relief in water, reinforces the idea of fundamental equality among living beings when confronted with nature's indifferent power.

Moreover, the story subtly challenges the ideological foundations of traditional Soviet adventure literature. While perseverance, teamwork, and scientific purpose remain central, Faynberg introduces moments of fear, loss of control, and instinctive behavior that complicate the image of the disciplined Soviet specialist. In doing so, he presents survival not as an ideological victory over nature, but as a humbling process that exposes the fragile balance between control and chaos. This perspective grants the narrative lasting philosophical depth and distinguishes it from more conventional adventure prose.

In a broader sense, Faynberg's story retains strong contemporary relevance. Its emphasis on environmental awareness, respect for natural forces, and the psychological impact of extreme conditions resonates with modern discussions on ecological ethics and human vulnerability. By portraying nature as neither enemy nor ally, but as an autonomous force demanding respect, the story encourages readers to reconsider humanity's place within the natural world.

In conclusion, Alexander Faynberg's survival narrative offers universal insights into resilience, humility, and coexistence with nature. Through vivid imagery, psychological realism, and symbolic structure, the story transcends its historical and cultural context, remaining meaningful for contemporary readers and scholars alike. It affirms that true survival lies not in domination, but in understanding, responsibility, and acceptance of the limits imposed by nature itself.

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