

“CRISIS OF ACTION” OF THE RUSSIAN LITERARY CHARACTER IN LITERARY DISCOURSE

Nikolay Ippolitovich Nikolaev¹ and Tatyana Vasilyevna Shvetsova²

Background: The authors of the article consider crisis phenomena in the history of Russian literature. The character’s “crisis of action” is viewed as a factor in literature development in the 18th – 19th centuries. The research aims to reveal new vectors in Russian historical and literary development in the 18th – 19th centuries. **Method:** To achieve the goal of the study, the authors conducted a comparative typological analysis of the features and patterns of Russian and Western European literature development. **Findings:** The study represents a new approach to the description of the Russian historical and literary development in the 18th–19th centuries. In contrast to the well-known concepts of the stadial development of literature the development the proposed approach allowed the authors to go beyond generally accepted ideas about the cause-and-effect development of literature. From their point of view, the main vector of its development is determined by large-scale and extensive changes that fit into the concept of culture secularization. This is seen as one of the strategic lines of Russian literary discourse development. **Improvements:** The results obtained make it possible to consider the creation of new approaches to understanding the historical and literary development, taking into account modern cognitive-discursive studies.

Key words: literary discourse, world view, action, crisis.

INTRODUCTION

Considering Russian literary works, this article represents an attempt to comprehend new concepts regarding the description of the “history of Russian literature”, the need for which was pointed out quite long ago by Academician D.S. Likhachev.

The article considers methodological and theoretical issues of the historical and literary development. The history of Russian literature in the 18th – 19th centuries is represented as a series of crises, manifesting themselves primarily as a character’s “crisis of action”. The development of Russian literature is studied in a broad historical and cultural context.

Analysis of modern publications on the subject proves that modern researchers actively discuss the models of literature history, as well as talk about the need for a new methodological paradigm. For instance, these goals have been pursued in the Euro-American Academy since the mid-twentieth century. The most pressing matters are traditional historiographic genres covering this issue (textbooks, reference books); various approaches (linear, diachronic, additive) to the history

¹ Doctor of Philology, Professor, Northern (Arctic) Federal University named after M.V. Lomonosov, Russian Federation, 163002, Arkhangelsk, Northern Dvina embankment, 17, *E-mail:* shvetzova.tatjana2018@yandex.ru

² Candidate of Philological Sciences, Associate Professor, Northern (Arctic) Federal University named after M.V. Lomonosov, Russian Federation, 163002, Arkhangelsk, Northern Dvina embankment, 17, *E-mail:* shvetzova.tatjana2018@yandex.ru

of literature on the basis of cause and effect relations between the past and the present in the literature development, as well as the aesthetic canon viewed in its historical dynamics. All this is a far from complete list of issues considered in various scientific literary journals. At present time, literary scholars see the history of literature as a flexible non-linear model, analyze the issues of the history of literature as “network nodes” shifted through historical periods; they investigate traces of significant literary events (changes in poetics, genre, style, trends, themes and motifs, cultural myths and archetypes, literary canon, etc.).

Many researchers have explored the processes and mechanisms of the development of Russian literature of the 18th century (L. Prokopieva, N. Kochetkova, O. Lebedeva, L. Golburt, etc.). In her paper, O.B. Lebedeva focuses on the Russian literature development in the mid-18th century [14]. The author analyzes the correlation of the novel genre and the system of classicistic genres, as well as considers the novel through the prism of transformations occurring in the Russian aesthetic consciousness.

In the work by L.B. Prokopieva and L.T. Leushina [15], the issue of historical and literary dynamics is studied through the image of antiquity, which was artistically expressed in original works by M.N. Muravyev and his translations. M.N. Muravyev’s works are analyzed using two artistic systems – those of classicism and sentimentalism, with which this Russian poet is associated.

N.D. Kochetkova, for instance, investigates the dynamic processes when studying love messages to the “fair sex” [12]. As a model of this tradition, the author examines *A Message to Women* by N.M. Karamzin and assesses this work as an early Russian literary model based on the idea of protecting women’s rights.

The paper by L. Golburt *The First Epoch* is also of great interest to us. The researcher thoroughly studies the influence of the 18th century on the subsequent development of Russian literature [5]. At the same time, the author focuses on paradoxical perception of the modern era by Russian writers, considering it progressive and outdated at the same time.

It should be noted that in the search for a new methodological paradigm, modern researchers refer to the material of Russian literature of the 19th – 20th centuries (D. Zhatkin, S. Ilyenko, R. Gryubel, and others). For instance, in the article dedicated to the work of translator D.E. Min and his contribution to the history of Russian poetic translation, D.N. Zhatkin and O.S. Milotayeva consider changes in ideas on translation and thereby reveal the dynamic processes in Russian literary discourse [10].

S.G. Ilyenko reveals the Russian literary tradition in depicting the city of St. Petersburg on the material of A.S. Pushkin’s works [11]. His article focuses on changing ideas that have influenced the literary image and historical perception of that period.

We would also like to highlight publications exploring the specific nature of a particular artistic method, which creates grounds for studying the style of a certain

writer. As an example we can mention R. Gryubel's paper which investigates A. Platonov's work and determines its place in the history of Russian literature and world culture of the 20th century, paying particular attention to his creative method in the context of realism, modernism, avant-gardism and other directions [8]. The works devoted to certain aspects of Russian literature are also of special interest to us: the article of E. Dobrenko presents a detailed study of formation and development of socialist realism, linked to the beginning of a new historical era and the emergence of a new literary paradigm [9].

M. Golubkov's article thoroughly explores the role of Russian literature in the early 21st century, which is viewed as the time when Russian culture stopped being "literature centric" [6]. Special attention is paid to the relationship between literature and cultural code. Many English-language articles deal with more specific issues, which nevertheless aim to reveal the problem of global historical literary dynamics. For instance, in his work, D. Boden carries out quite a detailed study of "popular literature" which since the 1990s has again become greatly demanded by readers [3].

The issue we explore is also considered in papers on Russian literary criticism at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries. In this regard, Y. Govorukhina analyzes the main features of the evolution of interpretational strategies of the turn of the century and reveals the most significant literary-critical techniques [7].

Some publications in English on the topic consider various issues of studying and teaching Russian literature. For instance, the work of R. Bekmetov analyzes the problem associated with the methodological status of modern comparative studies of Russian literature [2]. Yu. Balashova reveals the main problems arising when teaching Russian literature to students as part of their Journalism degree [1].

In addition to that, we would like to highlight publications dealing with the issues of cognitive literary criticism (works by E. Bolton, K. Krasny, and others). These authors study the conceptual works by M.M. Bakhtin and, in particular, his concept of dialogue [13]. In her article, E. Bolton explores a new cognitive model associated with personal perception of fairy tales: the author analyzes some papers on psychoanalysis and studies in detail how readers perceive the content of fairy tales [4].

In general, we can state that the interest of researchers in the specific features of the Russian historical and literary development has remained stable over the recent years.

This article attempts to generalize the observations of its authors concerning the history of Russian literature in the 18th – 19th centuries, accumulated over a long period of time. These findings have been published in various papers, but generalizing conclusions that follow from them have not been made so far. Aiming to make these generalizations, the authors of the article formulated their hypothetical vision of the main vector of the Russian historical and literary development in the

18th – 19th centuries which is different from the concept that dominates in literary studies today. The proposed model is based on the concept of the global nature of the secularization of Russian culture typical of the 18th and 19th centuries, and the permanent crisis of action of a literary character representing one of the mechanisms of this process within the framework of literary discourse. The authors of the article focus on the 1830-1840s – one of the most stunning pages in the history of Russian literature regarding “crises of action” of the Russian literary character.

METHOD

The main research method used in this article is the method of philosophical hermeneutics and the method of literary hermeneutics associated with it. We also applied the method of system-integral analysis (M.M. Girshman, B.O. Korman, V.V. Fedorov) that is based on the unity of the artistic phenomenon in its structural order and aesthetic self-organization, a comparative-typological method (L.Y. Ginzburg, Yu.M. Lotman, Yu.V. Mann, V.M. Markovich, N.D. Tamarchenko), as well as historical-functional and cultural-historical methods (M.M. Bakhtin, S.N. Broitman, M.N. Virolainen).

The research strategy implies presentation of a new concept of Russian historical and literary development through generalization of observations of various literary facts. The analysis involved application of standardized procedures (observation, description, interpretation). Conducting it, we applied the method of objective hermeneutics (Overman).

The novelty of the study stems from the fact that it is the first time the “crisis of action” of a character has been considered as a phenomenon fundamental for understanding the mechanisms of the Russian literature development.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Quite many research papers have considered the transitional nature of the history of Russian literature in the 1830–1840s. This specific feature of the time has also been discussed in some works of the authors of this article [16, p. 125-142]. At the same time, the issue of a literary character, becoming more acute over that period, turned into a kind of marker.

The literary criticism of that period conveys a new sense of the vacuum that formed where until recently there had been a very definite image of a heroic personality. The reference to the absence of this becomes almost ubiquitous and intrusive. With significant moral values having been lost, there rises a key question of the hero (who he is, this modern hero, what he should transform in at a new cycle of literary development). All this allows us to talk about a deep “crisis of action” that determined the nature of Russian literary discourse in the considered time interval.

We strongly believe the main outcome of this crisis in the Russian historical and literary development was “Russian classical literature” with its very specific

view of the key problems of life, which explains the public steady interest in it, and a very specific form of artistic representation of these new intellectual ideas – the Russian classical novel, which evolves in this historical period (the 1830s-1840s).

Description of this period as a crisis one (“crisis of action”) is due to the following widely known circumstances. First, this is introduction of a character pathologically incapable of taking serious action. He is called a “hero of the time”, a “new”, “superfluous man”, “spiritual pilgrim”. At the same time, the character of a “small man” evolves in literature, whose incapability of taking action stems from his insignificance in the world. “The hero disproportional to the world” becomes common in the central literary works of that period (it does not matter whether this character is “disproportionately small” or “disproportionately large”). The “natural school” that was establishing itself over that time simplified the problem of “the hero and the world” even further, reducing it to the problem of “the environment and social function”, thus eliminating the question of “proportionality” and, at the same time, the range of action a literary character could take.

Obviously, the “hero that does not take action” can be found in later periods of Russian literature (up to the present time), but it was in the 1830s-1840s when the introduction of this type of hero signified the profound “crisis of action”, accompanied by the emergence of new, previously irrelevant concepts and debates in the society and literature.

Among these, for example, we can mention the dispute between Slavophiles and Westerners that began precisely at this time and had far-reaching consequences for Russian history. This event has been thoroughly studied in philosophical and historical discourse. However, strangely enough, this issue turns out to be superficially explored from the perspective of the literary and artistic heritage of the time. It is where, we believe, the problem of a person’s action is at the center of attention of the disputing parties and, perhaps, is the underlying cause of their dispute within the framework of literary discourse.

Suffice it to recall one of the most striking phenomena of the time – the novel *Who Is To Blame?* by A.I. Herzen, where the main character and secondary characters’ inability to act is due to the Russian reality, its tradition and inertia. Everything gets stuck in this “big swamp”: any will, and any initiative. In this context, the question “who is to blame?” remains unanswered, since the “Russian world” portrayed by A.I. Herzen lacks any intelligible subjective action that could be evaluated.

A.I. Herzen, as we know, is one of the most prominent representatives of the Western wing of the Russian intellectual life of his time. On the other end of the great Russian discussion of that period there is A.S. Khomyakov who in his only surviving fictional text *Resurrection Sunday* proposed a concept directly opposite to A.I. Herzen’s. In his world, modern pragmatic life that absorbs and enslaves the

person and its values becomes routine and excludes any possibility of action. The real action a hero can take is consciously going beyond its limits, into the domain of great and timeless ideas, not limited solely to goals set in everyday life. This escape is possible through the internal involvement of the hero into the Easter tradition. In the author's interpretation, the character's action becomes possible through returning to tradition, and not deserting it.

Proposing different concepts that explained why action is impossible in modern life, both A.I. Herzen and A.S. Khomyakov, in fact, agree at the deep underlying level of their polemics: both of them prove the emergence of a "character incapable of action" as a basic characteristic of the world itself, and both of them see this circumstance as a dead end. We believe it was important for A.S. Khomyakov to relate to the story of his great European contemporary Dickens (*A Christmas Carol in Prose*), which underwent a deep conceptual revision in his interpretation. One of the semantic accents arising from this transformation is undoubtedly connected with the desire to emphasize the problem of the character's "crisis of action", relevant for the Russian literary discourse of that time.

Two decades earlier, it would have been impossible to talk about any "crisis of action" in Russian literary discourse. The literary character and his action at that time were still inseparable concepts. Differentiation between the "character not taking action" and the "character consistently expressing himself in his actions" did not yet exist in the Russian literary consciousness at that period. The ridge between them began to emerge right in the 30s-40s, which in itself is a proof of the crisis, accompanied by modern ideas and ideas of crisis theory: "the creation of new boundaries where there have previously been none" (A.A. Bogdanov) [19].

We see the reasons for the "crisis of action", which reveals itself in the Russian literary discourse in the 1830s-1840s in the global and continuous secularization of Russian culture, taking place over several centuries. In a simplified form the essence of this process can be expressed as a gradual (progressive) change in the world view, by moving the boundary separating the sacred and the profane in it ("disenchantment of the world", according to Max Weber [18]).

Our observations show that throughout the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century, this actively developing process was significantly changing the very nature of a Russian literary character, thereby accumulating the crisis potential that is revealed in the literary discourse of the 1830s and 1840s.

The beginning of the 18th century (the Petrine Epoch) in Russian literature history is marked by a very important event that changed the very foundations of literary discourse. In our earlier works, we defined this event as "the discovery of the inner world" [21, p. 147-150]. And we regard it as one of the most amazing events of the Russian historical and literary development of that period.

The essence of the event lies in a dramatic change in fundamental ideas about the content of the "inner" and "external" life of a person. To describe

these changes, we introduced the concepts of "a person's inner world" and an "inner person".

An "inner person" is a term familiar and widely used in the literature of the Russian Middle Ages. Its content is fully determined by the Christian understanding of salvation and is relevant only in this context. "Internal" and "external" are opposed to each other in this semantic field, denoting what is to become part of the eternity and what is doomed to decay.

On the other hand, the concept of the "inner world" reflects the ideas of Russian literature of the modern age and, regarding the contents, it primarily focuses on the impenetrability of its borders for the "other", its independence. The "inner world" is the sphere of absolute freedom of a person, in which no "other" can invade.

While the concept of the "inner person" can be understood just through the relationship of man and God, then the concept of the "inner world of a person" relates to the position of the "other" in the world. It is he only who perceives my "inner world" as something impenetrable, incomprehensible, and mysterious. He can only make guesses about the content of my "inner world", but would never have the same profound knowledge of it as I do. All in all, my "inner world" is the difference between my knowledge of myself and the knowledge of me the "other" has.

The idea of salvation is not an indispensable condition for the "inner world" (as opposed to the "inner person"). The "inner world" is grounded outside this idea and may even openly oppose it in its imperatives. The most convincing illustration of this can be found in the works of F.M. Dostoevsky. This is, for example, the "rebellion" of Ivan Karamazov, whose whole system of reasoning in the argument with his brother Alyosha can be reduced to the moral superiority of the imperatives of his inner world over the ethical foundations of the global (divine) plan for the world. "I don't want harmony. From love for humanity I don't want it. <...> Besides, too high a price is asked for harmony; it's beyond our means to pay so much to enter on it. And so I hasten to give back my entrance ticket, and if I am an honest man I am bound to give it back as soon as possible. And that I am doing. It's not God that I don't accept, Alyosha, only I most respectfully return Him the ticket." [20, p. 265].

The unwillingness to sacrifice the moral principles of his inner world in exchange for salvation (harmony) is clearly heard here. "The inner world of a person" clings to its self-sufficiency even on the threshold of non-existence; it is ready to give up the idea of salvation, if pursuing it poses even a slightest threat to its self-sufficiency.

Definitely, in the character of Ivan Karamazov F.M. Dostoevsky brings to the extreme, exaggerates the "inner world of a person". But this moral experiment of the writer convincingly reveals the nature of this phenomenon, which implies that it is possible to live beyond sacred meanings and values. We assume it was what

stimulated the interest to this concept during the formation of the original literary ideas concerning it.

We strongly believe that the discovery of the “inner world of a person” in Russian literature occurred in the first third of the 18th century. This fact is reflected both in secular literature of the era and in spiritual texts, for example, Demetrius of Rostov, who in his works introduced new shades in traditional for Russian literature ideas about the “inner person” [24], which considered new experiences a person’s being that appeared in the minds of his contemporary readers in connection with this discovery.

In research papers, the first third of the 18th century is traditionally seen as a period marking the beginning of rapid secularization of Russian culture and Russian life in general [28]. In our opinion, such conclusions on this undoubtedly important process should be expanded with its influence on the inner being of a person. “The inner world of a person” is also one of the essential products generated in Russian culture by the global process of secularization.

A new Russian literary character, in his “inner world”, has a different perception of his action in the world. For him, the “external world” has ceased to be the space where only sacred meanings and values manifest themselves. There is already room for “accidental”, unintentional, unprepared. A person anticipating a happy occasion, eagerly awaiting and preparing it – this is the most accurate description of a character of secular literature of the first third of the 18th century. The main motive of his action (action-feeling, action-desire, action-deed) is defined by this anticipation of “chance” as a final desired outcome, with which he associates most ideas of success.

A literary character (a hero) is greatly changed in his inner being due to the global secularization and takes a different direction for his action, the latter also changing under the influence of the same process, and discovers the key role of the “accidental” in this world. For such a character the main value vector is determined by his attitude toward success in life, and this is a fundamentally new feature emerging in Russian literary discourse in the first third of the 18th century. Like his medieval predecessor, the new literary character also fitted into the concept of chosenness, but unlike him, the new character acts in the environment largely free of the influence of sacred meanings and sacred will. This does not mean that in Russian literary consciousness of that time the world is presented as a desacralized place. However, it has obviously formed areas in which the sacred does not manifest itself clearly, where the literary character feels free, unlimited in his will.

By the second third of the 18th century, the unclear border between the sphere of human freedom and the sphere of special influence of sacred meanings and values turns into an important conceptual problem. This situation initiated one of the first waves of the cultural and value crisis driven by starting secularization of Russian culture. On the surface, this process revealed itself as a total “declining

morals" (M. Scherbatov). In literary discourse, it manifested itself in discussion on the quality of life success a person should strive for. Poets and writers of the new generation begin to distinguish between superficial, accidental success and success, based on great intellectual and spiritual work, success built on a solid foundation. This issue was explored in the satires of A.D. Cantemir – one of the most striking phenomena of Russian literary life of the late 1820s - early 1840s. The character, for example, in his satire *On Education*, is a man, who has achieved definite success in life, turns out to be a loser, raising a morally corrupt son [27]. In fact, all satires of A.D. Cantemir search for a balance between sacred values that establish the inviolable world order and the will of an active person who is looking for his road to success in the changeable world. It is not only A.D. Cantemir, but, perhaps, all Russian literature of his time involved in this search. In its turbulent flow amazing discoveries are made, one of which is revealed in Russian culture by great poet and scholar M.V. Lomonosov.

One of his greatest discoveries ignored by researchers is the moral code of the Russian scientist formulated by him, the justification of scientific activity as an action [23, p. 31-54]. This is the main source of the impulse which determined the rapid development of Russian science in the post-Lomonosov period. Moral justification of the scientist's place in the world was a direct consequence of the cultural and value crisis, which we attempted to analyze above. Regarding scientific cognition, there were two ideologically incompatible tendencies characteristic of pre-Lomonosov period. One of them was formed in the theological environment of the Slavic-Greek-Latin Academy. Its object of cognition is eternal and inviolable, and its product is the intellectual and spiritual growth of the knower, the progress and understanding of the Divine plan for the world are seen as goals of cognition. Such science had no practical orientation in the modern sense of the word.

The second tradition is born during Peter's transformation of Russia and has, in contrast, an exclusively practical purpose. It helps to find one's place in a world with no omnipotent sacred will, the world of luck and chance. Practical knowledge turns into an endless accumulation of factual information about what is "happening" in the world. The perfect expression of this knowledge is a collection of rarities – the famous St. Petersburg Kunstkamera, established by Peter I as the foundation of the future Academy of Sciences.

The philosophical and ethical position formulated by M.V. Lomonosov united these two traditions and removed the contradiction between them.

First of all, Lomonosov reconsiders the concept of the "accidental". There is nothing "accidental" in the picture of the global world order for him. Everything is linked together by a rigid causal relationship; a question "what for?" may be posed about anything (even very direct: "the rain sprinkles the earth and the sun warms it so that fruits can grow"). All this global chain of world interrelations rests on the

source of the reasonable world order, the Creator. Scientific ascension along this chain is comparable to “a religious deed”.

Nevertheless, it does not mean that the “accidental” is no longer present in Lomonosov’s picture of the world; it is still there, and it forms the basic ideas of the ordinary person about the world around him. However, as soon as he ascends to the next stage of his world-view, the stage of the scientific cognition of the global world order, the person starts to evaluate the “accidental” only as a separate fact, a fragment of the natural laws.

Denial of the “accidental” in the global world underlies Lomonosov’s scientific concept and explains the pathos of his best poetic creations, such as *Ode, Selected from Job*.

In this ode, harmony and sense of purpose of the global intelligible world are contrasted to the world which is close to the person and studied empirically. Job from Lomonosov’s ode, whose monologue is left beyond the text, apparently saw the world as a bulk of the “accidental”, unpredictable, lacking goals, and therefore questioned the greatness of the supreme Judge. That is why the answer of God comes in a form of a statement (proof) of absolute purposiveness, which encompasses and regulates all “accidental” that might seem pointless and chaotic. Thus, there is no opposition between the “sacral” world ruled by God and the “accidental”.

In Lomonosov’s world, the “accidental” is a fact of subjective consciousness, though it is hard for a person to perceive it as a part of the whole. However, it is a component of the divine world plan. The action of the scientist is to go through the veil of the “accidental” facts and reach the level of law comprehension, which, from his point of view, is the comprehension of the divine will. All this is achieved in small closed laboratories, consciously leaving earthly joys, a kind of ascetic self-denial of the scientist. Thus, both in form and in essence the deed of the scientist is similar to the spiritual endeavor of a hermit, devoting his life to comprehension of the divine will. The only difference between them is that for a scientist, it is a qualitatively different life, the life of a secular person. This person is a product of the global secularization, consistently and systematically evading all spheres of Russian life.

By the 1760s secularization influenced the very foundations of the social world order, state power and public service that was to implement it. The sacredness of state power and the social world order are not questioned by either M.V. Lomonosov or any of his contemporaries. However, the next generation of Russian writers will radically change this.

First, an alternative world order will be discovered in the poetry of Russian burlesque (I.S. Barkov, V.I. Maikov) and in the prose of democratic writers (M.D. Chulkov, M. Komarov). Writers will portray the layers of social reality that have previously not fitted into familiar and understandable norms of social organization,

that exist according to their own laws, with absolutely different moral values. In fact, Russian literature discovers the marginal world and a marginal character [26, p. 138-142].

The existence of social life beyond the one that has been recently considered as the only possible in the world inevitably questions the very idea of moral, sacral principles underlying it. However, if there is no predetermined social order, then, as a consequence, the sacred nature of state power can be doubted, and hence, the moral unconditionality of the state service.

The first Russian literary character deliberately rejecting public service will appear in the early 1780s. This is Starodum from the comedy by D.I. Fonvizin *The Minor*. For the first time his refusal to serve will be determined by the problem of moral self-preservation. At the same time, he manages to remain faithful to the ideals of serving the Fatherland. For several decades there has been a rapid polarization of the concepts of “service” and “devotion” [25, p. 85-91], ending up with their complete incompatibility in the consciousness of the comedy character by A.S. Griboyedov’s *Woe from Wit*, for whom public service becomes a real obstacle to the moral devotion to the Fatherland (“I’d love to serve. Servility is what I hate”).

The very essence of this historical metamorphosis, which the Russian literary character has undergone in the half a century, reflects the process of desacralization of public service. This shows the next stage of the global secularization of Russian culture.

It is this process that for a long time has progressively changed the picture of the world by moving boundary separating the sacred and the profane in it. The rapid change in the conceptual sphere of Russian literature in the 18th century due to secularization is confirmed by numerous facts. By the second third of the 19th century, the influence of this process triggers a very deep “crisis of action” of a character, which we have already mentioned above.

Before that, the rapidly changing character of Russian literature has not even for a moment lost the feeling of his connection with the sacred ideas and values, while his action in the world confirmed the fact of being a special “representative” (M.M. Bakhtin) of the divine will. What is more, this will itself was present in the world as an addition to the character, giving him an opportunity to make fateful decisions only in certain, minor life situations, in particular aspects, where it has already been allowed by secularization. Even the suicide of the heroine, for instance in N.M. Karamzin’s *Poor Liza* was morally justified only because, according to the author’s version, the death returned her under the cover of the divine will [17, p. 344-350]. The “calling” and “chosenness” of the character (in the biblical sense of the word) determined the meaning and nature of his action in the world, which clearly represented a pattern of following the path given from above, overcoming various difficulties and obstacles.

However, the situation radically changed in the 1830s-1840s. It was the time when Russian literature obtained a character for whom the external world was free from any sacred will, the place with no insurmountable obstacles for his absolute self-realization.

Such a character could emerge not without the influence of Western European literature. A character of this type, like his Russian predecessors, bears the features of "chosenness". However, from his point of view, in the world where he intends to take action there is no nothing else but his creative will. Thus, the motive of his action lies in the plane of his self-will, his exceptional initiative. In Russian literary discourse, this obviously erroneous point of view gives rise to an insurmountable contradiction. The action of the character cannot become any fruitful act, unless it relates to the sacred plan of the world. This circumstance also generates a complex of a new Russian character, pathologically incapable of action. This phenomenon should be recognized as an exceptional feature of Russian literature. A character of Western literature, comparable to the Russian one, seems to be born in as early as the era of Reformation; thus he carries a completely different religious experience, a different understanding of the meaning of his action (for example, Hamlet by W. Shakespeare) [22, p. 43-48]. For him, action in the world where there is no obvious sacred will, does not generate any contradictions, does not paralyze his will as the doer of the action.

The unique artistic concept of the world of Russian literature in its classical period, formed as a response to new ideological challenges, established a semantic boundary that delineated the space where a character could take action, and consequently, the line beyond which his free will cannot go. This model of the world was reflected in a different way in many works of art: it revealed itself in a character who clearly sees the limits of his actions (for example, "the righteous men" of N.S. Leskov); or the same concept manifested itself in the fate of a character claiming to have a limitless will in the world (for example, R. Raskolnikov of F.M. Dostoevsky). The value model of the world, born as a result of numerous artistic attempts of the Russian classical literary period, is distinguished by its unique structure and amazing semantic balance. However, these features could not ensure its infinite dominance in Russian literary discourse. The postclassical period poses new challenges, new crises of action of the Russian literary character, new ways of getting out of it, and a new literary product generated by this process.

CONCLUSION

In this article, based on the observations over Russian literature development in the 18th and 19th centuries, the authors attempted to generalize the ideas and to propose new conceptual approaches to the description of this process. In our opinion, the main vector of its development is due to large-scale and continuous changes that relate to the concept of culture secularization. The gradual artistic

desacralization of the various spheres of life enables a freer and more responsible will of the person (literary character). This can be seen as one of the strategic lines of the development of Russian literary discourse, at least over the last three centuries. One of the main mechanisms of this development is the permanent smaller or bigger crises of the character’s action that occur at different stages of this process. One of the most striking crises of this kind can be found in Russian literature of the 1830s-1840s.

The theory of crisis distinguishes between explosive and “dying” types of crises. In our opinion, the peculiarity of Russian literature development in the modern age stems from its similarity to a “dying” crisis, when, after a burst “oscillation goes down and a new equilibrium is established” [19]. This seems to be a distinctive feature from European historical and literary development, which was governed by a completely different development vector. Nevertheless, this is a separate and a very extensive issue that cannot be covered in this article.

References

- Balashova Y. Teaching the course «history of Russian Literature» to journalism students: Theory and poetics // *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 2015. – Pp. 277-282.
- Bekmetov R. Comparative studies of literature in Russia: Exploration of new paradigms // *Journal of Language and Literature*, 2015. – Pp. 141-145.
- Boden D. The perception of Russian popular literature in literary and cultural studies // *Fabula*, 2012. – Pp. 267-279.
- Bolton E. Meaning-making across disparate realities: A new cognitive model for the personality-integrating response to fairy tales // *Semiotica*, 2016. – Pp. 397-418.
- Golburt L. *The First Epoch: The Eighteenth century and the Russian cultural imagination*. – W.: University of Wisconsin Press, 2014. - Pp. 1-390.
- Golubkov M. Literature and the Russian cultural code at the beginning of the 21st century // *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, 2013. – Pp. 107-113.
- Govoruhina J. Russian Literary Criticism at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century // *Russian Literature*, 2015. – Pp. 337-366.
- Grubel R. «Between All Chairs». Andrei Platonov’s Place in the History of Russian Literature and World Culture in the Twentieth Century // *Russian Literature*, 2012. – Pp.201-222.
- Dobrenko E. Socialist realism // *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Russian Literature*, 2011. – Pp. 97-114.
- Zhatkin D., Milotaeva O. Min’s creative work in the history of the Russian literary translation of the XIXth century // *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 2015. – Pp. 383-390.
- Ilyenko S. Petersburg-Petrograd-Leningrad in Russian literary text as a reflection of the city’s historic being // *The Questions of Cognitive Linguistics*, 2014. – Pp. 35-43.
- Kochetkova N. Dedications to “The Fair Sex” in Eighteenth-Century Russian Books // *Russian Literature*, 2014. – Pp. 321-332.
- Krasny K. Toward an embodied account of double-voiced discourse: The critical role of imagery and affect in Bakhtin’s dialogic imagination // *Semiotica*, 2016. – Pp. 177-196.

- Lebedeva O. Russian Literary Process in the 1760-1770s: Novel as a Representative of Interconnection of Epistemic Reproductive Models // *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2015. – Pp. 283-288.
- Prokopieva L., Leushina L. Antiquity in Russian Literature in the XVIII Century (Anacreon's Poetry Translated by M.N. Muraviev) // *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2014. – Pp. 504-508.
- Nikolaev N., Shvetsova T. Russian literature of the 1830-1840s. "Awaiting a hero" // *Tomsk State University Journal of Philology*. 2014. ¹ 3 (29). C. 125-142.
- Nikolaev N.I., Shvecova T.V. Suicide motives in Russian and European literary tradition // *Asian Social Science*. 2015. T. 11. ¹ 5. P. 344-350.
- Weber M. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* / Translated by Talcott Parsons With an introduction by Anthony Giddens. London and New York, Routledge Classics, 1930. 314 p. - <http://www.d.umn.edu/clafaculty/jhamlin/1095/The%20Protestant%20Ethic-%20and%20the%20Spirit%20of%20Capitalism.pdf>
- Bogdanov A.A. *Tektology: Universal Organization Science*. In 2 books: Book 1 / Eds. L.I. Abalkin (publishing editor), etc. / Economics Department of the USSR Academy of Sciences. Institute of Economics of the USSR Academy of Sciences. - Moscow: Economics, 1989.- 304 p. - (Economic heritage). – Available at: http://www.pseudology.org/science/Bogdanov_Tektologia1a.pdf
- Dostoevsky F.M. *Collected works in 15 volumes*. Vol. 9. Leningrad, 1991. 265p.
- Nikolaev N.I. Clarification of the concepts "inner person" and "inner world of a person" // *Res philologica. Proceedings of the Severodvinsk branch of Pomor State University named after M.V. Lomonosov* / publishing editor E.Ya. Fesenko. Arkhangelsk, 2002. 147-150 pp.
- Nikolaev N.I. Literary character in the religious and ethical context (from the history of Shakespeare's Hamlet in Russia) // *Bulletin of the Northern (Arctic) Federal University. Series: Humanities and Social Sciences*. 2002. No. 2. pp. 43-48.
- Nikolaev N.I. Myth about M.V. Lomonosov and the motives of his action (on the creation of the scientist's biography) // *M.B. Lomonosov: personality, scientific and educational activities*. Arkhangelsk, 2009. Pp.31-54.
- Nikolaev N.I. Russian literary character in the context of ethical searches of the 18th-19th centuries. Monograph / N.I. Nikolaev, N.A. Nekhlebaeva, E.Yu. Shestakova. Arkhangelsk: Solti, 2009. - Part 1: Architectonics of the world of the Russian literary character's action of the first third of the 18th century. - 2009. - 172 pp.
- Nikolaev N.I. At the origins of new Russian ideas about "happiness" and "luck", "service" and "devotion" ("Fortune" by N.A. Lvov // *Bulletin of the Northern (Arctic) Federal University. Series: Humanities and Social Sciences*. No. 4. P. 85-91.
- Nikolaev N.I., Khrantsova M.V. Marginal world and a Russian literature character of the 18th century // *Discussion*. 2014. No. 2 (43). Pp. 138-142.
- Nikolaev N.I., Shestakova E.Yu. Satire of A.D. Cantemir "On Education" in the context of the moral quest of his age // *Res philologica. Proceedings of the Severodvinsk branch of Pomor State University named after M.V. Lomonosov*. Arkhangelsk, 2007. pp. 194-199.
- Panchenko A.L. *Russian culture on the eve of Peter's reforms*. Monograph / Publishing Ed. D.S. Likhachev. - Leningrad: Leningrad Branch of Nauka Publishers, 1984. - 205 p.