

“I STUDIED CRISIS...”: THE PHENOMENON OF THE UNFINISHED AS A LITERARY TRILOGY*

Rev. of: Феномен творческой неудачи / под общ. ред. А. В. Подчиненова и Т. А. Снигиревой. Екатеринбург : Изд-во Урал. ун-та, 2011. – 423 с. ; Феномен незавершенного / под общ. ред. Т. А. Снигиревой и А. В. Подчиненова. Екатеринбург : Изд-во Урал. ун-та, 2014. – 528 с. ; Феномен творческого кризиса / под общ. ред. Т. А. Снигиревой и А. В. Подчиненова. Екатеринбург : Изд-во Урал. ун-та, 2017. – 400 с. (Podchinenov, A. V., Snigireva, T. A. (Eds.) (2011). *Fenomen tvorcheskoy neudachi*. Yekaterinburg, Izdatel'stvo Ural'skogo universiteta. – 423 p. [The Phenomenon of Creative Failure. Yekaterinburg, Ural Federal Univ. 423 p.] ; Podchinenov, A. V., Snigireva, T. A. (Eds.) (2014). *Fenomen nezavershennogo* [The Phenomenon of the Unfinished]. Yekaterinburg, Izdatel'stvo Ural'skogo universiteta. – 528 p. ; Podchinenov, A. V., Snigireva, T. A. (Eds.) (2017). *Fenomen tvorcheskogo krizisa* [The Phenomenon of Creative Crisis]. Yekaterinburg, Izdatel'stvo Ural'skogo universiteta. – 400 p.)

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The subject of the review is a cycle of collective monographs written by Ural philologists where facets of creative peripiosis are described in detail: *The Phenomenon of Creative Failure* (Yekaterinburg, 2011), *The Phenomenon of the Unfinished* (Yekaterinburg, 2014) and *The Phenomenon of Creative Crisis* (Yekaterinburg, 2017). All three volumes were published under the general editorship of T. A. Snigireva and A. V. Podchinenov. Throughout the series, a productive attempt was made to identify the causes of complex creative circumstances and to discuss some of the potential resolutions of these situations. By interposing a complex of problems in literary criticism, the authors remain within the boundaries of academic research. The coherence of analytical approaches, the selection of literary texts representing the work of recognised writers and continuity in the choice of literary material create a unity of reflection from volume to volume

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which allows one to read the monographs as a literary trilogy. When analysing creative failure, the non-completion of creative work and creative crisis, the research team addresses various aspects of these phenomena, interpreting them from the points of view of the author, the reader and the critic in both synchronic and diachronic terms. Considered from many angles, the same work can be simultaneously regarded as a creative miscalculation and a text containing elements of innovation. As can be seen from the materials presented in the trilogy, the entirety of the twentieth century was marked by signs of crisis: it is to these crises and its literary personalities that the three monographs are devoted.

Keywords: literature; poetics; creative crisis; creative failure; unfinished work.

Предметом рецензии выступает цикл коллективных монографий уральских филологов, в которых всесторонне описаны грани творческого периптозиса. Все три книги вышли под общей редакцией Т. А. Снигиревой и А. В. Подчиненова. В книгах сделана продуктивная попытка выявить причины и показать основные направления выхода из сложных творческих обстоятельств. Вторгаясь комплексом заявленных проблем в сферу литературной критики, авторы монографий остаются в границах академического исследования. Согласованность аналитических подходов, отбор литературных текстов, презентирующих творчество признанных писателей, преемственность в выборе литературного материала, создающая единство длящейся от книги к книге научной рефлексии, позволяют прочесть монографии как своего рода литературоведческую трилогию. При анализе творческой неудачи, творческой незавершенности произведения, творческого кризиса коллектив исследователей обращается к разным сторонам этих явлений, осмысляя их с позиций автора, читателя и критика в синхроническом и диахроническом аспектах. Рассмотренное во многих ракурсах, одно и то же произведение может быть расценено одновременно как творческий просчет и как текст, содержащий элементы новаторства. Как явствует из представленных в трилогии материалов, знаком кризисности отмечен весь недавно завершившийся XX в.: именно ему, его литературным персоналиям посвящена большая часть объема трех монографий.

Ключевые слова: литература; поэтика; творческий кризис; творческая неудача; незавершенное произведение.

The intention of Ural researchers to describe the boundaries of creative periphtosis has been embodied in the three collective monographs under review: *The Phenomenon of Creative Failure* (hereafter referred to as PCF), *The Phenomenon of the Unfinished* (PU) and *The Phenomenon of Creative Crisis* (PCC). All three books were published under the general editorship of T. A. Snigireva and A. V. Podchinenov. The stated problem is connected not only with specific literary circumstances: it also has, but additionally has a deeper, philosophical aspect. As noted in PCC, the appearance of a turning point in a writer's creative life can be influenced by diverse

factors: biographical (hard a bad childhood, unhappy love, the care of close people, friends and family, illness, poverty), ideological (disappointment in certain ideals, a farewell to illusions, a loss of meaning in life fulness), spiritual (loss of faith, doubts about the existence of “truth-goodness-beauty”, the perceived impossibility of realising an ideal, existential angst), as well as “socio-political” (abrupt or senseless reorganisation of reality, wars, ecological disasters) (PCC, p. 3).¹ Ultimately, these factors may consist of actual creative reasons: “dissatisfaction with what has been done, a suddenly overwhelming feeling of being untalented or incapable of producing a new work of quality” (*Ibid.*, p. 3). The authors of the above-mentioned works have made a productive attempt to identify the causes of complex creative circumstances and to discuss, as well as discussing some of the potential resolutions of these situations.

The undeniable merit of the discussed books is that, when interposing a complex of problems in literary criticism, they (with rare exceptions) remain within the boundaries of academic research. The coherence of analytical approaches, the selection of literary texts representing “the work of writers who have repeatedly proved their artistic worth” (PCF, p. 5) and continuity in the choice of literary material create a unity of reflection that persists from volume to volume, which make it possible to read the monographs as a literary trilogy.

The success of the project is underlined by the re-issue of PCC, which was first published in 2015. Indeed, it is difficult to overestimate the relevance and timeliness of the analysed works: the second decade of the new century is a period marked by an acute sense of a crisis “engulfing all aspects of everyday life and being of modern man, including the crisis of logocentrism” (PCC, p. 7). As can be seen from the presented materials, all of the twentieth century was marked by signs of crisis: it is to these crises and their associated literary personages that the majority of the three monographs are devoted. Under the purview of the authors’ attention are the works of Andrei Bely, Vasily Rozanov, Marina Tsvetaeva, Anna Akhmatova, Vladimir Narbut, Yury Olesha, Daniil Kharms, Vladimir Nabokov, Gaito Gazdanov, Mikhail Bulgakov, Mikhail Prishvin, Sigizmund Krzhizhanovsky, Aleksandr Tvardovsky, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Chinghiz Aitmatov, the Strugatsky brothers, Vasily Aksyonov, Viktor Astafyev, Andrei Bitov and others. From the authors of the classical period, attention is also paid, among others, to Gavrila Derzhavin, Mikhail Lermontov, Ivan Turgenev, Anton Chekhov and Alexey Suvorin. The emphasis placed on Russian literature is reflective of Russia’s undeniable position as a global epicentre of the socio-historical and spiritual crisis of mankind, which has become aggravated in the new era. This thought is additionally illuminated by selective appeal to the international literary context, with references being made to Giovanni Boccaccio, Franz Kafka, James Farrell, Aldous Huxley and Lars

¹ Hereafter, references to peer-reviewed publications are given in parentheses indicating the page numbers.

von Trier. It is as if our new century has taken the baton from the twentieth century: "The word *crisis* penetrates into all spheres of society: today they write about the crisis of banking, the environment, investment and food, about the crisis of the family, middle age, adolescents, etc." (PCC, p. 13. Authors' emphasis). Among contemporary Russian authors, attention repeatedly is paid to the creative work of Lyudmila Petrushevskaya, wherein the crises of the present are accumulated; this is reflected in the writer's interrogations of genre (*True Tales*), even though they are not always successful (i. e. the novel *The Number One, or In the Gardens of Other Possibilities*).

When analysing creative failure and creative crisis, the research team addresses various aspects of these phenomena, interpreting them from the points of view of the author, reader and/or critic in synchronic or diachronic terms. Considered from many perspectives, the same work can be simultaneously regarded as a creative miscalculation and as a text containing elements of innovation. For example, in her analysis of Bely's novel *Moscow*, N. V. Barkovskaya shows the complexity of a text marked by the redundancy of poetic tropes as a factor of creative failure. However, at the same time she adduces a number of arguments showing the undoubtedly influence of the poetics of *Moscow* on the "non-classical poetics of the catastrophic twentieth century" (PCF, p. 21). It should be noted that, in most of the materials presented, creative failure essentially turns out to be a relative category; this is especially indicative in the diachronic approach to this phenomenon. One of the most striking examples of such a proposition can be seen in the history of perceptions of Chekhov's *Seagull*. The relativity of the concept of *creative failure* is, in this particular case, contingent upon the selection of the material itself, which is oriented towards creatively prolific authors. This attitude contributes to an increase in research intrigue, which might not be the case if works of second- and third-tier literature stood at the centre of the reflection.

For the given group of writers, the concepts of creative failure and literary crisis are not so much isolated phenomena as essential to the creative processes. Among truly classic writers, it is hard to find an author who would not have survived a state of crisis or the feeling of an unsuccessfully implemented plot. For representatives of mass culture, this feeling, if not entirely absent, is noticeably muted, since it is commercial success, based not so much on an artfully woven plot as on the sharpness of anecdotal intrigue, that is of primary importance to them. Here, the task of poetics is either altogether absent or occupies a more peripheral position. Rather, it is the organisation of a continuous stream of texts demanded by the general reader that takes pole position. As expressed by Darya Dontsova in an interview, at one point she felt as if she were connected to an electrical power outlet. From this we can conclude that for this circle of authors creative failure or non-completion of an intended creative effort has a direct link with the "disconnection" of literary thought, which is "external" in nature. To understand how such processes are brought to realisation is a problem not so much of philology as of psychology.

Thus, the concentration of the contributors on creatively fecund writers is fully justified. In the first monograph, an attempt is made to distinguish between artistic and creative failure, as can be seen from the section titles: *Artistic Failure: Causes and Consequences*; *Creative Failure: Receptive and Communicative Aspects*; *Literary Reflection on Creative Failure*; and *The Creative Potential of 'Unsuccessful' Texts*. In our view, this problem has not been addressed consistently. While artistic failure is a narrower concept related to aesthetics, creative failure is a multilevel category, as is pointed out by the authors in the preface to their work. If Bely's *Moscow*, Aitmatov's *Plakh*, Astafyev's *Sad Detective*, Aksenov's *Voltairean Men and Women* and V. Makanin's *Funk*, considered in the first section, can really be attributed to *artistic* failure – and here it is a question of the failure of a work within the framework of these writers' general success – it is more logical to attribute the failures of Narbut the poet and Narbut the editor to *creative* problems than to the poet's work in general, including receptive and communicative aspects related to his editorial activity and the perception of his contemporaries, and only then from official Soviet criticism and the party nomenclatura.

In the context of creative failure, the question of “gerontological writing” is also touched upon. This definition of late-career writers does not seem correct to us, since this period very often does not coincide with the time of senescence. Many authors did not live long enough to achieve this, especially in the first half of the twentieth century. At the same time, features of late-period creativity are, in our view, a significant but scarcely-touched-upon topic in literary criticism, the materials of which could provide material for more than one academic work. Here, one finds an entire body of literature, ranging from Gogol's *Correspondence with Friends* to the late creations of Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy, from Olesha, Platonov, Astafiev, Rasputin and others to those works specifically mentioned by the researchers, Solzhenitsyn's *The Red Wheel* and Leonov's *The Pyramid*. Some provisions on this topic can be found in the diaries of Prot. A. Schmemann in the context of his reflections on the works of Solzhenitsyn, the pathos of which, over time, increasingly shifted to journalism and preaching. Here are just a few entries: “The *soteriological complex* of Russian literature – Gogol writes moral guidelines for ‘the Tambov governor’s wife’, Tolstoy founds a religion. And even Dostoevsky’s authentic ‘prophecy’ begins to be confused with preaching and sermonising (not forgetting the Pushkin [anniversary] speech, also thoroughly imbued with prophetic rhetoric).² Now, apparently, Solzhenitsyn has also joined this path” [Шмеман, с. 488–489] (Italics here and below are the author’s); “The temptation of teaching, not just prophecy, which is so strong because it is not ‘didactic’? A meteor, cooling and petrified at *descent* into the atmosphere, to the ‘lowlands’? I do not know, but

² Mikhail Bakhtin expressed a similar position in *The Aesthetics of Verbal Creativity*: “Entering the field of Dostoevsky’s journalism, we observe a sharp narrowing of the horizon, the universality of his novels disappears” [Бахтин, с. 377].

there's a gnawing at my heart, and fear of this undeniable, amazing *gift...*" [Там же, c. 125]. The metaphor of Fr. Alexander's "descent to the lowlands" is described by the authors of the monograph's first section, who are enthusiastic about the journalistic pathos of Solzhenitsyn and Astafyev or the "everyday and criminal black humour" and "leaden abominations" of Petrushevskaya's description of modern life.

The sections of the monograph analysing the receptive and communicative aspects of literary reflection on creative failure leads to the position formulated in its concluding part: the creative potential of this phenomenon. Strictly speaking, it is in this way that the research strategy of the labour as a whole develops, which is carried out both at the level of poetics and in terms of linguistic organisation. The appeal to linguistic analysis supplements the conclusions reached by literary scholars. In this respect, the inference of A. V. Snigirev, author of the section 'The Phenomenon of the Defective Text', is largely conceptual: "The correspondence to the text norm of the work is not related to its artistic value; on the contrary, many works, although defective from the point of view of the text structure, are nevertheless exemplary from the aesthetic point of view" (PCF, p. 212). The greatest applicability of this statement has to do with the literature of modernity, which lies beyond the scope of classical artistry. In its theoretical and literary aspects, this complex of problems is developed by V. Yu. Novikov in the section entitled 'Linguistic Absurdity: Communicative Failure or an Infinite Set of Meanings?' Perhaps the most striking proof of the infinitude of meaningfulness is the mature work of Andrei Platonov, which is apogean in terms of combining a high frequency of linguistic anomalies with consummate poetic skill.

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Since creative failure and creative crisis are two closely related phenomena, it is logical to continue our reflections by referring to the last of the three works in terms of publication: PCC. In fact, we have already mentioned this problem more than once in the context of the reception of creative failure.

The first section of the monograph is devoted to identifying the causes and variants of creative crises. In the global context, E. K. Sozina, the author of this section, considers this problem in connection with the literary situation in Russia in the 1880s. E. K. Sozina, the author of this section, a period identified as a turning point with several distinct dimensions. The first of these was connected with the fact that the classical system was losing its leading position, giving way to nonclassical artistic forms. The second consists in the crisis of "the primary classical literature genre of the nineteenth century", i. e. the novel (PCC, p. 19). The third aspect of the creative crisis of the 1880s affected "traditional ideology and the dominant type of consciousness" (*Ibid.*, p. 20), to which Sozina refers as "Hegelian consciousness" oriented towards "the primacy of reason". The fourth aspect re-

fers to the “generational crisis, specifically *the eighties generation*, consisting of people who came to literature during the second half of the 1870s and 1880s expecting to come into full bloom, but who instead fell into a state of creative dissatisfaction exacerbated by disapproving critical reviews” (*Ibid.*, p. 21. italics of the author – *E. P. I. S.*). In constructing a rationale for this position, the researcher makes passing mention of Mamin-Sibirjak, but her principal analytical focus is the work of Anton Chekhov, seen as the “primary literary personage at the end of the classical nineteenth century” (*Ibid.*, p. 29).

An especially acute creative crisis was experienced by representatives of the first wave of Russian emigration. Thus, the purview of A. G. Maslova includes critical, artistic and philosophical essays by Vladislav Khodasevich, Georgy Ivanov, Vladimir Veydle and Gaito Gazdanov from the 1920s and 30s, a time when the tragedy of exile and the uncertain fate of its associated literature was reflected in the work of young émigré writers. However, in our opinion, a slip into a journalistic mode of discourse undermines the scholarly integrity of this study. For clarity, we provide an example: “And the question remains: does the contemporary writer think about what he carries to his reader? Does he give himself unstintingly to his creation, does he have some inner moral knowledge (even if it is doubt, confusion or despair), or is he only interested in playing with stylistic devices, external effects and thus satisfying the reader’s aesthetic, rational or sensual preoccupations? And can the contemporary verbal form of ‘word art’ be categorised as the same art form thought by Veydle to be dying, or can we rather say after Gazdanov that there is no literature in the sense of the ‘word art’ asserted at the beginning of the twentieth century? In our view, these questions must confront every writer who feels a deep inner spiritual connection with the Russian literary tradition” (*Ibid.*, p. 42–43). We find that this type of argument is more suitable for a journalistic article than for a scholarly monograph.

An appeal to contemporaneity is made in the study of the genre of new fairy tales by E. V. Ponomareva, although not so much in the modality of crisis as in terms of updating the genre. Also tracing developments in the contemporary period, A. Snigireva and A. V. Podchinenov examine the fate of the journal *Literary Georgia*. This study can serve as a clear indication of how the history of one journal reflects the current crisis of the “thick journal” as a special type of publication.

The second section of the monograph, entitled ‘Crisis as a Sociocultural Fact’, opens with O. N. Turysheva’s study of the crisis of “literary existence”. The inauthenticity of the “paper life” is traced through the example of W. Golding’s novel *Paper People* and H. Hesse’s novel *The Book Man*. The reverse situation – the non-authenticity of the protest against the “paper life” – is also shown through Jean-Philippe Arrou-Vignod’s novel *Lesson in Disobedience* and K. M. Dominguez’s *The Paper House*. From the point of view of the researcher, none of the presented plot situations offer a convincing solution to the crisis of “literary existence”. From the plots of Rus-

sian literature, the story of Bartholomew Smith in the *Battle of the Alphabet* by Bitov, in which the hero tries to escape from the problems of real life by diving into an ephemeral “bookish” existence, could assist in reaching an understanding of this problem. The crisis strategy of the plot is not weakened by the Christmas genre: the hero does not undergo a miraculous transformation through a return to reality in Bitov’s work. From a somewhat different angle, the problem of “literary existence” is considered by T. N. Breeva through the antinomies of “creativity – life” and “creativity – game” in Dina Rubina’s story *On the Upper Maslovka*.

In the context of creative crisis, N. A. Kupina constructs a “replication of speech stereotypes” by representatives of mass culture (A. Marinina, T. Ustinova, E. Vilmont, et al.). However, the point of view expressed by the researcher, which conflicts with the thesis put forward in the title of this section, seems more to the point: “Typical for popular prose, the repeatability of speech structures of the same type testifies to the poverty of speech as a consequence of the insufficiently deep creative and psychological potential of the prose writer” (*Ibid.*, p. 130). This “insufficiently deep” creative potential is also a generic property of mass literature, especially its modern variant, that has nothing to do with the problem of creative crisis. This has already been mentioned above in more detail

With respect to “healing pragmatics and ethical-aesthetic loss”, E. V. Ponomareva considers the new phenomenon of modern literature referred to as “psychotherapeutic tales”. Through its orientation towards a utilitarian outcome, this “medico-literary” version of the fairy tale extinguishes the aesthetic merits of the genre. At the same time, advancing in the first place the problems of salvation from difficult life situations turns the fairy tale into a parable, an instructive history, and so on. It is symptomatic that the readers of such fairy tales are referred to by the “fairy tale therapists” as their “clients”. The question remains as to whether this generic modification can be attributed to artistic creativity, even if it contains aesthetic elements and traces of the original genre (e. g. Andrei Gnezdilov’s fairy tales), since none of them are strictly artistic, but are instead narrowly pragmatic. The use of the same elements of the traditional fairy tale acquires a speculative focus.

The third section of the monograph, entitled ‘Crisis as a Fact of Literary Biography’, is opened by T. M. Abolina’s study of Lermontov’s literary output during the mid-1830s. Based on a large number of papers, the author of this section discusses the period of Lermontov’s work marked by relatively low output and centred around the naturalistic image of Junker life in which “the main place is occupied by humorous verses and pornographic poems (*The Hospital, Holiday in Peterhof, Ulansha*)” (*Ibid.*, p. 187). The author considers this in terms of a crisis period, a time when the great writer had exhausted the romantic type of writing and was engaged in a painful search for new creative possibilities.

Similar tendencies in the painful “transition from romantic subjectivism to a new ‘objective’ style of writing” (*Ibid.*, p. 213) are remarked

on by O. V. Cherkezova in his discussion of Turgenev's work at the turn of the 1840s and 50s, which is based on his "routine correspondence". S. V. Savinkov apprehends the loss of "living truth" in the authorial word of Gogol in *Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends* by comparing the "transpersonal" printed word of the "correspondence" with the sincere wording of Gogol's letters. In the process of analysing the late period of Sigizmund Krzhizhanovsky by referring to the stories *The Paper Loses Patience* and *In the Queue* and comparing them with his early works, T. A. Gridina and A. V. Kubasov remark on the creative crisis of the writer in terms of a loss of the sharpness in style, automation, the secondary nature of the artistic method, the self-evident presence of a language game, a loss of depth in the implicit meanings, a simplification of the compositional structure and the banalisation of conclusions and syntheses. According to the biographical plan, the crisis situation was recognised by Krzhizhanovsky himself at the end of his life: "I am rejected by myself" (*Ibid.*, p. 262). As if taking the baton from P. V. Markina, who also analysed the work of this author in the context of failure, A. N. Ushakova turns to Yury Olesha's creative crisis. The study is successful in providing a critical complement to the provisions of the previous article, which was based on interviews with readers, polemics and explanations. The complex position of the writer crystallises in, on the one hand, not wanting to distort himself, and, on the other, in striving to be both "widely read and highly esteemed". A. V. Snigirev, drawing from the letters and diaries of the Strugatsky brothers, comes to the conclusion that there were several crisis points in their creative biography. Their work advanced through co-authorship, but this was complicated by life in different cities and the unwieldiness of maintaining creative contacts through mailing written parts. While such inconveniences in the collaborative creative process do not in themselves amount to crisis, a loss of the pursued goal and lack of interest in the stories being thought up, which is often experienced by co-authors, really do constitute crisis phenomena. In concluding his study, Snigirev observes that "each time, the authors will go up to the next level, surprising their readers and themselves" (*Ibid.*, p. 291).

The last section of the monograph, entitled 'Ways out of a Crisis Condition', opens with L. A. Nazarova's study of the creative work of the fourteenth-century writer Giovanni Boccaccio. This excursion to Renaissance Italy expands the chronological and geographical scope of the topic. On the one hand, the reason for the first creative crisis of the author of the *Decameron* is connected to the biographical circumstance of a betrayal on the part of a beloved; on the other, Boccaccio was dissatisfied with the reference in his early creative period to the literary models already formed in the poetry of Petrarch and Dante. The author's way out of this crisis lay in his creation of the novel *The Elegy of Lady Fiammetta*, a work in which the author freed himself from his habit of literary borrowing to create an original work – the first psychological novel in the history of European literature to have a heroine at the centre of the plot. The second creative crisis was also

connected with an unrequited love, to which the writer responded with the caustic satirical work *Corbaccio* (*The Labyrinth of Love*). However, unlike *Fiammetta*, this turned out to be one of Boccaccio's weakest creations. Analysing the reasons for this creative failure, which did not lead to a way out of the crisis, L. A. Nazarova proposes spiritual dissatisfaction, the rationality and schematism of the plot of *Corbaccio* and the age-related factor: "His status as a humanist scientist... who won the right to consider himself the successor of his great Florentine predecessors, does not give him the opportunity, as in his youth, to experiment, to eliminate tradition, the embodiment of which he has already become" (Ibid., p. 304).

The next four subsections are addressed to the literature of the twentieth century in the works of Aldous Huxley, Vladimir Narbut, Daniil Kharms and Aleksandr Tvardovsky. To a determining degree, the crisis situations in the creativity of these authors are related to the complexities of the era in which they happened to live. As V. S. Rabinovich shows, for Huxley this was the period of silence of 1932–1936, when he reinterpreted his early philosophical position concerning the right to doubt. From the crisis, he went through the creation of a "positive programme" of individual self-improvement and the clarification of his moral position, which he followed to the end of his life. A. V. Mironov's study bears witness to Narbut's painful attempts to escape from periods of creative crisis, when the poet perceived his service to the new government as a betrayal of himself and of poetry. His tragic biography illustrates a rare event in the fate of Soviet poets when a "lyrical upsurge" experienced during the brief Gulag period becomes a creative breakthrough: it was during this short time, which was cut short by his execution, that Narbut's "colossal emotional experiences" opened up the opportunity to plunge into the real world of nature and return to the pure poetic word. I. E. Vasiliev, on the basis of a comprehensive analysis of various works by Daniil Kharms, his creative biography, specialist research and the available evidence from his contemporaries, presents the attempts of the writer to gain stability during often unbearable yet vital creative cataclysms. One of the approaches taken by Kharms during the difficult period of creative decline in the mid-1930s was addressed to his diary with the aim of giving himself a lesson in remorse as a means of self-education and self-organisation.

The discussion about freedom of creativity in unfree circumstances is continued by T. A. Snigireva in reference to Andrei Tvardovsky, who repeatedly experienced creative crises. Analysing the life and creative path of the poet on the basis of his verses, poems, letters and diaries, the researcher shows how "dissatisfaction with himself, the growing crisis and the indispensable but very painful overcoming of it appeared at different stages of Tvardovsky's creative path, representing a kind of signal of the poet's relentless movement towards inner freedom" (Ibid., p. 360).

Taken as a whole, the researchers' treatment of this last section is a testament to how much suffering was involved not only in the crisis periods themselves, but also in their attempts to exit from this state. The Soviet

era did not allow respite; thus, creative inspiration could only be obtained by overcoming the internal decline from within itself.

The two sections of the Afterword, 'About This, or Essays on the Crisis' (A. P. Bykov) and 'The Creative Crisis from a Phenomenological Point of View' (A. V. Pertsev), are not so much a conclusion as an invitation to further reflection on an inexhaustible, essentially philological problem.

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We will now turn our attention to the third book of the cycle – the monograph entitled *The Phenomenon of the Unfinished*. In the European tradition of literary poetics, an author is expected to create a finished text that satisfies certain semantic criteria; moreover, this text should, from an aesthetic point of view, be presented in the form of a completed work. In accordance with this comprehensive poetic norm, the author of a literary work – whether a play, a sonnet, a novel or something else – brings his or her work into a particular final and conclusive form.

This principle is especially clear in the literature of the epic genre: the narrative plot must be wrapped up and the hero of the action brought to his or her final value and semantic status. Here the lines of development of the plot and the hero should converge in a unified finale. Thus, the system of authorial practice and reader expectations in modern verbal culture includes the mandatory setting for the creation and perception of the whole text and entire work.

At the same time, in the converse literary phenomenon of the incompleteness of a text, the unfinished state of a work has a systematic character and is manifested regardless of the specifics of literary time, poetic direction and aesthetic preferences. Therefore, it is also natural that the very problem of incompleteness/the unfinished becomes the subject of engaged literary attention. In the third volume of the reviewed trilogy, an attempt is made to theoretically apprehend this phenomenon, as well as to analyse the polyvalence of the unfinished in literary processes and the creative biographies of writers. The monograph also reveals the linguistic and philosophical aspects of the phenomenon of the unfinished. The general formulation of the problem is comprehensively defined by T. F. Semyan as follows: "In the history of literature, the phenomenon of the unfinished is manifested in two fundamentally different aspects: 1) as unfinished due to various circumstances; and 2) as a creative authorial strategy, on the basis of ideas of fragmentariness and textual nonlinearity" (PU, p. 385).

The first section of the monograph is devoted to theoretical reflections on the phenomenon of the unfinished in fiction. Based on the works of Mikhail Bakhtin, Yury Tynyanov, Yuri Lotman, Naum Leiderman, Yuri Chumakov, Roman Ingarden, Jacques Derrida, Ezhi Farino and other important theorists, the provisional hypothesis of the contributors is that the unfinished in literature can be a sign of creative individuality, a manifestation of a special type of artistic thinking and a marker of a certain literary

trend (modernism and especially postmodernism, actively working with the poetics of the fragment). As the researchers justly point out, incompleteness creates a communicative link between author and reader, resulting in a field of semantic tension and a particular ideational energy. The authors also address the question of why a literary work naturally acquires the status of unfinished: from the point of view of artistic pragmatics, this status translates into a reciprocal “realisation of delayed completion”, primarily in terms of its semantic interpretation (*Ibid.*, p. 6). In the literature of modern times, which is in its very existence interconnected with new technologies of textuality (i. e. via the interface of Internet, hypertext, interactivity), the poetics of the unfinished text receive new developmental impulses.

At the same time, for the authors of the monograph it is obvious that the systematic and meaningful functionality of the phenomenon of the unfinished in European literature – including Russian – originates in the era of modernism. It is not by chance that Kafka enters into the limelight. In the section written by O. N. Turysheva, the early unfinished fragment is considered as a prototext of the key work of the writer of *Metamorphosis*, expanding the space of his interpretations. In the context of artistic questing into literary modernism, key concepts of Vladimir Nabokov’s creative work, such as “death”, “pain” and “memory”, are also apperceived. N. I. Zavgorodnyaya, the author of the following section, considers the unfinished works *Solus Rex* and *The Original of Laura: Dying is Fun* as the most representative texts of the writer. According to the researcher, the interaction of these concepts creates in the works of Nabokov “the effect of aesthetic completeness – with a formally incomplete composition of texts” (*Ibid.*, p. 123–124). In developing his research on the poetics of incompleteness in Marina Tsvetaeva’s *Poems on the Tsar’s Family*, A. L. Medvedev shows that the unfinished character of the work “in the context of the romantic aesthetic of the fragment and the literature of the twentieth century with its setting of overcoming artistic genres” is perceived as a poetic utterance with the artistic intention of lyrical confession. “Intertextual analysis of the poems reveals a semantic multilayeredness that is inherent to the poetics of modernism, including annalistic, mythological, archetypal, biblical, documentary, autobiographical and poetic layers” (*Ibid.*, p. 213).

From the literature of modernism, the authors of the monograph pass to postmodernism: of great interest in terms of the problem of literary incompleteness is the section written by E. V. Ponomareva and E. P. Isakova. The study is devoted to deliberate poetic strategies of non-completion in the most recent literature that posit creativity in the interaction between the author and the reader. The reader becomes a co-author of the work via branching storylines and a multiplicity of possible denouements; here, the text of the creative work overcomes its linear character and becomes a hypertext in its virtual existence on the Internet.

The third and fourth sections of the monograph reveal certain aspects of the poetics of the unfinished, including the artistic potential of ellipsis in a literary text (A. V. Kubasov, O. A. Mikhailova, M. Yu. Mukhin), the func-

tion of an unfinished plot in artistic prose (K. D. Gordovich), the variability of the lyrical plot as a factor in the aesthetics of incompleteness (S. A. Fokin) and the problem of the reverse artistic strategy from integrity to incompleteness (N. A. Rogachev). Of particular interest here is the section entitled ‘The Poetics of Fragmentation’ by A. V. Podchinenov and T. A. Snigireva, consisting of a holistic study of the poetics of a fragmentary text on the basis of the genres of diaries, notebooks and other so-called “ego texts”, which occupy an intermediate position between documentary and artistic prose. The authors draw attention to the fact that the artistic potential of the incompleteness of the “ego text”, which transforms it into a complete work, is often already disclosed in the text’s reception. According to the authors of the monograph, the unfinished can become a key element of the writer’s artistic thinking and era due to the possibility it presents for studying subjectivity. From this point of view, we glimpse the artistic worlds of Vasily Rozanov (N. M. Rakovskaya), Marina Tsvetaeva (T. Ye. Baryshnikova), Anna Akhmatova (L. M. Menshikov), the Strugatsky brothers (A. V. Snigirev), and Vitaly Kalpida (A. V. Mironov).

In general, the study of incompleteness in literature would itself be incomplete without critical literary discourse, which here is adequately fulfilled by Yu. A. Govorukhin. While this text is located at the beginning of the book, it could easily form the real conclusion of the monograph on the unfinished: “an unread work does not exist; the text generates a multiplicity of readings; the activity of interpretation is not so much exegetic as hermeneutic; interpretation is the answer to a question, including the question of the epoch; interpretation is determined by epistemological and communicative attitudes, specific for each historical and cultural period; literary and critical activity is pragmatically oriented” (*Ibid.*, p. 70). Thus, “any text is fundamentally incomplete, since it includes significative potentialities” (*Ibid.*, p. 71) and the authentic conclusion of a literary text is achieved in the semantic continuum of its subsequent reception.

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