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SYMBOLIC REPRESENTATION OF CRISIS IN THE BRITISH POSTMODERNISTS' FICTION DISCOURSE

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Contemporary fiction discourse reflects the general unease and turbulence of the late XX – early XXI century, marked by crises in various spheres. The paper investigates how the concept CRISIS is represented in the fiction discourse of the British postmodernists via symbols. Symbol which is always an understatement, a potentiality for interpretations, indefinite in its arbitrariness, acquires a specific rendition in postmodern theory through its idea of unreality, “simulativity” of the world filled with secondary meanings. This capacity of symbol to contain numerous layers of meaning is frequently employed by the postmodernist writers who in such way create multidimensional narrative with numerous possible interpretations. Symbol that can be viewed within the traditional approach (as a culture-forming phenomenon) or the postmodern one (as a means of creating a simulative reality), is a relevant component of the postmodern textual space. Postmodern authors tend to reject traditional symbols, and instead create new symbols representing the modified reality. Crisis which is understood as a period of instability, a crucial stage, a turning point of events, features prominently within the postmodern worldview, and is one of the most verbalized concepts in postmodern fiction discourse due to the particular importance attached to it in postmodern theory. The crises depicted by I. McEwan, D. Lodge, J. Barnes take a variety of forms, from global socio-political to interpersonal and inner psychological ones. Postmodernists use the nominations of different attributes of current crisis situations as the new symbols to actualize the concept CRISIS – to represent the idea of threat for modern society, human insecurity when facing global and personal turmoils, the risks and pressures of turning points in life. In the postmodern narrative, the symbolic space of a crisis society becomes not just disturbing and unsafe, but even hostile.

СИМВОЛІЧНЕ ВІДОБРАЖЕННЯ КРИЗИ В ХУДОЖНЬОМУ ДИСКУРСІ БРИТАНСЬКИХ ПОСТМОДЕРНІСТІВ

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Ключові слова: криза, постмодернізм, британська художня література, дискурс, символ, концепт, мовні засоби.

Сучасний художній дискурс відображає загальний неспокій і турбулентність кінця ХХ – початку ХХІ століття, що позначається кризами в різних сферах. У статті досліджено, як концепт КРИЗА представлений в художньому дискурсі британських постмодерністів через символи. Символ, який завжди є недомовленістю, поштовхом для інтерпретацій, невизначеним у своїй довільності, набуває специфічного тлумачення в теорії постмодернізму через ідею ірреальності, «симулятивності» світу, наповненого вторинними значеннями. Письменники-постмодерністи часто використовують цю здатність символу містити численні шари значення для створення багатовимірного нарративу з численними можливими інтерпретаціями. Символ, який можна розглядати в межах традиційного підходу (як культуротвірний феномен) або постмодерністського (як засіб створення симулятивної реальності), є актуальною складовою частиною постмодерністського текстопростору. Постмодерністи відмовляються від традиційних символів на користь створення нових, що репрезентують змінену реальність. Криза як період нестабільності, переломний етап, поворотний момент подій займає важливе місце в постмодерністському світогляді та є одним із найбільш вербалізованих концептів у постмодерному художньому дискурсі через особливе значення, яке надається йому в теорії постмодернізму. Кризи, зображені І. Макьюеном, Д. Лоджем, Дж. Барнсом, набувають розмаїтих форм та варіюються від соціально-політичних до міжособистісних і внутрішньопсихологічних. Автори використовують номінації різних атрибутів сучасних катастроф і кризових ситуацій як нові символи, які актуалізують концепт КРИЗА, тобто виражають ідею загрози для сучасного суспільства, незахищеності від глобальних та особистих потрясінь, ризиків переламних моментів життя. У постмодерністському нарративі символічний простір кризового суспільства стає не просто тривожним і небезпечним, а навіть ворожим.

Problem statement. In the second decade of the XXI century – with a full-scale war in Ukraine still in progress, at the brink of World War III, facing a growing nuclear threat – we are living through the period of multiple crises, including economic, political, demographic, ecological, cultural, axiological, and moral. It is quite rare that a speech of a politician or a statesman is made without a mention of the word “crisis”, let alone analytical texts in political, economic, ecological affairs where the term is most prevalent. So, crisis has become a sign of our time. Crisis is commonly understood as a crucial stage or turning point in the course of something, esp. in a sequence

of events or a disease, an unstable period, esp. one of extreme trouble or danger in politics, economics, etc. [Collins]. No wonder that the concept has recently become so common, since it can be used to describe watershed events both on the global scale, and at a local or even personal level.

In the turbulent XX century that brought the humanity two world wars, the complex outlook of the new epoch – post-modernity – started to shape as a response to the challenges of the time. Ambivalence, loss or dispersion of centre, and total uncertainty are postulated among the key concepts of postmodernist outlook (by I. Hassan, J.-F. Lyotard, and many others

theorists): “the interior space of our imagination is a theatre...; the images created there make up a movie that can never be destroyed” [Rushdie, 1992, p. 426]. The evolution of the British fictional forms has provided both traditional and innovative means for articulation of the most crucial aspects of contemporary life. But the scope of lingual means to actualize such images gradually changes as the postmodernist paradigm offers new dominant concepts, approaches and forms of their depiction capable of functioning as “the richest allegorical and hermeneutic vehicles for some new description” [Jameson, 1991, p. 16–17].

So, the **objective** of the paper is to investigate how the concept of crisis is represented in the fiction discourse of the British postmodernists via symbols.

The main **tasks** that we intend to accomplish in the paper are:

- to specify the notion of symbol and its interpretation in linguistics;
- to describe the role of symbols in fiction;
- to single out and analyze the symbolic means of expressing crisis in postmodern British fiction.

The British postmodernists’ fiction texts (Ian McEwan, David Lodge, Julian Barnes) comprise the empiric **material** of this research.

The **object** of the research is represented by crisis and its realization in language. The **subject** of the article includes the symbolic means of expressing crisis.

Presentation of the main material. Symbol, which occupies a special position in postmodern art, has quite long been in the focus of culture studies and philological research. It may be interpreted in modern humanitarian sciences in numerous ways, but its prominent role is recognized by all scholars, because as the main component of the symbolic universe, it brings together the world of culture and the world of man through the mediation of language. Symbol acquires a special interpretation in postmodern theorizing, in the framework of which J. Baudrillard proposed the idea of unreality, “simulativity” of the world filled with secondary meanings. Simulacra are related to symbols, but differ from them in that they do not have denotates, they are signs autonomous from referents [Baudrillard, 1983]. Regardless of the understanding of symbol – traditional (as a culture-forming phenomenon) or postmodern (as a means of creating a simulative reality) – it is mentioned by many theorists as a relevant component of the postmodern textual space.

The variety of meanings embedded in symbol makes it quite a challenging object of analysis in several fields of science, semiotics being in the forefront. A symbol is always an understatement, a signal for interpretations, indefinite in its arbitrariness and tangibility. The indicator of the symbol is the incomplete information in the verbal designation of the object, vagueness of the implied information,

“in the Peircean sense, symbols are based purely on conventional association” [Chandler, 2007, p. 38]. This capacity to contain numerous layers of meaning is frequently employed by the writers of fiction, postmodernism being no exception, who in such way create multidimensional narrative with several possible implications. A symbol in literature is an effective means to suggest an idea or evoke an emotion in the readers. As G. Hellman puts it, “Artful writers use symbols to suggest abstract ideas, not only for their brevity but for the feelings they convey” [Hellman, 1977, p. 280].

Symbol plays a special role in culture during crisis situations. “Crises are triggered by real or seeming threats. They are highly disruptive events (upending plans, routines, expectations, beliefs and values) that create heightened uncertainty” [Woods et al., 2020]. The crisis affects society in two ways: on the one hand, it brings destructive tendencies; on the other hand, it stimulates the renewal and update of the spiritual sphere, because it leads to a reconsidering the traditional values. Crisis periods, which postmodernity also belongs to, are usually accompanied by an upsurge in symbol-making, as the writers, movie-makers, journalists and general public feel that common ones are outdated and do not fully reflect the particulars of reality: “We are living at a time when it is more important than ever to put on our critical thinking hats. Are these symbols – the ones we’ve entrusted to coordinate our values – serving us the people? <...> What we are seeing right now is the crisis of symbols. The symbols of the old world, of the old order are only loosely mapped to inherent values. <...> What we need is an explosion of new symbols, which actually represent the inherent values we care about” [Smith, 2019].

So, numerous new symbols appear that reflect the spirit of time, the fragility and instability of human existence. For instance, yellow vests became a symbol of mass protests against the government social policy in France in 2018. The COVID-19 pandemic that posed a global threat to health, economic well-being and even political stability, gave rise to such a symbol as mask. For instance, the publication on the web-site of The Research Institute for Sustainability (Potsdam, Germany) was entitled “The mask in the Coronavirus crisis: a symbol of risk perception, politeness and community spirit” [Kumar, 2020], which awards the medical mask the status of the symbol of fight against the pandemic and highlights the importance of protecting oneself and the surrounding from coronavirus.

The second half of the 20th century is typically associated in art with the postmodernist “crisis of meaning”, therefore postmodern writers treat symbols in a special way. Postmodern discourse is influenced by historical (traditional) symbols that have personal meaning for people: “Symbolism

aimed at suggestibility of expression, actualisation and semantisation of the cultural context” [Mankus, 2014, p. 274]. According to M. Mankus, postmodernism replaces the abstract industrial and mechanical symbolism associated with modernist form-making with its figurative symbols derived from anthropomorphism, analogies of ‘items from environment’, or allusions to popular culture [Mankus, 2014, p. 277]. The significance of the idea of “double coding” for postmodernism brings to the forefront the necessity to “read” a postmodernist’s work on at least two levels, which is relevant when speaking about the symbols employed by the authors.

As mentioned in “A Dictionary of Symbols”, in times of crises and challenges people are likely to “find the technique whereby everything of a kind can be transmuted into its opposite. For example, illness inverted becomes health, hate becomes love, loneliness company, ignorance wisdom, dissension solidarity, rancour forgiveness, sadness happiness, the enemy’s victory turns to rout and drought to fertility. Such inversion at first appears as a crossroads, that is, as a potentiality. Then it takes the form of symbols of sacrifice” [Cirlot, 2001, p. 66–67]. Among the traditional Christian symbols of sacrifice the most famous are: cross, candle, poppy, and knife. However, today’s media-driven images have undermined society’s traditional values: “To get our attention, writers and speakers often use a discourse of exaggeration. Almost to the point of boredom do we hear about the ‘crisis’ of this and the ‘end’ of that. These expressions summon us to get ‘beyond,’ ‘post’ whatever is now in place” [Farley, 1996, p. 1], so postmodernism replaces the traditional symbols with its own newly-coined ones that are in the zeitgeist, respond to the audiences’ experiences and resonate with their backgrounds. Therefore, in a symbolic image crisis is included in the spectrum of the semantic load of the concepts of uncertainty, threat, anxiety, insecurity and tension.

CRISIS is one of the most verbalized concepts in postmodern fiction discourse due to the particular importance attached to it in postmodern theory. “Crisis” is defined by “Cambridge Dictionary” as: 1) a time of great disagreement, confusion, or suffering; 2) an extremely difficult or dangerous point in a situation; 3) a moment during a serious illness when there is the possibility of suddenly getting either better or worse [Cambridge]. As seen from the definitions, the concept that is quite ambiguous and challenging to express in everyday communication, as well as in fiction. Postmodernists explore new and modify traditional techniques for symbolic representation of crises that trigger the current social, political and cultural changes. Symbols serve as the efficient vehicle of representing the concept of crisis so relevant for people at the turn of the millenia, as we can observe

in the works of the popular British postmodernists: I. McEwan (“Saturday”), D. Lodge (“Deaf Sentence”), J. Barnes (“The Sense of an Ending”).

In his novel “Saturday” I. McEwan describes in detail a day in the life of the British neurosurgeon Henry Perowne. The main character faces threats from his professional duties in addition to those related to London’s social, political, and criminal environment. In a single day, he watches an airliner on fire in London sky, is caught up in a violent anti-war protest march, gets into a vehicle accident, and his family is taken hostage by a crazy criminal. The author portrays these unalienable aspects of our day as frequent threats to modernity, endangering people’s security, creating uncertainty about the future, and placing their lives in danger: “During the course of the novel, Perowne’s professionalized materialist understanding of consciousness is challenged” [Waugh, 2010, p. 128], as well as his confidence in the future and stability of his life.

Numerous symbols in the novel signal of the general crisis situation. The events of that day demonstrate Henry’s sense of vulnerability and insecurity, therefore, symbols of “double” reality acquire special significance in the novel. For example, **Schrodinger’s cat** which is the symbol of parallel existence of several possibilities at the same time at the point of bifurcation, which disappears and gives way to realization of only one of the two potentialities right after this point has been passed: “*A cat, Schrodinger’s Cat, hidden from view in a covered box, is either still alive, or has just been killed by a randomly activated hammer hitting a vial of poison. Until the observer lifts the cover from the box, both possibilities, alive cat and dead cat, exist side by side, in parallel universes, equally real*” [McEwan, 2006, p. 18].

Perowne wakes up one morning in fear, as he is sure that a terrorist attack is about to occur in London. The symbol that turns out to be a harbinger of a crisis situation and causes the main character’s unease and fear (both situational and overall) is a **burning plane**. With its appearance in London sky in the opening pages of the novel, anxiety bursts into the protagonist’s life and grows as the action proceeds, because many of today’s disasters are connected with airplanes, technological disasters have become the undeniable sign of our time. From time to time during the narration Henry enquires about the plane and tries to find out about its fate (asks his family, colleagues, watches TV news). The text contains 35 cases of the word “*plane*” used in the contextual environment of such lexemes as “*horrified*”, “*nightmare*”, “*horror*”, “*catastrophe*”, “*death*” that the protagonist associates the case with.

But as the novel unfolds, the symbol turns out to be simulative because the accident with the airplane on fire turns out not an act of terrorism against hundreds of civilians, but an emergency situation on a cargo

vehicle – “an electrical fault is suspected to be the cause of the fire” [McEwan, 2006, p. 70] – which ends up in a successful landing, as the journalists reported later. However scary the burning plane seemed to Henry, it appeared that his expectations and fears were far from reality, so the symbol appears to be a simulacrum: “*The fading life-chances of a disappointing news story – no villains, no deaths, no suspended outcome*” [McEwan, 2006, p. 70] “...in fact the story has collapsed – you can almost hear in the introduction the presenter’s regretful tone” [McEwan, 2006, p. 179]. Henry even feels a kind of disappointment about his failed expectations of what he supposed to be a disaster as he watches the news on TV: “*Good news, but as he walks out of the kitchen in the direction of the larder, Henry feels no particular pleasure, not even relief. Have his anxieties been making a fool of him?*” [McEwan, 2006, p. 180].

In the novel “Saturday”, the new symbols of crisis are also the names of tragic socio-political events, organizations responsible for tragic acts of violence with disastrous consequences, sinister personalities associated with attempts to undermine the stability of human existence: “*Saddam*” [McEwan, 2006, pp. 38, 62, 64, 72], “*jihadists*” [McEwan, 2006, p. 33], “*Al-Qaeda*” [McEwan, 2006, pp. 73, 100, 186], “*the New York bombers*” [McEwan, 2006, p. 191]. The novel contains multiple references to the other turning points of modern times that together form a specific symbolic space which is insecure and hostile: “*Despite the troops mustering in the Gulf, or the tanks out at Heathrow on Thursday, the storming of the Finsbury Park mosque, the reports of terror cells around the country, and Bin Laden’s promise on tape of ‘martyrdom attacks’ on London, Perowne held for a while to the idea that it was all an aberration, that the world would surely calm down and soon be otherwise, that solutions were possible, that reason, being a powerful tool, was irresistible, the only way out; or that like any other crisis, this one would fade soon, and make way for the next, going the way of the Falklands and Bosnia, Biafra and Chernobyl*” [McEwan, 2006, p. 32].

The language means used to verbalize the symbols of crisis are diverse, but the specificity of postmodern fiction is that resorts with this aim to names of locations, people, organizations strongly associated with crises situations: “*Perowne, born the year before the Suez Crisis, too young for the Cuban missiles, or the construction of the Berlin Wall, or Kennedy’s assassination, remembers being tearful over Aberfan*” [McEwan, 2006, p. 31]. The terrible events of September 11 make this tragic date a modern symbol of the uncertainty of existence: “*The September attacks were Theo’s induction into international affairs... the New York attacks precipitated a global crisis*” [McEwan, 2006, p. 31]. Their initial function – to denote the realia associated

with events of political, religious, existential crisis – develops into symbolic representation of insecurity, instability of human existence, as their role here is to imply the tension, fear, and uncertainty, which is the leitmotif of the novel.

The author also tends to use the symbol of “**fog/mist**”: “*Perowne feels himself moving through a mental fog*” [McEwan, 2006, p. 104], “*Until now, Henry suddenly sees, he’s been in a fog*” [McEwan, 2006, p. 209]. This symbol is created by metaphorical transfer of meaning based on similarity of events and objects which are fuzzy, vague, blurred or unclear. That physical and mental fog the protagonist goes through brings to mind the idea of a person or the whole humanity being lost, seeing no way out.

In contrast to H. Perowne, the protagonist of D. Lodge’s novel “Deaf Sentence” Desmond Bates, a Doctor of Linguistics, faces with the professional and family crisis arising from his physical disability (deafness): “*His retirement put the whole phenomenon in a different and less agreeable perspective, and shifted the balance of their marriage*” [Lodge, 2008, p. 41]. As a deaf person deprived of the auditory perception, he feels acutely and frequently exaggerates his problems, since the world reduces to his nearest environment, and any minor trouble seems a crisis if it deteriorates his touch with the outer world: “*I have to admit that after that I forgot all about him in the stress of my hearing-aid crisis*” [Lodge, 2008, p. 192].

In spite of occasional personal crises, Desmond also cares about the social and other issues, and expresses concern about the local and global problems: “*The episode threw me into a what-is-the-world-coming-to mood, a state I am increasingly prone to these days, prompted by phenomena like Big Brother, four-letter words in the Guardian, vibrating penis rings on sale in Boots, binge-drinkers puking in the city centre on Saturday nights, and chemotherapy for cats and dogs. Somehow it is easier to focus one’s anger and despair on these comparatively trivial offences to reason and decency than on the larger threats to civilisation like Islamic terrorism, Israel/Palestine, Iraq, AIDS, the energy crisis and global warming, which seem to be beyond anyone’s ability to control. I don’t think I have ever felt so pessimistic about the future of the human race, even at the height of the Cold War, as I do now, because there are so many possible ways civilisation could come to a catastrophic end*” [Lodge, 2008, p. 108].

This list quoted above demonstrates what Desmond sees as the everyday symbols of numerous crises, the mixture of local down-to-earth markers and the events with planetary-scale consequences. The interplay between the global and personal dimension of crises is further intensified by their recurrent opposition in the text – the author places Desmond’s reflections on

world problems next to the following description of the characters' trifling concerns: "*She asked for a glass of white wine, being in good humour because the faulty Italian fabric which had caused a **minor crisis** some weeks ago had been replaced in time to make up the client's curtains for Christmas*" [Lodge, 2008, p. 164]. By doing so, D. Lodge points out that for a postmodern individual their personal and interpersonal crises are intertwined and equally important.

The novel "The Sense of an Ending" by J. Barnes demonstrates another approach to the symbolic depiction of crisis. The crisis revealed there is inner psychological one, as it concerns the collapse of emotional stability, the loss of trust and confusion of feelings. It is "the story of one man coming to terms with the mutable past" [Barnes, 2011, p. 3]. The main character, Tony Webster, who is retired, tries to disclose the mystery of his close friend Adrian's death, and faces with a stumbling block of turbulent reality which disillusiones him and makes him rethink his past. The novel reveals the collision between different dimensions of the main character's personality, so the entire narrative provides numerous symbolic representations of his internal crisis.

At the beginning of the text, his worldview dissonance with the era is expressed in an internal monologue: "*We live in time – it holds us and moulds us – but I've never felt I understood it very well*" [Barnes, 2011, p. 10]. The seven-time repeated anaphora in the finale of the novel emphasizes the heaviness of the narrator's thoughts, creates a sense of confusion, movement in a circle, looping: "***I thought*** of a bunch of kids in Trafalgar Square. ***I thought*** of a young woman dancing, for once in her life. ***I thought*** of what I couldn't know or understand now... ***I thought*** of Adrian's definition of history. ***I thought*** of his son cramming his face into a shelf of quilted toilet tissue in order to avoid me. ***I thought*** of a woman frying eggs in a carefree, slapdash way, untroubled when one of them broke in the pan... ***And I thought*** of a cresting wave of water, lit by a moon, rushing past and vanishing upstream" [Barnes, 2011, p. 162]. The text ends with the protagonist still completely confused, as what he had found out during his investigation did not give him all the answers, yet increased his anxiety, unease and confusion: "*You are allowed a long moment of pause, time enough to ask the question: what else have I done wrong?*" [Barnes, 2011, p. 162]. Such a finale of the novel implies that the crisis of personality is not resolved.

The detailed textual analysis of the novel makes it possible to single out several symbols of crisis in the textual space: "*Another detail I remember: the three of us, as a symbol of our bond, used to wear our watches with the face on the inside of the wrist. It was an affectation, of course, but perhaps something*

more. It made time feel like a personal, even a secret, thing" [Barnes, 2011, p. 12]. Those **watches worn in the wrong way** were the symbols of not only friendship and unity, but also represented a specific feeling of time, its neglect and wrong perception that eventually ended in loss of relationship.

It is necessary to mention that J. Barnes also resorts to the symbolic representation of a personal crisis as an **airplane crash**, which is consonant with a similar symbol used by I. McEwan, and indicates its importance for postmodern outlook: "*Later, the memory becomes a thing of shreds and patches. It's a bit like the black box aeroplanes carry to record what happens in a crash. If nothing goes wrong, the tape erases itself. So if you do crash, it's obvious why you did; if you don't, then the log of your journey is much less clear*" [Barnes, 2011, p. 105].

Another symbol reflecting the concept of crisis the narrator (Tony) considers relevant is the **Severn Bore** (a tidal bore created as the rising tide enters the funnel-shaped Bristol Channel and Severn Estuary and the rushing water pushes upstream in a sequence of waves) that he happened to witness with his friends: "*the river simply seemed to change its mind, and a wave, two or three feet high, was heading towards us, the water breaking across its whole width, from bank to bank. This heaving swell came level with us, surged past, and curved off into the distance*" [Barnes, 2011, p. 46]. He admits that the event was not equal to a disaster, but made him reflect on the turning points in life when things can unexpectedly go in the reverse direction: "*It wasn't like a tornado or an earthquake (not that I'd witnessed either) – nature being violent and destructive, putting us in our place. It was more unsettling because it looked and felt quietly wrong, as if some small lever of the universe had been pressed*" [Barnes, 2011, p. 46]. River is a traditional symbol of the irreversible flow of time that many authors employ in fiction discourse, but in the postmodernist text it is updated to the "Severn Bore" with its new connotation of the flow's potential to run backwards. Just the same way as that tidal bore, Chapter Two of the novel turns Tony's idea of his past in the opposite direction, making him reconsider many events of his and his friends' lives. Thus the symbolic dimension gives the personal crisis voluminous character, brings in philosophic ideas about eternal values.

Thus, the texts under consideration demonstrate that understanding and harmonizing with the inner "self" in the world transformed by the changing reality and global crises, turns out a real challenge for postmodern individuals: "*...words like 'catastrophe' and 'mass fatalities', 'chemical and biological warfare' and 'major attack' have recently become bland through repetition*" [McEwan, 2006, p. 12]. By using the lexemes usually associated with the military sphere the author states that the terms of war have become the

signs of postmodern tough times. The analysis of the fiction discourse of the British postmodernists reveals that the concept of crisis is one of the postmodern semantic dominants around which the symbolic space is created noted by the atmosphere of total insecurity and unease. The represented symbols of crisis extend the range of interpretations of postmodern reality by the authors, shaping its specific simulative character and marking the overlappings between the concept of crisis and other conceptual spheres.

Conclusion and prospects for further research.

Symbolic systems, performing as an integrating factor in stable periods of life, tend to lose this function in times of crises. Any crisis, on the one hand, has a destructive character, but, on the other hand, contributes to the transformation and renovation of the spiritual sphere, since it triggers rethinking of values. It is shown in the research that a social crisis is always accompanied by complex processes in the symbolic system of culture: rejection of old symbols, and an upsurge in symbol creation leading to the emergence of numerous new symbols to represent the modified reality, which is what we observe in postmodernity. The specific feature of a postmodern symbolic space of a crisis society is that it tends to be simulative.

The analysis of the symbolic representation of the concept CRISIS in the fiction discourse of the British postmodernists reveals that it can be performed in a number of ways, with a tendency to employ rather newly-created than traditional symbols. In the postmodern narrative, the symbolic space of a crisis society becomes not just disturbing and unsafe, but even hostile. It is worth highlighting the differences in the nature of the crises depicted in the novels under consideration – from global socio-political to interpersonal and inner psychological. As the analyzed novels demonstrated, a symbol is an effective means of actualizing crisis in fiction discourse due to its inherent imagery, metaphorical and meaningful character, potential for implications. This is evidenced by theoretical studies of the nature of symbolism, and this is also confirmed by our illustrative material. Postmodernist writers gravitate towards using nominations of different attributes of current disasters and crisis situations as the new symbols to represent the ideas of threat, insecurity, and the whole concept of crisis pressuring modern society. The prospective research of the problematics can touch upon the linguistic manifestations of crisis in other types of discourse.

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