

ISSN: 2545-0573

## THE CONCEPT OF GOTHIC AND NEO-GOTHIC STYLE IN THE CONTEXT OF LITERATURE HISTORY

**Khabibova Shakhnoza Ismatullayevna**

*Teacher of the Department of Teaching Languages Samarkand Institute of Economics and Service*

### ARTICLE INFO.

**Key words:**

aesthetics, genre, style, gothic, enlightenment, mysticism, pre-romanticism

### Abstract:

The article is devoted to the problem of the Gothic style in Western European prose. The origins of the Gothic tradition, the history of the term in literary criticism, the main stages in the development of the classic Gothic novel and the emergence of the Neo-Gothic phenomenon are considered. The article provides an overview of the most important works for this style, from Walpole's *Otranto* to Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*, with an analysis of the key philosophical and aesthetic ideas of the era that influenced the formation of the genre (in particular, the concept of the sublime, formulated by Edmund Burke). The article also touches upon the issues of studying classical Gothic literature and its perception by the student audience.

<http://www.gospodarkainnowacje.pl/> © 2022 LWAB.

The history of foreign literature is an integral part of the modern program of professional higher education in the specialty "Philology". In the course of studying this discipline, students get acquainted with the main stages of the Western European literary process, gain an understanding of genres, styles, aesthetic concepts, often unparalleled in Russian culture. However, with the most complete and rich curriculum, some forms of Western European literature do not receive sufficient coverage, they are studied only introductory. In particular, the course of the history of foreign literature of the 18th century, as a rule, does not leave time for a detailed and thorough consideration of such a phenomenon as pre-romanticism, not to mention its particular manifestation - the Gothic novel. One way to satisfy students' interest in this exciting topic is a special course. It allows you to take a closer look at the works of those authors who are usually not included in the main program - for example, Anna Radcliffe and M.G. Lewis, C. Maturin and C. le Fanu, as well as the little-studied texts of the classics, such as the story "The Vampire" by J.G. Byron, the mystical stories of Dickens and Elizabeth Gaskell.

Many students taking a specialty course in gothic literature associate the very term "gothic" with vampires, ghost stories, and other genres of "horror literature" that are experiencing a resurgence in popularity, especially among younger readers. In addition, in the student audience, an adequate understanding of this term is hindered by its use in relation to music and youth subculture that spread in the West in the late 1970s, and in Russia after the 1990s. Thus, one of the first tasks of the special course is to clarify the term and identify those meanings that are relevant in the context of modern literary criticism.

The first use of the word "Gothic" in an aesthetic context is attributed to Giorgio Vasari, who tried with this definition to mark the boundary between the medieval, barbaric art of the northern peoples and the classical style of the Italian Renaissance [1].

Under his complete indignation tirades against the gloomy medieval art, both the classicists of the 17th century and many thinkers of the Enlightenment could subscribe. Only in the works of representatives of pre-romanticism, in particular Richard Hurd, the term "Gothic" loses its negative meaning and ceases to be synonymous with the word "barbarian". Richard Hurd in his collection of essays *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* "argues with neoclassical aesthetics, declaring medieval literature a significant period in the history of culture, which served as sources of inspiration for many brilliant poets of subsequent eras (Ariosto and Tasso, Spencer and Milton). Hurd compares ancient and medieval culture, finding in the latter an immeasurably richer embodiment of poetic fantasy than in the works of classical antiquity. At the same time, Hurd uses the term "Gothic" broadly, in fact, as a synonym for the concept of "medieval".

In the same meaning, the definition of "Gothic" appears in the subtitle of Horatio Walpole's story "The Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Story" (1764), which is considered the first text in the history of Gothic prose. In the first preface to his work, prudently published under a pseudonym, Walpole allows himself an ironic remark that could be retrospectively addressed to Giorgio Vasari: "The principal incidents are such as were believed in the darkest ages of Christianity; but the language and conduct have nothing that savours of barbarism. The style is the purest Italian » [2].

Although *The Castle of Otranto* claims to be some kind of historical scenery - the action takes place "between the first and last crusade" - the medieval background in the story looks no more convincing than mystical motifs in the form of animated portraits or giant ghosts. It was not Walpole's task to reconstruct the true picture of the chosen period; the colorful era of the Crusades attracted him precisely because of its remoteness from the Age of Reason, in which the author had to live. This temporal distance is exacerbated by the choice of location, which is some semi-mythical province in Italy. Through his text, Walpole argues with the philosophical and aesthetic dogmatism of his era, which requires an indispensable edification and plausibility from a work of art: "It was an attempt to blend the two kinds of romance: the ancient and the modern. In the former, all was imagination and improbability; in the latter, nature is always intended to be, and sometimes has been, copied with success. Invention has not been wanted; but the great resources of fancy have been dammed up, by a strict adherence to common life. But if in the latter species nature has cramped imagination, she did but take her revenge, having been totally excluded from old romances...The author of the following pages thought it possible to reconcile the two kinds" [2].

In his search for a new novel form, Walpole was not alone: shortly before *The Castle of Otranto* appeared, the English public had the opportunity to get acquainted with another work that combined medieval scenery with characters modern in character and way of thinking. In 1762 Thomas Leland's *Longsword, Earl of Salisbury*. In this voluminous text compared to Walpole's story, the medieval background is drawn in more detail, and mysticism is completely absent. However, the author himself indicates that the entertainment function of his work is paramount, warning the reader about possible "liberties" in the interpretation of historical events: "if too great liberties were taken in altering or enlarging their accounts, the reader who looks only for amusement will probably forgive it » [3]. Genre subtitle of Leland's novel *An Historical Romance* is very eloquent - it emphasizes its connection with a certain historical era, and with the medieval genre "romance". In this respect, Anna Radcliffe is closer to Leland than to Walpole - some of her works also bear the title "Romance" (*The Romance of the Forest*, 1791, *A Sicilian Romance*, 1792), and they lack any mysticism. However, the historical background in her works is becoming more and more conventional, the chronotope is becoming less and less removed from the present (for example, the action of Radcliffe's "Romance in the Forest" takes place in the 16th century). These changes show that the concept of Gothic in the literary context is

rapidly losing its original meaning of "medieval", while acquiring new genre and aesthetic associations.

The early gothic novel, especially in its female version - by Radcliffe, Clara Reeve, Charlotte Smith, Sophia and Harriet Lee - in many ways approaches the sentimentalist: the texts are replete with descriptions of nature and a detailed account of the experiences of the characters, and their misfortunes, as a rule, end in a happy ending. What makes it possible to distinguish these novels into a special group, separating them from the enlightenment "mainstream" and uniting them under the general name of "Gothic"? There is no longer a connection with the Middle Ages, even if conditional, but not yet the supernatural motives, mysticism or horrors with which the modern reader associates literary Gothic. Separate exceptions, built on the predominance of the mysterious or terrible, are occasionally found in English literature of the second half of the 18th century - "The Castle of Otranto", "Vatek" by Beford, "The Monk" by Lewis. Much of the gothic romance of this period retains its implicit connection to the ethics and aesthetics of sentimentalism, and tends towards a moderately frightening or sublime variant of horror, defined as terror, which is opposed to shocking and repulsive horror. The supernatural imagery of the "Castle of Otranto" disappears in Clara Reeve's revision of the story (Old English Baron, 1777), while the novel *The Monk*, shocking with infernal motifs and scenes of violence, brings to life the restrained Italian (*The Italian, or the Confessional of the Black Penitents*, 1797) by Radcliffe, written a year after Lewis's controversial novel.

One of the genre-forming features of the Gothic novel is a special chronotope. Formed by the end of the 18th century, the typical topos of the Gothic novel includes a number of such elements as a secret passage and / or room, a labyrinth of corridors and stairs, sometimes leading to a dungeon, a room with a secret, which is often a mysterious portrait. Among other secrets hidden in the bowels of a Gothic castle, mansion or monastery are traces of monstrous crimes or otherworldly intervention, evidence of family curses. The hero is forced to go through the entire multi-level labyrinth of the Gothic topos, leading him to reveal the fatal secret and at the same time to the knowledge of himself - his roots, origin, true character.

Another common feature for the first texts of the Gothic tradition, regardless of the presence or absence of mysticism, historical scenery or the traditional set of motifs "heroine-villain-castle-sinister secret", is an interest in the unknown and forbidden. Gothic novels, short stories, and dramas often deal with "problematic" themes such as mental illness, religious fanaticism, violent tendencies, incest, sexual depravity, and irrational and mystical phenomena. Gothic texts are marked by a clear desire to reveal secrets that enlightenment thought ignored or considered in a different, most often socio-psychological light.

The desire to enter the labyrinth, to penetrate into a locked room, to look behind the black curtain is typical not only for the heroes of Gothic novels, but - in a metaphorical form - for their creators. It is no coincidence that the history of writing some Gothic works is rapidly acquiring almost mystical details, as if involving the authors themselves in the world they have created: the quaint Strawberry Hill mansion, which imitates a Gothic castle in the same way as *The Castle of Otranto* imitates a historical novel, inspired its owner with the idea of his story; the last years of Radcliffe's life, spent in creative silence, are covered with rumors (in particular, that the nightmares invented by the novelist have deprived her of her mind). The paucity of biographical information about Clara Reeve makes centuries later to think out her story, turning the writer into the heroine of a very scandalous novel (Leoni Hargrave, Clara Reeve, 1975).

Another unifying feature of gothic novels - both early classics and modern examples of the genre - is the author's desire to immerse the reader in a state of paralyzing fear. This property of literary Gothic is discussed by Howard Lovecraft, whose work can be considered not only in the context of neo-Gothic, but also as an example of a unique Gothic mannerism - or decadence. In the essay "Supernatural Horror in Literature" Lovecraft tries to find a formula for genuine gothic fear: "The true weird story has something more than secret murder, bloody bones or a sheeted form clanking chains according to rule.

A certain atmosphere of a breathless and unexplainable dread of the outer, unknown forces must be present; and there must be a hint, expressed with the seriousness and portentousness becoming its subject, of that most terrible conception of the human brain — a malign and particular suspension or defeat of those fixed laws of Nature which are our only safeguard against the assaults of chaos and the daemons of unplumbed space" [4].

The sources of fear in the early gothic novel were very predictable, and boiled down mainly to the horrors that can await a young defenseless girl on a life full of dangers. However, the change of cultural paradigm at the turn of the century and global historical upheavals, such as the French Revolution, lead to the need to revise the artistic arsenal of Gothic, in accordance with the more demanding tastes of the public. Ghosts and mysterious silhouettes in the night are no longer enough to frighten the jaded reader. Significant changes are taking place in the aesthetics of the gothic novel of the turn of the century, it becomes more bloody and frank, and Lewis's *Monk* can be considered a harbinger of this metamorphosis. At the same time, the boundaries of the genre are blurring, since romanticism, which replaced enlightenment neoclassicism, favorably perceives both medieval and mystical motifs, but does not welcome the "classic, ancient, excellently long, long, long" novel.

The multi-page works of Radcliffe and her followers are being replaced by small, but dynamic and much more frightening short stories, stories and even poems with a Gothic flavor: *Zastrozzi* by Shelley (1810), *Christabel* by Coleridge (1816), *Vampyre* by Polidori and Byron (1819). Against the background of this process of "crushing" the form, one cannot fail to note two major and significant novels, each of which develops the traditions of literary Gothic in its own way - "*Frankenstein*" (*Frankenstein: or, The Modern Prometheus*, 1818) Mary Shelley and "*Melmoth the Wanderer* » *Maturin* (1820). The originality of these works, while maintaining the features typical of the Gothic novel - the poetics of the mysterious, special chronotope - allows us to talk about the rapid evolution of Gothic as a style in literature and the completion of the first, classical stage in the formation of the genre itself. His subsequent history is the history of the penetration of Gothic motifs into other genre forms, their integration into the romantic tradition, then into Victorian, sensational and detective prose.

In parallel with these processes, the canon of horror literature as such begins to take shape - prose about vampires, ghosts and ghosts. The classics of this genre are Sheridan le Fanu and Montague Roderick James. From the point of view of early Gothic, their works seem to be the "quintessence" of the terrible, but at the same time, this kind of prose turns the Gothic style from a kind of "underground", which was the first Gothic novels against the backdrop of the Enlightenment tradition, into a phenomenon of mass culture. The variety of nightmarish images in these works is not able to replace the subtle nuances of fear caused by the movement of the curtain on a calm night, as described by Radcliffe. The aesthetics of the sublime was replaced by the categories of the truly terrible and repulsive.

In its classical form, both a product of the Enlightenment and at the same time a form of its criticism, the classic Gothic novel lasted less than half a century before becoming a source of interest and inspiration for subsequent eras. Almost all English writers of the 19th century, from Dickens to Oscar Wilde, paid tribute to mystical and supernatural motifs in literature in one form or another. In the 20th century, Gothic turns into a meta-genre phenomenon, spreading its influence not only on literature and cinema, but also on music, animation and computer games. The Gothic style no longer has its own form or a distinct aesthetic and moral task, it becomes part of the bright palette of mass culture, actually dissolving in it, therefore, in relation to the texts of the 20th century with a pronounced "Gothic" entourage, it is more appropriate to use the term "Neo-Gothic". This is exactly what the editor of the *American Encyclopedia of Gothic Literature* Mary Ellen Snodgrass does, uniting under the heading neo-Gothic such diverse writers as J. Carol Oates and Flannery O'Connor, Ann Rice and Toni Morrison, Iris Murdoch and Michelle Fiber [5]. Genres, artistic techniques, images and motifs of Gothic literature change and are modified, and the style itself adapts to the demands and needs of modern culture; options such as southern, colonial, urban gothic appear. But fear, in any case, remains the strongest

human emotion, so “terrible tales” will be among the most popular genres for a long time to come.

### References:

1. Vasari Giorgio, Maclehorse Louisa S., Brown Gérard Baldwin. Vasari on Technique: being the introduction to the three arts of design, architecture, sculpture and painting, prefixed to the lives of the most excellent painters, sculptors and architects. — Dover: Dover Publications, 1960. — 328 p.
2. Walpole Horatio. The Castle of Otranto. — Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 2009. — 259 p.
3. Leland Thomas. Longsword, Earl of Salisbury, v. 1. — London: W. Johnston, 1762. — 236 p.
4. Lovecraft H.P. Supernatural Horror in Literature and Other Essays. — Holicong: Wildside Press, 2011. — 132 p.
5. Encyclopedia of the Gothic Literature. The Essential Guide to the Lives and Works of Gothic Writers / ed. Mary Ellen Snodgrass. — NY: Facts On File, 2004. — 480 p.
6. Hurd Richard. Letters on Chivalry and Romance. — London: A. Millar, W. Thurlbourn, and J. Woodyer, 1762. — 120 p.
7. Khabibova Shakhnoza Ismatullaevna. (2021). The Modern Gothic in Twentieth Century. *Eurasian Research Bulletin*, 2, 73–77.
8. Ismatullayevna, K.S. 2022. Gothic Romance and the Birth of the Neo-Gothic Direction in Culture. *International Journal on Integrated Education*. 5, 4 (Apr. 2022), 147-153.