

Naidenova V.M.

Lugansk State Pedagogical University, Lugansk city

FANTASY AND REALITY IN THE WORKS OF H.WALPOLE

The modern fantasy genre has its origins in the European knightly novel, the Scandinavian sagas, myths and legends such as the Arthurian cycle, the Gothic novel, and the works of mystics and romantics of the 19th century.

The chronological framework of the “golden age” of the English Gothic novel dates back to 1764-1820. The classic novels of Gothic literature are considered to be “The Castle of Otranto” by H.Walpole (1764), “The Old English Baron” by C.Reeve (1777-1778), “The Recess, or a Tale of Other Times” by S. Lee (1783-1785), six novels by A. Radcliffe, “The Monk” by M.G. Lewis (1796), “Vathek” by W.Beckford (1786), “Frankenstein or, The Modern Prometheus” by M.Shelley (1818) and “Melmoth the Wanderer” by Ch.Maturin (1820).

Literary Gothic dates back from the work “The Castle of Otranto” by Horace Walpole. The success of the book allowed the writer to give his name in the second edition of 1765 and explain his artistic intentions. He considers his work as an attempt to synthesize “two types of novels - the old and the modern”, the fantastic and the real. In the modern novel (English realistic novel of the 18th century) “the great sources of fantasy were closed due to too exact imitation of real life” [3, c. 32].

A system of images formed in the novel of H.Walpole “The Castle of Otranto” that defines the canon of the Gothic novel: the image of a vivid Gothic villain and a weaker image of the protagonist hero, as well as images of a woman victim, a monk and chatty servants. The undoubted success of H.Walpole is the creation of the image of Manfred, who opens a whole gallery of Gothic villains in world literature. Manfred is depicted as a man who has got points, torn apart by conflicting passions.

V.M. Zhirmunsky emphasizes that they were “defined by a romantic interweaving of life experience and poetry: the coloring of life with elements of creative fantasy” [2, p. 251].

The pile of the terrible and the supernatural testifies to the degree of fascination of Walpole with the romantic area that he discovered.

In “The Castle Otranto”, H.Walpole proposed an innovative approach to depicting supernatural events, which was also pointed out by W.Scott: “The intention of Walpole was to evoke similar associations in the mind of the readers through a carefully thought-out plot and carefully reproduced historical flavor of those times, to prepare them for the perception of miracles, congenial beliefs and the own feelings of the characters in the narrative” [4, p. 237].

For the fate of the emerging genre, the emphasis of surreal forces in “The Castle of Otranto” was of paramount priority: reinforced by the perception of the characters of the novel, it outlined a “fundamentally new mechanism for the functioning of the fantastic” in narrative literature. The supernatural in Walpole's book not only brings the final triumph of the highest justice closer, it has an important emotional role to play: its manifestations are always accompanied by the perplexity and confusion of the characters and plunge them into horror. The affect of fear, generated by the impossibility of explaining the phenomena of the supernatural, is an undoubted innovation in Gothic poetics [1, c. 11].

In “The Castle of Otranto”, supernatural motives are designed to evoke not only feelings of amazement and horror among readers. They serve as a means of true recreation of the atmosphere of the Middle Ages, reconstruction of medieval consciousness. Beginning with “The Castle of Otranto” by H.Walpole, the category of the supernatural becomes an integral part of the genre of the Gothic novel.

Numerous reprints of “The Castle of Otranto”, translations into all European languages testify to the success of the work. Moreover, there are a large number of imitations that laid the foundation for a new genre of gothic novels or “novels of mystery and horror” and enjoyed wide popularity at the end of the 18th – first half of the 19th century.

Thus, the work of H.Walpole is characterized by a romantic interweaving of life experience and poetry: the coloring of life with elements of creative fantasy and the reflection in the work of the self-consciousness of the individual.

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