

## IV. ЛИТЕРАТУРНЫЙ ПРОЦЕСС В КОНТЕКСТЕ МУЛЬТИКУЛЬТУРИЗМА И МНОГОЯЗЫЧИЯ

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### **RUSSIAN AND AMERICAN HORROR FICTION AS A GENRE, CREATIVE WRITING AND EDUCATIONAL PHENOMENON: A PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Although the genre of horror has gained an extraordinary popularity in contemporary literature, it still raises controversy among specialists. The situation in Russia is especially complicated. Until the beginning of the 20th century, Russian horror fiction used to develop concurrently with the evolution of horror genre in the U.S., but after the revolution of 1917 and until the late 1980s this tradition was interrupted in Russia. Therefore, nowadays the question “What is horror fiction?” is unclear for Russian philologists, the question “How to write horror fiction?” is unclear for Russian writers, and including the horror genre in literature syllabus is regarded by Russian professors and teachers as a forbidden topic. The situation is different in the United States where a long-standing tradition of interpreting the category of the horrible has been created. Modern American scientists, philosophers, writers and educators agree that horror fiction in its best manifestations touches upon essential problems of a human soul. It allows to exert a powerful positive influence on the formation and development of a personality. Throughout the 20th century, the genre of horror was systematically evolving in the U.S., and as of today, it is American horror fiction that sets the standards of the genre all over the world.

The aim of this research is to describe horror fiction as a dynamically developing genre from three points of view: 1) through comparative and genre analysis of horror fiction in the U.S. and Russia; 2) by studying narrative strategies which are used by horror writers in the U.S.; 3) by surveying principles of teaching the horror genre in an American multicultural educational environment.

After experiencing decades of oblivion, the genre of horror can revive in Russia thanks to the critical mastering of the U.S. experience, where the genre tradition has never been interrupted.

A list of bibliography is attached to help beginner researchers with their study of the subject.

*Key words:* the genre of horror, American studies, contemporary Russian literature, comparative and genre analysis of horror fiction, narrative strategies, principles of teaching the horror genre.

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#### **Introduction**

In the proposed article, horror fiction is theoretically described as a three-dimensional phenomenon, and each level of comprehension corresponds to three fields of study: 1) Literary Criticism (studying history of the genre and genre’s characteristics; comparative analysis of horror fiction in Russia and in the U.S.), 2) Creative Writing (studying narrative strategies and special techniques which are used by horror writers), 3) Educational Psychology (analyzing the possibility and appropriateness of introduction of some horror fiction examples in school and university

teaching, especially in a multicultural educational environment). It is worth mentioning here that the literary analysis approach is decisive and is used as a scientific dominant in relation to the other levels. Being observed from these three points of view, horror fiction appears as a many-sided phenomenon significant in the broad sphere of philosophical anthropology.

Generally speaking, the material of this article is an introduction to a more substantial research project. The necessity of this research is determined by the fact that the genre of horror in literature has a long history and is very much in demand today. This is reflected in both huge print run and an infinite number of screen versions of horror novels. It is no coincidence that Stephen King, who is the brightest representative of this genre, is considered to be one of the most widely read authors in the world.

Nevertheless, the definition of horror as a literary genre is still controversial, and there is no tradition of classification of works related to this genre in Russian philology. M. Parfyonoff, the creator of the “Horror Web,” admits that it is wrong to consider the horror genre as a variety of fantasy or confuse it with mysticism in the wide sense. Horror is an independent and dynamically developing genre which occupies a special place in world literature and is in need of being studied.

The category of the horrible has attracted attention of philosophers all around the world in all times. Ancient Greek philosophy considered the category of the horrible in cosmogonic terms and associated it with the concept of chaos. In the Middle Ages, the category of the horrible was placed in the system of theological conception [Huizinga, 2016: 679]. M. Heidegger and N. Berdyaev analyzed the category of the horrible in the field of existentialism [Heidegger, 2015: 201; Berdyaev, 2015: 314]. Ts. Todorov tried to create a general categorization of the genre of horror [Todorov, 1973: 59; Voller, 1994: 198]. American philosopher N. Carroll constructed his own “philosophy of horror” based on the trends of contemporary art [Carroll, 2004: 25].

Unfortunately, Russian scholars, with rare exceptions, ignore this genre. The situation is much better in the U.S., where has always been a long-standing tradition of interpreting the horror genre in literature as well as horror movies; in its best manifestations touches upon essential problems of a human soul. This allows to exert a powerful influence on the formation and development of a personality. In particular, L. Badley considers the category of the horrible in art to be the sphere of repressed passions of a modern society [Badley, 1996: 29]. The moral content of the genre of horror and the questions of the genre’s influence on American and world culture were analyzed in “Horror” edited by S. Hantke [Hantke, 2002], as well as in a number of other books published under the editorship of this scholar in the publishing house “University Press of Mississippi” [Hantke, 2004; 2010; 2018].

In conducting this research we contacted with almost 30 American professors from 14 universities and came to the point that usually the gothic and the horror genres are studied in the field of science fiction or speculative fiction studies. There are five universities which have special research programs and courses in speculative and gothic horror fiction and also creative writing schools: Florida Atlantic University; University of California, Riverside; The University of Kansas; Washington University in St. Louis; University of Michigan.

However, even in the U.S., as our investigation showed, there are no works in which horror fiction is studied through the integrated approach offered in the proposed article both, as a separate genre, creative writing and educational unity.

The proposed article includes three fields of scientific perception of horror fiction: Comparative Literature, Creative Writing and Educational Psychology, which correspond to the three levels of investigation of horror fiction.

### **1. Horror Fiction in a Comparative Aspect**

The understanding of horror genre suggested in this research is dictated by current literary processes, which are deeply eclectic. In our opinion, this genre includes those works in which the poetics of the terrible is the main communicative strategy, the key technique by which an author influences the reader. In our view, “A Song of Ice and Fire” by G. R. R. Martin is an interesting

example of the horror genre as well as the works by S. King and N. Gaiman, since these authors use the category of the horrible as a leading device (although not the only one).

The origins of horror fiction in Russia and in the United States date from the same historical period, which is the first half of the 20th century. During this period, Russian horror fiction used to develop concurrently with the evolution of the horror genre in the U.S. despite the independence of literary processes in either country. It is not difficult to discover their common ground: the orientation of Russian and American authors toward the creative work of E. A. Poe and Ch. Baudelaire, and also a vast field of “occult” and “theosophical” mystical literature which was very popular at the beginning of the 20th century.

It is possible to assume that at the beginning of the 20th century the genre of horror was finally shaped in the form which continues to exist to the present day. Creative works of science fiction and horror writers who wrote at the close of the 20th and at the beginning of the 21st century (Sprague de Camp, Michael Moorcock, Dean Koontz, William Blattie, Ray Bradbury, Robert MacCammon, Stephen King, G. R. R. Martin and others) inherit the tradition of “terrible stories” of the beginning of the century. S. King, for instance, repeatedly stressed the importance of the creative universe of G. Ph. Lovecraft. Contemporary Russian authors call L. Andreev, V. Bryusov, A. Remizov, N. Gumilev their idols, and these writers lived in Russia at the beginning of the 20th century and worked in the genres close to horror fiction.

It is widely accepted that the difference between American and Russian horror fiction is caused by external historical processes. Whereas throughout the entire 20th century the genre of horror was successfully developing in the U.S., the tradition of horror fiction in Russia was interrupted after the revolution of 1917, and that genre was not welcomed by official Soviet criticism. Nevertheless, in the works of such authors as M. Bulgakov, A. Platonov, and the Strugatsky brothers the category of the terrible continued to exist, but the creative work of those writers was rendered “outside” the main literary process until the late 1980s. In the late 20th and early 21st centuries, horror fiction was “rehabilitated” in Russia, but the time was lost and it is necessary to admit that the genre slipped into a decline in Russia. Most recently published works are just imitations of American novels. Even in the creative work of Russian post-modernists and neo-realists, elements of the category of the horrible are often borrowed from American literature in a ready-made form, but cannot adapt to the Russian cultural background.

This problem results in the fact that horror fiction is one of the most commercially unpredictable genres in Russia. Publishers have no confidence in another attempt to create a “Russian horror novel,” and the rare published works can not satisfy mass readers’ demands. At the same time, Russian readership really enjoys reading translated American horror fiction, and there are dozens of sites for horror fans on the Russian Internet.

The rebirth of horror genre in Russia is a matter of time. This process cannot be reduced to the literal borrowing of American examples. It is necessary for Russian scholars and writers to analyze and understand the mechanisms of success for horror fiction in the U.S. and adapt these mechanisms to the Russian horror fiction. Only in this way will it be possible to create a new, mature and original product based on the Russian background.

## **2. Horror Fiction in the Aspect of Creative Writing**

In addition to revealing the genre and comparative literary characteristics of horror fiction, it is important to understand narrative strategies used by the authors who work in the genre under study. This goal is closely connected with the field of Creative Writing, since the object of research is being analyzed from the inside – as a creative process, for which it is necessary to understand the internal principles of the genre and study the fundamentals of the craft.

It is important to stress here that there is a lot of room for the reflections of other writers in the field of horror fiction. Ann Radcliffe in her essay of 1826 distinguished two elements of horror fiction: “terror” and “horror” [Radcliffe, 1826: 145–152]; G. Ph. Lovecraft wrote an essay “Supernatural horror in literature,” in which he outlined the prehistory of the genre and his understanding of “supernatural horror” [Lovecraft, 1973: 11–106]. Among current publications, the

most significant are two S. King's books: "Danse Macabre" (in which, above all, four main archetypes of the category of the horrible were described), and "On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft," addressed to beginning writers [King, 1981: 2002].

It is known that, there are a lot of modern writing courses in the U.S. connected with the genre of horror. The "Horror Writers Association" contributes to promotion of the genre and inspires beginning writers. Thanks to the activities of this Association, a wonderful book "On Writing Horror" was published [Oates and others, 2006]. Publications by David Taylor (currently he is a Senior Advisor in The Effective Writing Center at the University College of Maryland) under the general title "How to Write Today's Horror" are very popular on the Internet, and some of the publications are translated into Russian and published on the Russian Internet platform "DARKER."

Publications devoted to the principles of writing prose fiction in general are also very interesting. One of the most striking examples is "Teaching and Writing Popular Fiction: Horror, Adventure, Mystery and Romance in the American Classroom" [Hubert, 2000]. There are also specialized prizes in the field of horror fiction conducted in the United States: Bram Stoker Award, Silver Hammer Award and others (mainly with the support of the "Horror Writers Association").

The situation is different in Russia. Currently, every self-respecting writing school in Russia, in addition to a classical program, promises to familiarize students with how to write horror. However, in essence, Russian instructors of such courses admit that they do not know how to teach students to write relatively long work of horror fiction, so they just try to point out that horror is a short story genre. No one has yet been able to unlock the secret of success of American writers who are famous for their novels, some of which are quite long (for example, "The Terror" by Dan Simmons). All writing courses, textbooks, programs give an idea of what "thriller" and "suspense" is, but no one in Russia has enough experience to provide beginning writers with realistic, detailed and effective recommendations on how to write a horror novel which would become an organic part of the modern Russian literary process. Furthermore, works of modern well-known Russian writers who try to create a "Russian thriller" such as A. Ivanov's "Psoglavtsy" (2011) are to be considered unsuccessful, at least as horror stories.

### **3. Horror Fiction in the Field of Educational Psychology**

Traditionally, in Russian school and university education horror fiction used to be marked as marginal, but increasingly there are suggestions in modern teaching practice to diversify the literary syllabus by introducing creative works related to the horror genre. Such ideas are dictated, on the one hand, by a commercial success of this genre, and, on the other hand, by the interest students show to this genre at both high school and university. In this connection, it is urgent to understand the possibility and appropriateness of introducing certain examples of horror fiction in the field of school and university teaching, especially in a multinational educational environment.

In the article "Teaching Horror Fiction in a Multicultural Classroom," L. Matek analyzes this problem and offers some practical solutions to it based on the ideas of American psychologists and sociologists. The author of the article rightly considers that horror fiction is a significant resource which allows not only to increase students' interest in reading, but also to develop their capacities of empathy with and tolerance for others, which is a valuable learning outcome in a multicultural educational environment [Matek, 2015: 61–73].

A well-thought-out introduction of horror texts into the school and university literary syllabus, especially in a multicultural classroom, can neutralize many problematic moments. Our own teaching experience suggests that introduction of horror texts into the literary syllabus and the practice of teaching literature in Russia, helps to reduce aggression and promote tolerance in a multinational audience. The Udmurt Republic is a multiethnic region, and students from Udmurt, Tatar, Armenian, Ukrainian, Russian families study together. In this respect, horror fiction has a considerable emotional effect on students and reveals the commonality of people regardless of their nationality: all people are afraid of similar things, all people are united in the fight against evil, injustice, death and dread. When teaching the Russian language and literature at Izhevsk College of Law to multiethnic groups of students, we had some students who acknowledged that in addition to

the standard educational program they read G. Ph. Lovecraft, R. Bloch, N. Geiman or, more rarely, contemporary Russian horror writers. We found it necessary to encourage such reading preferences, and little by little these students made progress in the main literary syllabus. We are convinced that horror fiction in its best manifestations can develop a reader's taste, and most students inevitably turn from the horror genre to "boring" classical literature, because they begin to enjoy the art of the written word and the process of reading itself, which is a desirable effect initiated by horror fiction.

In addition, it is convenient to familiarize university students with the mythology and folklore of a particular nation by means of horror fiction. It is no coincidence that some researchers interpret "The Odyssey" by Homer, which is an invaluable source for studying ancient Greek mythology, as a predecessor of the horror genre. N. Gaiman's "American Gods" is based on various forms of folklore. But not only that. Among modern Russian writers there are also acknowledged creators of novels in which the category of the horrible has an ethnic flavour. For example, Tatar mythology inspired N. Izmailov's novel "Ubyr", and the Ural and Siberian folklore tales come to life in creative work of A. Ivanov.

Nevertheless, although the concept of the "horrible" is a frequent phenomenon even in Russian classical literature (Karamzin, Pushkin, Gogol, Dostoevsky and others), the genre of horror is introduced in Russian literary syllabus in an inconsistent and ill-conceived way. School curriculum simply does not provide opportunities for explaining the horror genre, and most university lecturers just point out, at best, the presence of "fantasy elements" in some texts even as far back as the Soviet period. However, there are some positive changes as the list for extra-curricular reading has been replenished not only by "The Lord of the Rings," but also by S. King's "The Dead Zone," and this fact alone could be considered as a positive tendency.

In the U.S., the question of teaching the horror genre attracts much more attention than in Russia. A short but quite informative manual by M. J. Weiss "A teacher's guide to selected horror short stories of Stephen King" was published as far back as in 1995, and its amateur translation into Russian was posted on the website *stephenking.ru* in 2004. An analysis of the popular American portal for teachers *lessonplanet.com* according to the request of "horror+genre" shows that learning aids devoted to the teaching of horror fiction in American schools are among the most demanded and plentiful. An interesting collection of learning aids and recommendations for American teachers is available on the website *jlbenet.com* and on many other theme sites.

The current situation in Russia is characterized by the reformation of the education system, and this is a favourable opportunity for adapting foreign experience to Russian education, especially in such an important field as teaching literature in a multiethnic classroom.

### **Conclusion**

Thus, the integrated approach in the proposed article contributes to the perception of the horror genre as a many-sided phenomenon. The study concerns the definition of the horror genre in Russian and American Comparative Literature. It also deals with teaching beginning writers the techniques of writing horror stories. And thirdly, it is connected with teaching students the horror genre. Assimilation of the U.S. experience will allow development of the genre of horror in Russia, as well as help to find a worthy and reasonable place for it in school and university literary syllabi. After experiencing decades of oblivion, the horror genre can revive in Russia thanks to the critical mastering of the U.S. experience, where the genre tradition has never been interrupted. In this respect, it is necessary for Russian scholars not only to systematize and classify modern trends in the field of horror fiction, but also to reveal deep creative mechanisms involved in this genre.

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## **РУССКАЯ И АМЕРИКАНСКАЯ ЛИТЕРАТУРА УЖАСОВ КАК ЖАНРОВЫЙ, ХУДОЖЕСТВЕННЫЙ И ОБРАЗОВАТЕЛЬНЫЙ ФЕНОМЕН: ПОСТАНОВКА ПРОБЛЕМЫ**

Жанр ужасов (хоррор), получивший необычайную популярность в современной литературе, до сих пор вызывает споры среди специалистов. Особенно сложной является ситуация в России. До начала XX в. российская литература ужасов развивалась параллельно литературе ужасов в США, однако после революции 1917 г. и вплоть до конца 1980-х гг. данная традиция была прервана. Поэтому на настоящий момент для российских филологов неясен вопрос «что такое хоррор?», для российских писателей – «как писать хоррор?», а преподавание литературы ужасов расценивается учителями как маргинальная тема. Иначе обстоит дело в США, где уже создана определенная традиция интерпретации хоррора. Современные американские ученые, философы, писатели и педагоги сходятся в том, что литература ужасов, равно как и кино, в лучших своих проявлениях затрагивает глубинные, сущностные проблемы человеческой души, позволяя оказывать мощное воздействие на становление и развитие личности. В США на протяжении всего XX в. жанр ужасов планомерно развивался, и на сегодняшний день именно американская литература ужасов задает стандарты жанра во всем мире.

Цель статьи состоит в том, чтобы описать литературу ужасов как динамично развивающийся жанр, рассматриваемый с трех точек зрения: 1) через сравнительный и жанровый анализ литературы ужасов в США и России, 2) путем изучения повествовательных стратегий, которые используют авторы данного жанра, 3) посредством осмысления принципов преподавания литературы ужасов в многонациональном образовательном пространстве.

Пережив десятилетия забвения, жанр ужасов может возродиться в России благодаря осмыслению и критическому осваиванию опыта США, где жанровая традиция никогда не прерывалась.

*Ключевые слова:* жанр ужасов (хоррор), американистика, современная русская литература, сравнительный и жанровый анализ литературы, повествовательные стратегии, преподавание литературы ужасов.

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#### **LA FONTAINE AND KRYLOV: THE ART OF NEGLIGENCE**

In the French vers libres of the seventeenth century, we expect to find, most commonly, varied sequences of long lines (alexandrines and decasyllables) and short lines (eight or fewer syllables), linked by unsystematic rhyme groups in neighboring rhyme (AABBCC...), in four-line groups (alternating rhyme, ABAB, or enclosed rhyme ABBA) or in varied groups of five or more lines on two or more rhymes. An isolated line with no answering rhyme was unknown.

Two of the great fabulists have produced one fable with a missing rhyme: La Fontaine ("La Cour du Lion") and Ivan Krylov («Купец»). Critics who have noticed the missing rhyme in "La Cour du Lion" have assumed that La Fontaine was negligent or careless. No commentator of Krylov's «Басни», so far as I can determine, has noted the missing rhyme in «Купец». Each fable