

III. ЛИТЕРАТУРНЫЙ ПРОЦЕСС В КОНТЕКСТЕ МНОГОЯЗЫЧИЯ И МУЛЬТИКУЛЬТУРАЛИЗМА

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HYBRID SPECULATIVE FICTION AS A GENRE PHENOMENON IN MODERN LITERATURE OF THE U.S. AND RUSSIA

The article is devoted to theoretical exploration of modern hybrid speculative fiction. This term comprises a huge body of creative works which are written at the intersection of genres related to speculative prose. On the one hand, hybrid speculative fiction is rooted in post-modern epoch, on the other hand, it returns to the principles of hybrid genre genesis, which flourished at the beginning of the 20th century. The tendency to genre eclecticism is a common feature of a great number of modern creative works and seems to be an efficient way out of conceptual crisis emerged in speculative fiction at the close of the 20th century, that is why the future development of speculative fiction is expected to be closely connected with the expansion of hybrid genre forms.

The overall goal of the article is to scientifically comprehend hybrid genres in modern speculative fiction of the United States and Russia. The investigation of hybrid speculative fiction as a genre and cultural phenomenon leads to setting three goals. Firstly, it is necessary to determine genre taxonomy of such genres of traditional speculative fiction as science fiction, fantasy, and horror. Secondly, it is necessary to investigate genre-forming models, which underlie modern hybrid works. Thirdly, it is important to understand common features of the works of hybrid speculative fiction.

The study of the genre interaction in modern speculative fiction is based on the descriptive and functional methods. The comparison of Russian and American works involves the use of comparative, typological and cultural-historical methods.

Using the genre blocks common for both literary criticism, readers' expectations and publishing practice, it is possible to identify such genre-forming models of hybrid speculative fiction, as: science fiction+fantasy; science fiction+horror; fantasy+historical novel; fantasy+post-modernist novel. It is also possible to sum up such common features of the works of hybrid speculative fiction, as: irrational world outlook; distortion of the very structural basis of traditional science fiction; shift of sociocultural model of world outlook; polyphonic principle of narration and potentially an endless unravelling of the plot without a pronounced climax; postclassical narrative model; the complexity of storyline.

To conclude, modern hybrid speculative fiction can be treated as a separate literary and sociocultural phenomenon in the literature of the U.S. and Russia. It destroys inner canons of traditional science fiction, it is deeply influenced by post-modern cultural paradigm, and could be described as a significant cultural movement, which is aligned with demands and values of modern society.

Key words: hybrid speculative fiction, genre, science fiction, fantasy, horror, modern speculative fiction, post-modernism.

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Introduction

The term “speculative fiction” is commonly used in modern American literary criticism in the same way as the term “fantastica” is used in Russian philology. It describes a vast and quite vague sphere of genre literature devoted to futuristic technologies, supernatural events and imaginary worlds.

The role of speculative fiction in a current literary process and trends of its development in the wake of conceptual and thematic crisis of modern literature are urgent philological problems to study. Despite wide popularity of science fiction, fantasy and horror as subgenres of speculative fiction among the readership, there is no generally accepted understanding of their nature in the world literary criticism. As U. LeGuin puts it, “There are dozens of definitions of what “science fiction” is; few are useful and none is definite” [LeGuin, 2014: 4]. The situation is aggravated by the fact that from the very beginning speculative fiction was highly influenced by the tendency to genre eclecticism. In Romanticism speculative fiction was mixed with a fairy tale, in Realism era it became a literary device often found in satirical and utopian works. At the turn of the 19th century speculative fiction was shaped in its modern form on obvious hybrid basis both in Russian and Anglo-American literature. It is worth mentioning that the origination of modern speculative fiction in general and science fiction in particular happens both in Russia and in Anglo-American world at about the same time. Although Gene Wolfe considers that “science fiction is of Anglo-American growth” [Wolfe, 2007: 19], A. Banerjee believes that there are enough evidences that science fiction was originated in Russia at the same time as in Anglo-American world, if not earlier [Banerjee, 2012: 21].

By the middle of the 20th century there was a solidification of separate genre forms within speculative fiction: science fiction, fantasy and horror. Towards the end of the 20th century, this differentiation lost its relevance to a large extent due to the origination of modern hybrid subgenres such as science fantasy, cyberpunk, post-apocalyptic fiction and others. In the introduction to the cyberpunk manifesto “Storming the Reality Studio: A Casebook of Cyberpunk and Postmodern Science Fiction” (1992) Larry McCaffery associated the origination of current hybrid works with artistic rebellion against classical genre models influenced by post-modern and counter-culture movements [McCaffery, 2007: 16]. At the same time, it is important to stress that modern speculative fiction returns to the principles of hybrid genre genesis which flourished at the beginning of the 20th century, for example, in the works of H. P. Lovecraft and J. W. Campbell, Jr. in the U.S. and in the works of Russian Modernists (N. Gumilyov, V. Bryusov, F. Sologub, A. Tolstoy, etc.).

Modern literary process in general is marked by the readers’ and writers’ tiredness from traditional genres and predictable plots. Stanislaw Lem drew attention to the fact that in science fiction of the 20th century, “the sources of new ideas gradually dried up. The motifs and themes ossified” [Lem, 1992: 29]. The tendency to genre eclecticism seems to be an efficient way out of this crisis, that is why the future development of speculative fiction is expected to be closely connected with the expansion of hybrid genre forms.

The overall goal of the article is to investigate hybrid speculative fiction as a genre and cultural phenomenon in modern literature of the United States and Russia. This goal leads to setting three subgoals: firstly, it is necessary to determine a genre taxonomy of traditional speculative fiction; secondly, it is necessary to investigate genre-forming models that underlie modern hybrid works; thirdly, it is important to explore common features of the works of hybrid speculative fiction in the US and Russia.

The study of the genre interaction in modern speculative fiction works is based on the descriptive and functional method, the comparison of Russian and American works involves the use of comparative, typological and cultural-historical methods.

The novelty of this research is in an introduction of the term “hybrid speculative fiction” which has not been clearly described neither in the U.S. nor in Russia yet.

1. Genre taxonomy of traditional speculative fiction

Regarding the first subgoal concerning the necessity to determine a genre taxonomy of traditional speculative fiction there is a diversity of opinions among scholars. In 1971, D. Wollheim proposed a threefold division of the types of speculative fiction: science fiction, weird fantasy, and pure fantasy [Wollheim, 1971]. Since then, a significant number of conceptions concerning genre taxonomy of speculative fiction have emerged. Summing up the existing literary approaches it is possible to describe speculative fiction as a meta-genre that consists of three main genre blocks:

1) science fiction divided into such subgenres as “hard” science fiction, social science fiction, adventure science fiction, space opera;

2) fantasy, according to Phyllis J. Perry and some other scholars, is branching into “high” and “low” fantasy [Perry, 2033: VI], while F. Mendlesohn argues that there are essentially four categories: the portal-quest, the immersive, the intrusive, and the liminal [Mendlesohn, 2008: 14];

3) horror which could be divided according to the nature of the “horror” that is objectified in a particular work: horrors about vampires, dead men, maniacs, ghosts, and so on.

These genre blocks are quite common for both literary criticism, readers’ expectations and publishing practice. Summing up, there are three of them: science fiction, fantasy, and horror.

2. Genre-forming models of hybrid speculative fiction

With regard to the second goal related to the genre-forming models of modern works of hybrid speculative fiction, it is necessary to stress that this part of research was done on the analysis of the texts of such modern hybrid speculative fiction writers, as: W. Gibson, N. Stephenson, S. King, C. McCarthy, G. R. R. Martin, G.X. Todd, N. Gaiman, D. Simmons, N. Perumov, S. Lukyanenko, D. Glukhovsky, A. Ivanov, V. Pelevin, L. Petrushevskaya and others. In my view, it is possible to identify such productive models of genre combinations as:

1. Science fiction + fantasy (science fantasy, or techno fantasy). The matrix of science fiction is a structural basis that is enriched by religious, mythological, mystical components unusual for “hard” science fiction. As J. Clute in “The Encyclopedia of Fantasy” puts it, in science fantasy “fantasy-like tales are told in venues not necessarily very well understood by the characters involved” [Clute, 1977: 844]. Besides that, there is a rationalisation of magical and mythological elements in science fantasy. This type of genre hybridisation is extremely successful as shown by the history of such works as “American Gods” by N. Gaiman, the Harry Potter series by J. Rowling (the “scientific” aspect of teaching magic), and a joint project by N. Perumov and S. Lukyanenko “No Time for Dragons.”

2. Science fiction + horror. In hybrid works of this type, the sci-fi setting is not a way to rationalise the text, but just a background for a supernatural horror. While in science fantasy there is a tendency for the rational explanation of supernatural events, in combination “science fiction + horror” the very “scientific” aspect is reduced. This type of hybrid genre is flourishing in modern culture: in both, the U.S. and Russia, such hybrid genres as cyberpunk (W. Gibson, N. Stephenson), post-apocalyptic fiction, (“The Road” by C. McCarthy, “Defender” by G. X. Todd, “Metro 2033” by D. Glukhovsky), dark science fiction (sci-fi stories and novels by G. R. R. Martin, “Star Shadow” by S. Lukyanenko) are in high demand.

3. Fantasy + historical novel. The usual outline of a historical novel with its factual records and historical figures is enriched by fantastic assumptions important for the development of the plot. Generally speaking, this is a fantasy novel in which a historical setting serves as a way to increase the reliability of the events described. At the same time, the sci-fi mythologem of time travel is either completely absent here, or has no structurally significant role. The plot is enriched by some miraculous phenomenon that explains historical events in an unusual way or gives them an alternative course (“The Terror” by D. Simmons, “The Gold of Revolt” and “Tobol” by A. Ivanov).

4. Fantasy + post-modernism. Fantasy helps modern writers to reveal post-modern philosophy in the most vivid and visible way. Post-modernism describes an unstable, delusive

reality filled with simulacrum, and in this respect fantasy turns to be an appropriate literary device. In Russia this model is represented in the works by V. Pelevin and L. Petrushevskaya. The world famous “A Song of Ice and Fire” series by G. R. R. Martin with all its genre eclecticism could be defined as postmodern fantasy, too.

Thus, using the genre blocks common for both literary criticism, readers’ expectations and publishing practice, it is possible to identify such genre-forming models of hybrid speculative fiction, as: science fiction+fantasy; science fiction+horror; fantasy+historical novel; fantasy+post-modernist novel.

3. Common features of the works of hybrid speculative fiction in Russia and the U.S.

Speaking about the third goal of my research, it is possible to conclude that the above listed models of genre combinations within modern hybrid speculative fiction have common features for both Russian and American speculative fiction, and these features deserve further scientific investigation. My study of Russian and American scholars’ concepts and the analysis of the texts of modern writers has led me to the following observations.

Firstly, hybrid speculative fiction, in contrast to “hard” science fiction, develops ideas of unknowability of the Universe and the limitations of human mind, that is why the bulk of “hybrid” works gravitates towards the irrational world outlook, thereby rational world outlook of traditional science fiction is being destroyed.

Secondly, in hybrid speculative fiction the very structural basis of science fiction is being distorted. In the work “Fairy-Tale Roots of Science Fiction,” E. M. Neyolov demonstrates that the plot and typological constructs of traditional science fiction structurally correspond to the constructs of a fairy tale [Neyolov, 1986]. In the article “Transformations of a Fairy Tale in Hybrid Science Fiction (Based on American and Russian Prose of the 20th Century)” I conclude that hybrid fiction destroys both the canons of “hard” science fiction and the constructs of a fairy tale [Malykh, 2020]. Common to a fairy tale, science fiction, and fantasy motive of struggle between a superhero and a supervillain is replaced by psychologisation of this struggle and extreme complication of metaphysics of the Good and the Evil in hybrid speculative fiction.

Thirdly, there is a shift of sociocultural model of world outlook in hybrid speculative fiction. The works of traditional science fiction, fantasy and horror, even proclaiming an atheistic philosophy, are deeply rooted in Christian tradition which formed an axiological basis of both the U.S. and Russian cultures: the hero wins the struggle by sacrificing himself; the good guy’s defeat leads to his resurrection in a more powerful and perfect state (the case of Gandalf the White); the death of a bad guy serves as a way of atonement (the death of Darth Vader in “Star Wars”). Hybrid forms of speculative fiction reinterpret or negate the Christian world outlook. In hybrid fiction, the death of a character does not mean atoning sacrifice, but leads to a final destruction of the body and personality, or a transition to a completely different state of a digital personality (cyberpunk) or a body without a personality (zombies in the post-apocalyptic fiction; “white walkers” in “A Song of Ice and Fire”). Christian allusions are replaced by other types of world outlook (the equalisation of Christianity and paganism in N. Gaiman’s “American Gods”; the gnostic implications of D. Simmon’s and Ph. Pullman’s works; the Buddhist implications of V. Pelevin’s works).

Fourthly, hybrid works tend to have a polyphonic principle of narration and potentially an endless unravelling of the plot without a pronounced climax. A modern fantasy series as “The Dark Tower” by S. King and “A Song of Ice and Fire” by G. R. R. Martin are opposed to a canonical “high” fantasy novel “The Lord of the Rings.” Hybrid works are marked by such features as non-linear time model, cyclical chronotope, the absence of an “omnipresent” narrator, postclassical narratology, the complexity of storyline, and ambiguity of moral principles. In hybrid fiction, the hero’s path does not lead to the restoration of the world order or offering a new world order as it was in traditional science fiction, but it leads to destruction of rational and intelligible world. For example, in “Metro 2033” by D. Glukhovsky, the hero is responsible for a gloomy epilogue where the narrow-mindedness of humankind thrives.

Thus, it is possible to sum up such common features of the works of hybrid speculative fiction, as: irrational world outlook; distortion of the very structural basis of traditional science fiction; shift of sociocultural model of world outlook; polyphonic principle of narration and potentially an endless unravelling of the plot without a pronounced climax; postclassical narrative model; the complexity of storyline.

Conclusion

The common features of hybrid speculative fiction in the U.S. and Russia outlined above are an evidence of the fact that modern hybrid speculative fiction can be treated as a separate literary and sociocultural phenomenon that requires further in-depth investigation.

The study of speculative fiction in the U.S. has a long history that has not been interrupted throughout the 20th century, so it is natural that science fiction research centers operate in the U.S., and that the curriculum of educational institutions includes science fiction and other speculative fiction subgenres; besides that, the curriculum of Creative Writing programs in the U.S. include teaching how to write speculative fiction. At the same time, “hard” science fiction, horror and fantasy as separate genres in the U.S. (and partly in Russia) have been described well enough, but there is a shortage of research work in relation to modern hybrid speculative fiction, therefore the study of this topic is relevant to both, Russian and American literary studies.

It is obvious that modern Russian speculative fiction with rare exception follows American genre and cultural trends, and there are a lot of similarities between modern Russian and American literature.

The material of this article is a preface to a prospective research. Thus, it is interesting to investigate, why irrational world outlook is preferable in modern speculative fiction; it is also important to understand inner mechanisms of global culture that are reflected in hybrid speculative fiction’s tendency to deny traditional Christian worldview; finally, it is possible to explore other genre-forming models apart from the models mentioned above. Besides that, the development of modern speculative fiction is ongoing process, and it is important to monitor new trends and look for innovative creative works written in this sphere.

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ГИБРИДНАЯ ФАНТАСТИКА КАК ЖАНРОВЫЙ ФЕНОМЕН В СОВРЕМЕННОЙ ЛИТЕРАТУРЕ США И РОССИИ

Статья посвящена теоретическому осмыслению современной гибридной фантастики (hybrid speculative fiction), под которой понимается комплекс произведений, написанных на стыке жанров, относящихся к фантастической прозе. Гибридная фантастика, с одной стороны, является порождением постмодернистской эпохи, с другой стороны – возвращается к принципам эклектического жанрообразования, свойственного художественной литературе начала XX в. Тенденция к гибридизации, характерная для современной фантастической прозы, представляется продуктивным способом выхода из идейного кризиса, наметившегося внутри фантастики, а будущее фантастической литературы видится, главным образом, в русле гибридной фантастики.

Цель работы заключается в научном осмыслении гибридных фантастических жанров в современной литературе США и России. Достижение данной цели реализуется через последовательное решение трех задач. Во-первых, определяются жанрообразующие категории, лежащие в основе традиционных жанров научной фантастики, фэнтези и хоррора. Во-вторых, осмысляются наиболее продуктивные модели жанрообразования современных гибридных произведений. В-третьих, выявляются общие идейно-философские и структурные особенности гибридных произведений.

Изучение взаимодействия жанров при анализе современных фантастических произведений осуществляется с опорой на описательно-функциональный метод. Сопоставление российских и американских произведений предполагает также применение сравнительно-типологического и культурно-исторического методов.

Опираясь на закрепленные в литературоведении, читательском сознании и издательской практике жанровые блоки, мы выявили такие наиболее продуктивные модели гибридного жанрообразования, как: научная фантастика+фэнтези; научная фантастика+ужасы; фэнтези+исторический роман; фэнтези+постмодернистский роман. Также были выявлены следующие идейно-философские и структурные особенности гибридных произведений США и России: иррационализм, разрушение структурной модели традиционной научной фантастики, замещение христианской мировоззренческой парадигмы иными мировоззренческими конструктами; полифонизм и ориентированность на потенциально бесконечное разворачивание сюжета без ярко выраженной кульминации, постклассическая нарративная модель, усложненность сюжетных линий.

На основании проведенного анализа делается вывод о том, что гибридная фантастика представляет собой особое направление в современной литературе и культуре США и России. Она разрушает внутренние каноны традиционной научной фантастики, вписывается в постмодернистскую культурную парадигму и представляет собой значимое культурное явление, соответствующее запросам и ценностным ориентирам современного общества.

Ключевые слова: гибридная фантастика, жанр, научная фантастика, фэнтези, хоррор, современная фантастическая литература, постмодернизм.

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РОССИЯ ЧИЧИКОВА И РОССИЯ ГОГОЛЯ В ПОЭМЕ «МЕРТВЫЕ ДУШИ»

В статье рассматривается многозначность образа России в «Мертвых душах» Н. В. Гоголя. Это новый ракурс исследования, актуальность которого связана с рецепцией категории храмостроительства, позволяющей увидеть новые свойства поэтики Гоголя. Целью исследования является установление связи категории храмостроительства, проявляющейся через символику храма, с поэтикой гоголевского текста. Методологией исследования является изучение поэмы «Мертвые души» в контексте православной традиции.

На внешнем изобразительном плане возникает образ России, увиденный Чичиковым. Это образ губернской России, стремящейся скопировать «просвещенную» Европу, поэтому она и предстает как ее двойник: то как псевдо-Россия, то как псевдо-Европа. На первый план в губернской России Чичикова помещаются гостиница и кабак. Чичиков словно сознательно избегает встречи с подлинной Россией, символами которой являются храмовое пространство, ее живая душа, воплощенная в природе, песнях, русском языке. В путешествиях по усадьбам помещиков образ этой карикатурной России обрывает мотивами пошлой моды, пошлого искусства, вызванных подражанием Европе. Антиэстетика натюрморта в поэме призвана символизировать мир смерти человеческой души. Нарастание inferнальности проявляется в мотивах гиперболизированной телесности на картинах в усадьбах помещиков, в организации их пространств. «Мертвые души» на внешнем плане выступают как путеводитель по миру смерти, в котором человек с мертвой душой способен