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**COMPARISON OF ELEMENTS OF GOTHIC NOVEL AND DETECTIVE GENRE  
IN LIUDMILA RUBLEUSKAYA'S STORY 'NIGHTS ON PLIABAN'S WINDMILLS'  
AND WILKIE COLLINS'S NOVEL 'WOMAN IN WHITE'**

**ALIONA YUKHNIK, ZOYA TRATSIK  
Polotsk State University, Belarus**

*The story of a Belarusian writer L. Rubleuskaya and the novel of an English author W. Collins are compared in this article. The particular attention is given to the elements of a Gothic novel and detective genre. Also the differences of both authors are singled out.*

Liudmila Rubleuskaya is a Belarusian poetess and a prose writer, a journalist and a literary critic. She began her career with some poems in Russian. Then she started to write in Belarusian under the influence of Uladzimir Karatkievich and Maksim Bagdanovich. The first publication is a poem in Minsk newspaper 'Znamya Yunosti' (1983). First prose works of the writer are fairy-tales for children ('The Adventures of Little Mouse Pick-Pick' (1991).

The writer prefers to use the elements of fantasy and fairy-tale in her prose. The plots of the stories are based on Belarusian myths and legends. For example in the novel 'Romul's Cave' (2012) 'there is almost no elements of fantasy, although the scene of the book unfolds in different times simultaneously round one and the same artifact'<sup>5</sup> [3, c. 6]. The collection of stories 'Outmoded Myths of the City B\*' (2002) is based on ancient myths, which set in in the background of the Belarusian town life in the XIX century.

The plot of the mystical story 'Nights on Pliaban's Windmills' (2007) is based on myths and legends of Minsk. If we examine the works of W. Collins (1824-1889), we can notice, that he pays his attention to describing the vital problems of the society in the Victorian Age. Both writers rely on events, that either happened at the time of the author's life (W. Collins), or before the author's works (L. Rubleuskaya).

Both authors use genres of popular literature in order to show some social problems. For Collins it was important not only to entertain his readers with an intriguing and tangled plot, but also make them think about disturbing problems. L. Rubleuskaya also tries to touch upon those problems through popular literature. In this story she wants to show 'the gloom of repressions 1920-1930s, their disastrous influence on the further Belarusian history' [3, c. 6].

The plot of the story 'Nights on Pliaban's Windmills' unfolds during that tragic period of time. Five people gather together in a house: pan<sup>6</sup> Andrej Belaretskij studies folklore and he is an amateur detective; Darota and Zosia are teachers; Noj is an artist; Ulad is an actor. Each of the characters tells a scary or mystic, or just an unusual story (Ulad's story about the night performance in Minsk theatre). Each story is separated from the main narration, e.g. 'The Story about Loshyck Ghost', 'The Story about Minsk town hall'.

In the novel 'Woman in White' (1860), Collins touches upon topics, that were popular during his literary work (crimes, facts of bigamy, problem of mental illnesses, relations between men and women, woman's role in family and society). And here we do not have different stories within one story, but different points of view on one and the same event. The composition of Collins's novel is very similar to the questioning of witnesses.

In the work of Rubleuskaya, the characters' stories are a kind of escapism from the most appalling events (repression, change of power). Pan Andrej Belaretskij answers to Zosia's request to tell some scary story: 'The more frightful time is the more welcome listening to made-up horrors is .... As if the darkness in comparison with the greater darkness seems to be the light not for a long time' [4, c. 4].

But in spite of differences in composition and narration, there can be found similar features of gothic and detective genres both in the story by Rubleuskaya and the novel by Collins.

Singling out gothic features, *the setting* should be mentioned first. In the novel it is the country seat Blackwater-Park, which is full of 'hugely long galleries, with low ceilings lying parallel with each other, and rendered additionally dark and dismal by hideous family portraits' [7, p.179]. In the story it is the house of the former headmaster of a real specialized school, 'an old wooden building with the attic and carved columns, darkened because of time <...>' [4, c. 3]. Characters of the story are sitting in the light of the wedding and funeral candles.

The next similar sign is *the presence of a ghost*. The image of a 'ghost' itself comes across during the whole story. Ghosts in the work of Rubleuskaya are very realistic and in most cases they are ghosts of girls. They were murdered because of love: 'the rejected admirer grasped the girl in his arms and together with her

<sup>5</sup> Here and further the translation is done by A. Yukhnik

<sup>6</sup> Pan, pani is a polite way of addressing a man or a woman, used in Belarus at the beginning of XX century.

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drowned himself' [4, c. 20]; 'They tied up the lucky girl with silk scarves, locked in this cellar <...> Svislach overflow... The cellar was flooded. <...> When fiancé, <...>, came there and saw the corpse <...>' [4, c. 54]. Or they died because of accident '<...> [pani Jadwiga] sat in a boat.... And it turned over...' [4, c. 45]. The ghost of pani Jadwiga is described in the story as 'the ghost of woman in white'. And it is an immediate reference to the novel by Collins 'Woman in White'.

But unlike the ghost in Collins's novel, the ghosts in the story do not warn characters. Even some of them on the contrary want to kill the characters. In the story 'Nights on Pliaban's Windmills' the characters suggest different versions. They suppose that it could be mythical creatures like mermaids or liadashtsiks<sup>7</sup>: 'It is Liadashtsik, who intended it, the evil spirit. – Not Liadashtsik, but mermaids!' [4, c. 36-37].

In the novel 'Woman in White' Anne Catherick is a kind of ghost, who wears white clothes and people around her think, that she is a ghost. Anne tries to help Laura Fairlie, warns her about the danger coming from her husband. Here the ghost performs its function, as in the traditional Gothic novel.

In 'The Story about Pliaban's Windmills' there is such an element as *a prediction*. The father of the heroine tells her before his death: '<...> On the third day after my funeral, a fiancé will come to you. He will say: 'Bless you the Minsk Mother of God'....Do as this man tells you' [4, c. 15]. And so it happens. A knight comes to the girl and marries her.

In the novel Marian Halcombe dreams a prophetic dream about Walter Hartright, namely which dangers he will meet with in his travel. Later Walter tells: 'Death by disease, death by the Indians, death by drowning – all three had approached me; all three had passed me by' [7, p.366]. Also Marian sees Laura and her meeting with Walter near Anne's grave in the future: 'He was kneeling by a tomb of white marble, and the shadow of a veiled woman rose out of the grave beneath and waited by his side'[7, p.200].

As in the Collins's novel, Rubleuskaya tries to *abandon the mysticism* and makes an attempt to explain mystic events logically. Almost at the end of every story characters give their suppositions about fantastic stories and what actually had happened. For example in 'The Story about the Old Pharmacy', Darota tries to explain: 'There was an old pharmacist, who lost his mind, confused a fairy-tale with his own life... Maybe, once he gets involved with smugglers, or with some nihilists, that is why he got those scars...' [4, c. 12].

In 'The Story Pliaban's Windmills', pan Belaretskij explains the story about the red carbuncle: 'There was an old casket... And a rich fantasy of my friend, Darota, your father, who believes, that the task of a creative person is to create myths for his Motherland, in order to make its history more interesting' [4, c. 18]. But then Darota brings a silver casket to prove, that the carbuncle really was. Anyway it is not an eloquent evidence for Andrei Belaretskij that this story is truthful.

Unlike the two previous stories, where characters only make attempts to clarify something mysterious, in 'The Story about Goldenhill Bride' there is a logical explanation. There was a mother's brooch, which Zosia pinned to a dress. A young girl was buried in that dress. Zosia comes to the grave, and begs to return it back. And she finds the brooch on the grave. Genus 'took the brooch from Karalina-Maryia's coffin, because the poor thing was in love with her, <...>. And put it back on the grave either he saw her in his dreams, or someone said, that to take something away from the grave is a major sin <...>' [4, c. 39].

If we examine the elements of the detective genre, there is only a figure of detective who is pan Belaretskij. In the story the author herself gives us only one line, where it is said, that he is an amateur detective. During the whole story pan always looks for rational explanation for all the stories, that have been told, despite given evidences (story about the carbuncle). In the novel of W. Collins, detectives (Marian and Walter) play a more significant role, than in the story. Pan does not investigate some important cases, like they do. Marian and Walter try to find the criminal in order to restore the main heroine's reputation and to prove the criminals' guilt.

After dealing with all the elements in the story by L. Rubleuskaya and the novel by Collins, we come to the next conclusion, that there are some similar elements in the novel 'Woman in White' and in the story 'Nights on Pliaban's Windmills'. We can single out the following common features of both literary works: the story composition, the setting, the presence of a ghost, the use of prediction, the renunciation of mysticism and the presence of a detective.

The used elements are needed to create the atmosphere of fear and horror. Collins not only creates the certain atmosphere with the help of above-mentioned elements, but also gives hints to a reader for solving the mystery.

While comparing these literary works, we found, that there are similarities in both works and each of the authors uses the elements for the certain purposes. Sometimes it helps to clarify the problem, and sometimes on the contrary it misleads a reader. And it seems that the plot is quite simple. But looking deeper, we can see the main aim of the writers. They would like to show the problems by using mystery or exciting plot for it is easier for a reader to understand. All this makes Wilkie Collins and Liudmila Rubleuskaya virtuosic writers.

<sup>7</sup> Liadashtsik is a mythical creature, who hates women and girls. It always tries to hurt them. Liadashtsik is imagined as a winged hideous monster, all covered with red hair and has one eye on the forehead.

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