



Elements of the Gothic Tradition in the Work of Joyce Carol Oats

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Annotation: The article is dedicated to Gothic tradition appears at the early stage of Joyce Carol Oates works and the increasing number of Gothic elements in her work.

Keywords: Gothic traditions, supernatural, mystical, terrible, aesthetic forms, the reality of life, component of the nightmarish world, unprecedented power.

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Among the writers who make a significant contribution to the formation of modern literary Gothic, one of the leading places rightfully belongs to J.K. Oates. Her interest in the Gothic tradition appears at an early stage of her work and can be traced throughout her career. At the same time, the Gothic tradition in the writer's prose undergoes an inevitable transformation and gives the author the opportunity to most convincingly convey the atmosphere of the modern world with its crises and catastrophes, both global and private. Moreover, the Gothic tradition is reflected both in novels and in 'small' prose. Examining the evolution of the creative manner of J.K. Oates, one can notice a constant increase in the number of Gothic elements in the works of the writer. If in her early novels ("The Garden of Earthly Delights" 1967, "Do with Me What You Want" 1973, etc.) only some elements of literary Gothic can be traced, then subsequent works ("Bellefleur" 1980, "Angel of Light" 1981, "Romance Bloodmoor" 1982, etc.) already quite definitely have a gothic orientation. The gothic tradition with a bright degree of intensity is also manifested in later novels (Zombies 1995, Madman 1997, Blonde 2000, etc.).

The inclination of J.K. Oates to the supernatural, mystical and terrible was manifested in the novel and short story work of the 1960s - 1980s. However, the work of J.K. Oates of this period develops in line with the general trends of American literature and is more characterized by an interest in the socio-psychological and ethical problems of modern man. At the same time, literary Gothic remains on the periphery of the writer's work. These works are imbued with a deep sense of the failure of human existence, they are dominated by a tragic perception of reality. 1990s - early 2000s become a new stage in the development of Gothic prose J.K. Oates. It traces the clear desire of the writer to transform the previous literary tradition and its complication due to the introduction of distinctly new elements into the Gothic text. Moreover, Gothic, according to J.K. Oates, is an art that embodies 'horror' in aesthetic forms, which brings to the surface hidden and repressed states of the soul. The grotesque is both 'real' and 'unreal', as well as quite real, but immeasurable states of mind - emotions, moods,

obsessions, faith. The writer emphasizes that subjectivity, which at the same time is the essence of man, has become a secret that inevitably separates people.

The writer's comprehension of Gothic literature was reflected in the collection of short stories *Collector of Hearts* (1998). The book, which consists of five parts, does not have distinct features that allow you to see and appreciate the thematic interconnectedness of the stories. However, an in-depth analysis makes it possible to trace the internal connection between the works that exists at the subtext level. The writer unites them with the theme of the coexistence of two worlds - the real and the unreal, and the position of the hero moving from one world to another. Rampant passions, general anxiety, neo-apocalyptic and decadent moods, a sense of the "end of the century" found expression in the stories of this fellow. The use of symbolism also plays an important role in the stories, since, by creating extraordinary characteristics of the characters, the writer turns each character into a symbolic figure. At the same time, the symbolism of the supernatural and terrible turns out to be quite diverse and contradictory and is associated with the development of the action in each of the stories. Moreover, the analysis of the collection 'The Collector of Hearts' showed that Oates' Gothic is a special chronotope that allows the writer to disregard the laws of reality, harmony and measure, i.e., provides an opportunity to introduce the supernatural into the narrative, giving unlimited freedom to the author's imagination. In the story 'The Collector of Hearts', whose name became the title of the entire cycle for a reason, the motif of a meeting with the devil is present in a veiled and transformed form. The protagonist of the story, an old judge named 'What-His-There' owns a mansion - a museum of exhibits of various structure and material, resembling real human hearts in their shape. The Collector of Hearts takes part in the fate of physically exhausted and morally devastated young people, helps to find a way out of current situations, to take the right path. But the material world determines the fate of man. The reality of life is one's own heart, which is subject to physical death. The man is unable to endure the hostile world around him, full of evil, so he gives his heart to the collection of the old judge. It is impossible not to notice that it is not by chance that J.K. Oates calls the judge by such a conventional name 'What-His-There.' He, possessing R, controls the actions, emotions and even the destinies of people who turn into toy hearts. The old judge serves as the personification of evil, and evil, according to the writer herself, has become so powerful, so all-pervading over the decades, that it has now become anonymous. Oates' characters are different people, but they are united by the need to make sense of their lives, to try to find the key to saving their souls. However, at the same time, in the words of the protagonist of the story "Hands", they are all too stupid and indifferent to start looking for him, G.P. no action took place, under the gun of J.K. Oates is "a fatally doomed world order based on unrighteousness and inhumanity and by its existence generating evil" [1,274].

In 1994, the collection of short stories *Haunted: Tales of the Grotesque* was published, consisting of four parts and an afterword. In all the stories, the obsessed heroes try to escape from the darkness of everyday life, make desperate attempts to find themselves in a grotesque setting, enter into an unequal battle with the surrounding reality, but this invariably leads them to a tragic denouement, self-destruction. The afterword, according to the author of the dissertation, deserves special attention. In it, J.K. Oates reflects on the specifics of the grotesque, expands its boundaries, shows the inextricable link between the grotesque and literary Gothic. Despite the fact that the grotesque, according to the writer, defies definition because of its greatest diversity, the author considers it as 'the antithesis of the beautiful', and sees in Gothic 'an art that represents mysterious, terrible, supernatural. Thus, it turns out that the gothic - the terrible - the grotesque are intertwined, and this combination becomes not only a hallmark of the stories in the collection, but also the creative manner of J.K. Oates. In the stories of the collection *Possessed: Tales of the Grotesque*, J.K. Oates not only conveys the hallucinations of the main characters, but also tries to explain how, under what conditions, a normal person is on the verge of insanity, and insanity in various manifestations becomes an extreme degree of conflict between the ordinary and another reality, evidence of which the Gothic character receives.

Moreover, for the stories 'Poor Bibi', 'Thanksgiving Day', 'The Cursed Inhabitants of the House of Bly' and others, the theme of violence is a cross-cutting one, designed to demonstrate the inhumanity and perversion of the surrounding world. Without a doubt, violence, as one of the most important motives for all the work of J.K. Oates, becomes the main component of the nightmarish world she depicts. Thus, according to the American researcher E. Showalter, any article devoted to J.K. Oates touches on "two facets: fantastic performance and violence"[2,66]. In turn, Oates argues that art is based on the image of violence, death, it is based on fear. It is no coincidence that the writer was accused by critics who saw in the depiction of cruelty, violence and murders an indulgence of the pathological nature of her own nature. However, according to one of the domestic researchers of Oates D. Zhukov's work, "what she writes is generated by the tragedy of American reality, she by no means sees in a person only the embodiment of insurmountable evil".

The story 'Martyrdom' is distinguished by even greater cruelty and crude naturalistic scenes. The blind adoration that the protagonist felt for his young wife was replaced by satiety, irritation and outright sadism. Having lost his masculine strength, he began to find perverse pleasure in watching the violence being done to his young wife by his friends. We dare to suggest that the scenes of violence are necessary for the writer in order to arouse disgust for violence, to show the unacceptability of the humiliation and insult of women, to challenge the world of male chauvinism. Oates' gothic stories are imbued with a deep sense of the failure of human existence, they are dominated by a tragic perception of reality. In most of the stories, the action takes place in our day, the heroes are modern Americans, the disintegration of human relationships, the isolation of the individual and the resulting psychopathological imbalance are not new phenomena, but Oates' interpretation of them is modern. The situations she paints are symptomatic of today's America. It is natural that in this case the pernicious influence of the environment and social conditions that suppresses the personality is exposed.

It is emphasized that an important feature of the stories of this period is the presence of a symbolic plan. So, in the short story "Flying Snowy Haze", a snowstorm that overtook Deputy Sheriff Rafe Mary on the road symbolizes a different life, a different world in which the main character happened to be. The lines of the story serve as a definite confirmation of this: "The flying snow haze subsided, all its unusual strength, primordial power dried up, leaving behind only sculptural outlines of whiteness, familiar outlines that reminded of the familiar world to which he was to return." The symbolic plan performs an important ideological and artistic function in the story. Another motif, which acquires a significant semantic load in the context of the Gothic narrative, is the motif of fear present in all the stories of this period. The main characters (Annette in the story 'The Enemy Appeared', Barry Somers - 'The Birth of Tragedy', etc.) at the moment of the strongest psychological stress feel overwhelming fear. The latest gothic literature is more concerned with the realistic authenticity of the action, and the supernatural horror in it gives way to fear explained by natural causes. "It is under the influence of fear that the main characters feel an internal split and the ability to consider their second "I" as an independent and alien being. Fear takes on a special meaning in the context of the Gothic tradition, as it leads to alienation. Note that the problem of alienation has always been relevant for the United States, representing the reverse side of the American dream. Moreover, alienation has largely become not only the subject of American writers' work, but also the manner, the style of writing. It would not be wrong to say that in the gothic prose of J. K. Oates, the problem of alienation becomes a leitmotif [3,138].

In the stories of the so-called "university" cycle ("The Birth of Tragedy", "The Crown of Glory", etc.), the satirical talent of the writer is manifested with all her might. Truthfully, without illusions, in describing teachers in the West, J.K. Oates gives grotesque characterizations of figures of science and literature, "hungry ghosts," as she herself calls them, shows the real, and not imaginary dangers facing

young people who decide to tie their life with science. In accordance with the Gothic tradition, the main characters are faced with the problem of comprehending, experiencing and overcoming the set limits. Gothic overcoming the limits is developed by means of “people going beyond their boundaries”, with an indispensable emphasis on the spiritual life of a person, testing his inner capabilities through the grotesque internal conflict of the personality and violation of the boundaries of the mental norm.

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