

## Shakespeare's Canon as the Source of Gothic Tradition

*У статті аналізуються базові концепти готицизму – крипта, страх, надприродне, "готична педагогіка" – та форми їх художнього оприявлення в п'єсах В. Шекспіра і романах Г. Волпола і М. Шеллі. Канон Шекспіра потрактовується як одне з джерел англійської літературної готики, що не втратило своєї актуальності та креативного потенціалу і сьогодні.*

*Ключові слова: готика, шекспірівський канон, крипта, страх, готична педагогіка.*

*В статье проанализированы базовые концепты готицизма – крипта, страх, сверхъестественное, "готическая педагогика" – и формы их выявления в пьесах Шекспира и романах Г. Уолпола и М. Шелли. Шекспировский канон понимается как один из источников английской литературной готики, не утративший своей актуальности и креативного потенциала и сегодня.*

*Ключевые слова: готика, шекспировский канон, крипта, страх, готическая педагогика.*

*The article focuses on the basic Gothic concepts – crypt, fear, sublime, Gothic pedagogy – and forms of their artistic realization in Shakespeare's plays and novels by H. Walpole and M. Shelley. Shakespearean canon is understood as one of the sources of English literary Gothic which possesses its vital and creative potential in our days.*

*Key words: Gothic, Shakespearean canon, crypt, fear, sublime, Gothic pedagogy.*

It is hard to exaggerate the extent of Shakespeare's influence on formation and effective existence of his discourse in diverse cultural or artistic traditional clusters of English literature. One of them is Gothic tradition which is generally acclaimed as one of the most essential trademarks of Englishness, English identity in particular. Though early Gothic writers mostly sought inspiration in medieval literature known for its abundance in supernatural and mystic, they did not neglected the possibility to appropriate from the stock of themes, motives and characters that was already acknowledged as national classics, and in this way to ward off the criticism their works encountered. Shakespeare's canon was the first they applied to as the authority of imaginative vision, as the national icon who had potential and power to assure and legitimize the status of new literary genre – the gothic novel.

Early Gothic writers acknowledged that their dramatic pathos is rather close by its nature to Shakespeare's but their targets, goals, and audience were different. Shakespeare's transgression, his circumvent beyond limitations in many situations was connected with literary techniques that we identify nowadays as concepts and signs of Gothic fiction – sublime, supernatural, spiritual, tombs and graveyards, cloisters and sepulchers, ghosts and terrific or providential visions, passions and horror. Despite Horace Walpole's declaration that he "should be more proud of having imitated... so masterly a pattern [Shakespeare] than to enjoy the entire merit of invention" problem of Shakespearean influence in Gothic literature is still under discussion. My article is the first scholarly research of the theme in national British studies.

Shakespearean influence in creation Gothic atmosphere can be perceived and noticed on different textual levels – dramatic scenery and scenes, supernatural phenomena and situations, specific spaces suggestive of horror and provocative of human's soul fall, peculiar descriptive language that evokes depths of intuition and fear, and plenty of other components which testify that Gothic writers actively exploited Shakespeare's recognizable, basic topoi as techniques that allowed them to correspond and satisfy the demands of their audience. As Walpole said, he sought "to shelter my own daring under the canon of the brightest genius" in England.

Modern scholar E. J. Clary is positive that if we "scratch the surface of any Gothic fiction... the debt to Shakespeare will be there" [1, p. 30]. E. J. Clary suggests that Shakespeare, historically and ideologically, corresponded the needs of 18th century writers, who were eager to mend the rational and the irrational, the natural and supernatural, the national and the Other. It is significant to say that in this aspect Gothic discourse contains hidden universal and eternal actuality which explains its relevance to any times and socio-cultural situations. Thus M. Gamer in his *Romanticism and the Gothic: Genre, Reception, and Canon-Formation* (2005) provides understanding of circulation and popularity of Gothic concepts by interpretation the term "gothic" as a "shifting aesthetic" [3], which is related to its ability to pass beyond the limits. And in this sense Gothic fiction is also very close to Shakespeare's canon that continues to travel across boundaries.

A New Historicist approach seems to be useful for my analyses as it allows looking back at Shakespeare through the Gothic prism. As Jerrold E. Hogle explains, "We do not realize how thoroughly pre-Gothic Shakespeare is [...] until we look back through the Gothic to his

most similar motifs and tendencies" [4, p. 202]. We have sufficient grounds for this "looking back" approach as, according to P. Cruttwell, the common sentiment of the Elizabethan age was "a sad looking back to a past idealized out of all reality, when life and love, society and individuals, were simpler and better" [2, p. 136]. Because of this sentiment, he asserts, "Elizabethans were just as prone as later ages to "Gothick" fantasies" [2, p. 136]. Their motivation was similar – they used depiction of the past to render not only the shortcomings of their actual modernity but to visualize their haunting fear of the unknown and unpredictable future with specific unexplained incidents of ancient times.

I do not intend to clarify all the signs of Shakespeare's presence in Gothic fiction but have an ambition to mark some of them and explain their peculiar functioning. Thus the sepulcher functions as the most important topos in Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) and Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* (1597). In both cases this locus implies the failure of traditional values (social and paternal authority), complete transgression of all conventional limits by young protagonists – their movement across taboo, through darkness and horror of death to expectable happy future with beloved. In both works the sepulcher turns to become a labyrinth where desire, fear, anxiety, death are interlaced and inseparable. In Shakespeare's tragedy the vault serves as a symbolic metaphor of deadly paternal will and authority, the cause of social anxiety and personal tragedy, as an emblem of human transience. Capulet's "ancient receptacle" is symbolic of the past as it is the storehouse of his "buried ancestors," but it also houses the devastation of his present loss – the daughter whose future he failed to protect (4. 3. 39). In Gothic fiction, as it is represented in Walpole's novel, the sepulcher functions as architectural scenery with certain connotation – its death-filled chambers are designed to evoke terrible fears and murderous horror. In *Otranto*, Isabella, one of Walpole's two young heroines, escapes from the villainous Manfred by making her way through "that long labyrinth of darkness," where "every suggestion that horror could inspire rushed into her mind" [9, p. 26]. So, despite all textual implications, the main function of the sepulcher locus in Gothic fiction is primarily emotional, aimed at formation the intense dramatic, similar to thriller effect and equivalent psychological response. In both works the sepulcher image implicates an intention to reveal the frightening realities of human isolation and annihilation, and also the reactions of various characters to the same situations. The limits of the unknown become closer and visualize the horrors each of us has to confront – sooner or later.

P. Merivale's essay "Learning the Hard Way: Gothic Pedagogy in the Modern Romantic Quest" inspired the idea to compare relevant concepts in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* ("a pure Gothic novel" [5, p. 152] and Shakespeare's *The Tempest* [6]. She discusses the tradition of "teaching through fear" as it is represented in "pageants, rituals' and shown in dramatic performances [5, p. 147]. For P. Merivale "Gothic pedagogy" means a consistent structural pattern in a series of works, where the writer produces an "astonishing, terrifying, yet phantasmagorical sequence of lessons, made up of separate episodes chiefly connected with each other by the fact that the hero experiences them" [5, p. 146]. So "Gothic pedagogy" may be qualified as "Gothicized godgames", because "a Magus, devil-god, and stage director, has devised and produced them to reinforce his didactic manipulations of the hero" [5, p. 146]. There are no doubts that one of the most essential plot components of *The Tempest* and *Frankenstein* is based on "Gothic pedagogy" – strategy of education by fear.

Concept of fear occupies the central position in thematic spectrum of Gothic fiction. It is interesting to note that it was also one of fundamental principles of British educational system, and specially oriented texts were included into school textbooks: "Fear opens wide the eyes and mouth, gives the countenance an air of wildness, covers it with deadly paleness, draws back the elbows parallel with the sides, lifts up the open hands, with the fingers spread, to the height of the breast, at some distance before it. The body seems shrinking from the danger. The heart beats violently, the breath is quick, and the whole body is thrown into a general tremor" (*Dialogues for Schools*; an 1813 textbook). Prospero in *The Tempest* provides the argument for this thesis. He, the enlightened and human-oriented magus, evokes sense of sublime in nature, practice and souls. At the same time, he stimulates fear and terror. In this sense he is equal to Victor Frankenstein, both of them neglect those whom they have to protect. Prospero due to his engagement with alchemy acquires power over his enemies and subjects. He uses his "scholarly" (alchemic) skills for mistreatment, and Caliban, who in potential could become "a new creature", is abused and humiliated in Prospero's "brave new world". Educative technique, if it is a proper name for it, in both works relies on fear which serves as a stimulus for growth and transformation. But in Gothicized godgame, created by Shelley, the master and the student seemed to change the positions: "The monster teaches by terror the master who has become his slave" [5, p. 152–153]. A similar kind of role reversal we can find in *The Tempest* when Ariel, who was

Prospero's servant, teaches his master how to be kind to his subjects. Both protagonists came to understanding that they misused their power, and they are punished for that though in a different way.

Through the lens of "Gothic pedagogy" it seems that both authors pursued the moral goals. Supernatural abilities (Prospero) or ambitious knowledge (Victor Frankenstein) does not imply fully human nature – they need to be taught responsibility for their creatures and subjects, and also to co-exist tolerantly with the Other, in wide sense.

In my work I have analyzed certain peculiar components of Gothic frame – the vault, sublime, and fear that are common for two of Shakespeare's plays and novels by Walpole and M. Shelley. All of them possess Gothic conventions which function in a different way. Gothic fiction with its vital creative potential continues to meet the needs of contemporary society – just as it was centuries ago.

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