



## Gothic Elements in the Works of Charles Dickens

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**Abstract:** *Charles Dickens is another name in the brilliant galaxy of English literature of Victorian Era, whose works are like an infrangible part of the daily lives of most of the people whether it is about children or about the adults. The present research article is focussed on the Gothic elements found in the works of Charles Dickens. It is observed that Charles Dickens followed the traditions of the literature with horror elements, the traditions of the "Gothic" novel. The aim is to show how the techniques that existed in the Victorian era, which came from the Gothic prose of the eighteenth century.*

**Keywords:** *Gothic literature, horror elements, Victorianism, realism, folklore.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION:

The work of Charles Dickens is a special phenomenon in the history of English realism. The literary legacy left by him is unique, and his work has an enduring significance. Dickens' books are familiar to us from childhood. It is impossible to say about the following remarkable feature of Dickens's realism: he does not simply depict the reality of his era and its morals, he is not just depicting the reality of his era. Infact, we can say "attacking society ... relentlessly calls for the perfection of the spirit, not of the social structure." A similar opinion belongs to J. Lacan, who believes that "one of the features of Dickens' art is a double emphasis - on the power and beauty of human love and on the power and horror of modern society". (Lacan 23) Charles Dickens is rightly called the "Great Victorian", because in his rich and diverse work he managed to reflect the smallest signs of the era, all the shades and nuances of life, human characters and destinies.

It is observed that Charles Dickens followed the traditions of the literature with horror elements, the traditions of the "Gothic" novel. The aim is to show how the techniques that existed in the Victorian era, which came from the Gothic prose of the eighteenth century. The elements of Gothic novel were used in the works of Charles Dickens, as, organically woven into the fabric of his novels, they performed the artistic tasks necessary for the writer. Dickens did not experiment with the artistic possibilities of the Gothic novel, he used the whole variety of genre features to give his works a harmonious form and harmony of the plot. Traditions of various genres and styles merged in Dickens's search for that single unique form (including at the ideological, substantive level) that all his works possess. Like pre-romantics, Dickens reworks folkloric motifs, including them in the plot basis of his works. Myth, folk legend, legend were the source from which the pre-romantic new aesthetics, the aesthetics of the terrible, arose and developed. The Gothic novel absorbed the features of national folk art. Folk and medieval legends were combined with fantastic, mystical plots, giving the works a mysterious and gloomy flavour. Such an artistic experiment was aimed at stirring the imagination of the reader. (Lacan 58) In the work of Charles Dickens, the organic connection of his works with folklore is undoubted. Dickens drew much from English folk art. Fairy-tale fiction and prepared reality, covered with poetry and fairy tales, constitute the essence of the creative method of Charles Dickens. He had an undisguised interest in the so-called "scary stories", so it is quite obvious that the traditions of this genre were somehow embodied in his work. Realistically combined with sentimental, romantic and realistic lines, Gothic creates a unique synthesis that determines the uniqueness of the style of Charles Dickens. His works are extremely peculiar, rich in a variety of shades, organically intertwined, sometimes contradictory trends. Dickens's creative method combines the tragic and the comic, the realistic, the documentary beginning and the unique, inherent fiction. Dickens often turns to detective themes, masterfully builds the plot of his works, creating a complex intrigue, introducing the motif of mystery. Various artistic techniques that the writer used in his work helped him to depict the life of Victorian England in its entirety. (Cox 11) Speaking about the influence on the work of Charles Dickens of the traditions of Gothic literature and the degree of borrowing of its motives and techniques, it is important to take into account those factors that influenced the formation of the literary and aesthetic taste of the writer. Throughout his creative life, Dickens had an interest in criminal issues and a criminal nature. You



can see in Dickens's interest in crime a manifestation of a kind of craving for the mysterious and terrible, which originated in childhood under the influence of Mary Weller's stories. (Cox 12) From one of his biographies, it can be read that Charles Dickens saturated all his works with dialogues full of drama. But the real passion of the writer were episodes about nightmares and horror, about which he told with chilling details, so that listeners and viewers shivered. The biographer of Dickens notes that ghosts, corpses, murderers, criminals, madmen aroused great interest in the writer. Dickens was particularly good at telling scary stories. Speaking about the features of the work of Charles Dickens, his obvious interest in the sphere of the otherworldly, it is necessary to say about the personal strangeness of the writer. This was manifested, for example, in the fact that Dickens could spontaneously fall into a trance, was subject to visions and from time to time experienced states of déjà vu. Dickens believed that his characters were constantly around and communicating with him. Working on the "Shop of Antiquities", the writer could not safely eat or sleep: little Nell constantly twirled under her feet, demanded attention. (de Sade 12) In the story "The House with Ghosts", the author indulges in memories, describing a secluded abandoned house. In this episode, Charles Dickens describes the actual fact of his biography. One day, waking up early in the morning, Dickens saw his father sitting with his back to him at his feet on the bed. When he wanted to touch his father, the vision disappeared. Since then, the writer decided that the morning is the most suitable time to "meet" with ghosts. The legacy of the great English novelist absorbed the various literary traditions and trends of the era. In the works of Dickens, we will meet both the traditions of Enlightenment literature, and in many respects the opposite features of pre-romanticism and romanticism. (Cox 9) The concept of "Gothic" is quite extensive. It contains a wide range of meanings. This is not just a trend in art, literature, inclined to turn to supernatural things and themes, the description of crypts and abandoned old castles. It's more of a boilerplate opinion. Gothic literature, which was born in the depths of pre-romanticism, absorbed philosophical ideas, including those of E. Burke, which became fundamental to the entire theory of pre-romanticism. It should be noted that it was pre-romanticism that rediscovered folklore for the reader of the XVIII century, revived interest in the ballad. In the artistic world of Charles Dickens, fairy tales and fiction coexist, gravitating to a greater extent to mysticism, inheriting the traditions of literature of "horror". In his work, Dickens turns to the traditions of Gothic literature, to its discoveries, enriching his works, giving them color, making sketches and portraits "picturesque". (Cox 14)

Victorian era, depicts on the pages of his books the real world, the streets and slums of London, the poor in rags and luxurious mansions of the rich. Even in the most fantastic "Christmas Stories", where, according to the law of the Gothic genre, supernatural beings, Spirits, appear, the action still takes place in England, and the time coincides with the time of the writer's life. But the reader cannot be distracted from the idea that there is something in the works of Dickens that makes you remember the novels of G. Walpole or A. Radcliffe. In the works of Charles Dickens, a mysterious female shadow appears on the wall, and fatal omens ("The Adventures of Oliver Twist"), and real Spirits, and visions ("Christmas Stories"), and, of course, mystery ("The Mystery of Edwin Drood"). Charles Dickens can make the reader shudder with fear, whipping up a dark, sinister atmosphere. (de Sade 15) To talk about the complete borrowing of the techniques of "horror literature" by Dickens is hardly true, since the writer used Gothic motifs in a realistic reinterpreted form. The use of the traditions of Gothic literature in the work of Charles Dickens is fair to consider as "underwater" literary trends, poetic solutions that contribute to the enrichment of the work of the great English novelist. In this vein, it seems to us legitimate to consider the influence of the traditions of Gothic literature on the work of Charles Dickens. The objective of the study is to explore the literary traditions of Gothic novel and its elements in the artistic system of Charles Dickens, which can be seen in his various works including: "The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club" (1837), "The Adventures of Oliver Twist" (1837-1839), "The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby" (1838-1839), "The Old Curiosity Shop" (1840), The Personal History of David Copperfield (1849-1850), Bleak House (1853), Little Dorrit (1855-1857), Great Expectations (1861), Christmas Carol (1843), The Chimes (1844), The Haunted Man and The Ghost Bargain (1848), "The Haunted House" (1859) and "Doctor Marigold's Prescriptions" (1865). This work aims to identify those common features and patterns that allow us to talk about The Gothic as a formed literary tradition with its own specifics and boundaries, to determine its place in the work of Charles Dickens; to identify the specifics of borrowing and functioning in the works of Charles Dickens of the traditions of Gothic literature. The analysis of some aspects of the plot of works of Gothic literature is chosen as a means for identifying Gothic traditions in the work of Dickens, since the study of plot structures seems to be the most successful basis for analyzing works belonging to different literary trends. The problem of the influence on the work of Charles Dickens of the traditions of the Gothic novel did not become the topic of special scientific research, and meanwhile, Gothic literature was a powerful impulse that influenced the writer and to one degree or another determined the peculiarity and originality of his work. Literary Gothic refers to those living and fruitful areas of literature, the influence of which is somehow found in a very wide range of artistic structures. The phenomenon of Gothic literature is inseparable from pre-romanticism, in the depths of which this tradition has developed. In his monograph "Pre-Romanticism". A special – thematically, plot-compositional and stylistic – artistic system was formed, which is defined by researchers as a Gothic tradition in literature. "It is quite



obvious that a form so closely related to the primary sense, that is, the literature of horror, is as old as human thought or speech. Cosmic horror appears as an integral element in the earliest folklore of all peoples, it is easy to see it in ancient ballads, chronicles and sacred scriptures, "notes Michael Cox in his essay "Supernatural Horror in Literature". (Cox 8) The Gothic tradition has drawn into its poetic spectrum the work of many writers whose artistic interests generally lie beyond its borders, from Dickens and Dostoevsky to Faulkner, Fowles, and Ackroyd. The genre of the Gothic novel, as well as the term itself, goes back to the work of Horace Walpole, namely to his only and famous novel at the time, or "novel", as he himself called his work, "Otranto's Castle" (1764). Speaking about the history and development of the Gothic genre, it is necessary to name the "Gothic" chivalric novel of the middle of the XIII century "The Disastrous Churchyard", the French "tragic stories" of the XVI-XVII centuries, in which the devil's obsession and other infernal themes appear (including the novels of Bishop Jean-Pierre Camus), the English Gothic novel (not so much early, Horace Walpole and Anna Radcliffe, as late, of the romantic era, primarily "Frankenstein" by M. Shelley, as well as "The Monk" by M. G. Lewis and "Melmoth the Wanderer" by C. Mathurin), fairy tales of German romantics (E. T. A. Hoffmann, W. Gauf, A. Arnim, Chamisso), psychological novels by E. Poe and A. Biers. Another not so often-called source is the "nightmares of visionaries" (Confessions of an English opiomaniac by T. de Quincy, "Artificial Paradise" by S. Baudelaire). One of the features of the Gothic novel, which distinguishes it from other literary phenomena of that time, is that within its framework the surreal became the central category of philosophical and aesthetic understanding of the world. The aesthetic, culturological, and philosophical basis of pre-romanticism was Edmund Burke's Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful (1756). (Burke 14) In his treatise, E. Burke formulated the basic postulates that became the canons of the Gothic novel. He substantiated, in contrast to enlightenment aesthetics, a new interpretation of the categories of the Sublime and the Beautiful, separated these categories from ethical ones (such as Good). Burke asserted the superiority of the emotional reaction to reality over its reasonable comprehension, put forward the idea of the determining power of the imagination. The treatise established a new important category: the terrible. E. Burke considered the beautiful and the sublime as phenomena of different orders. The sublime should cause surprise, the highest degree of surprise is horror. Burke believed that "... ideas of displeasure are much stronger than ideas aroused by pleasure". Any ambiguity always affects the imagination, so Burke attached great importance to rustling, mysterious sounds, darkness. (Burke 15)

The Gothic novel created a viable system of techniques that not only took root in literature, but also became the basis for artistic transformation in the works of a later period. Maggie Kilgour, author of *The Dawn of the Gothic Novel*, writes that behind the words "Gothic novel" lies a powerful image that seems to bewitch us: "Here we see a monster created by Frankenstein rising from the laboratory table, Dracula rising from his coffin, as slowly a crypt opens and some dark, dark figure emerges from the darkness." The researcher notes that Gothic is more of a transitional genre form, which is no stranger to some "childishness" (puerile). The patterns and schemes used by the authors of Gothic novels were somehow adopted by subsequent literature. In the late XIX-early XX centuries, interest moves to the area of the unusual, but not always supernatural. Terrible, mysterious, frightening, sinister becomes the consciousness of a person, his thoughts. Hence the interest in the realm of the subconscious and its hidden possibilities. Gothic traditions have gone through several stages of revival. Gothic themes and motifs are introduced into novels that cannot be called completely Gothic, transformed into universal methods of whipping up horror. With the help of fear, the Gothic seeks to make you think about the boundaries of reality, about magic in this world, about the presence of evil in the human soul. In a realistic novel of the XIX century, the atmosphere of mystery can shade the plot. But in the works of Charles Dickens, the mystery becomes the engine of the plot, all the characters are somehow connected with it. Gothic horrors in Dickens can be expressed through prophetic visions or bad premonitions. A mystical element is present in the novel "The Adventures of Oliver Twist" in the episode where Nancy talks about a terrible vision that turned out to be prophetic - the girl dies at the hands of Sykes: "... all day I was haunted by terrible thoughts of death, of some shrouds... and tonight a coffin was carried down the street just past me." (The Adventures of Oliver Twist) Despite the fact that Dickens noted the so-called "exemplary" horrors of Radcliffe, he quite often resorted to the creative experiment of the writer. The atmosphere of mystery and suspense inherent in all Dickens novels has a huge power of emotional impact. Mystery plays a decisive role in the plot of any of his novels. Let us now take a look over the features of the heroes of Gothic novels in the characters of Charles Dickens. Heroes of Gothic works, as a rule, are marked by the seal of fate and demonism (negligent priests and monks, sorcerers and witches, demons and ghosts, figures like Faust or the Eternal Jew). It is important to note that the predicament, clichédness of the role of the characters, often regarded as one of the most vulnerable points of the Gothic novel, is a characteristic genre feature. In his work, Charles Dickens combines a variety of literary traditions. Of course, the writer could not but focus on the literary tradition of the Enlightenment. In the very nature of the sculpting of the image, in a clear distinction between the "good" and the "evil" in man, Dickens follows the rationalist manner of the novelists of the XVIII century.



In the eighteenth-century English Gothic novel, which inherited the traditions of the Enlightenment, there was a clear division of characters into two main camps - virtue and villainy. And in the first dominated by female images, and in the second - male. In *The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby* (1838-1839)(TLANN), for example, there are no intermediate, contradictory figures. In this early work, along with the central positive hero and his main antagonist, there are characters either good or evil. The narrative is built on the principle of contrasting characters. In Dickens' mature novel, we do not see such a clear separation. Quite often in the works of Dickens, we can meet two types of characters: a semi-demonic hero and a heroine who carries a bright beginning. In later works, a completely different approach to the description of both positive and negative characters is obvious. The complication of images gradually leads to the fact that negative and positive traits are combined in one person. First, male and then female images become open to both good and evil. Even seemingly perfect heroes have dual potential. The positive heroines of Dickens (especially his early works) are similar to the heroines of sentimental and gothic novels. They are beautiful in appearance, their feelings are sublime, they are always surrounded by mystery. A heroine who embodies true virtue must be beautiful in appearance. This tradition passed from the Enlightenment novel to the Gothic novel and became entrenched as a canon. Matilda in *"The Castle of Otranto"*, Emilia in *"Udolf Mysteries"* are good-looking, beautiful and the inner world of these heroines. This is a typical for the middle of the XVIII century identification of external and internal characteristics. In the later novels of Dickens, the image of a positive heroine acquires a dual character. So, for example, Fanny in *"Little Dorrit"* is capricious and vain, Bella in the novel *"Our Mutual Friend"* with all her positive qualities, by her own admission, is self-serving. Recall that one of the central characters in the novel by Charles Dickens *"The Mystery of Edwin Drood"* is Rose, who is a typical example of the heroine of a Gothic novel. An interesting fact is that no matter how beautiful Rose is, some researchers associate the mystery of Edwin Drood's disappearance with her, while assigning her the role of an avenger in the novel.(TLANN) The main villains of Dickens, especially in the early novels, are very dark figures. This manifests itself on a descriptive level. They are repulsive, unpleasant in appearance (Quilp, Fagin, Ralph Nickleby). Fagin and Quilp are akin to a sorcerer and an evil dwarf from folk tales. However, some researchers deny Dickens' characters exclusivity: "Dickens' villains are usually soulless scoundrels, in stark contrast to their virtuous and helpless victims." In the image of Fagin there are features of the hero of a "terrible" novel. Dickens biographer G. Chesterton compares *"Notes of the Pickwick Club"* (1837) and *"The Adventures of Oliver Twist"* (1837-1839): "If in *Pickwick* Dickens restrained his natural inclination to the terrible, then in *Oliver Twist* he curbed his equally innate inclination to laughter and joy. In this novel, the smoke of the thieves' kitchen envelops the whole story ... It must be considered a particularly happy accident that the illustrations to this work belong to Cruikshank. There was a morbid expressiveness in *The Art of Cruikshank*, reminiscent, if you will, of the soul of a criminal. There's a grim force in his drawings... Between these heavy and sinister drawings, there is one that gives, with some particular dark frankness, a glimpse of the terrible poetry that permeates the entire book. It depicts Oliver sitting by an open window in the house of one of his kindest patrons. Outside the window stand Fagin and the Monk with the *Physiognomy of the Gallows*... Their colorless eyes, greedily and predatorily devouring the sleeping Oliver, are conveyed by the artist with his characteristic simplicity and diabolical expressiveness. In the novel *The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby*, Dickens portrayed more than truthfully the lives of students in Yorkshire schools in which children were abused by teachers. The release of the novel received a wide public response. After the inspections, many teachers were dismissed. It is impossible not to feel sorry for the innocent teachers and ministers of more respectable institutions: they were also thrown into the street. Shopkeepers and hoteliers suffered: the pictures of the unhappy life of teenagers in *"Nicholas Nickleby"* caused a lively response. It is not surprising that in the vicinity of Bernard Castle, the name "Dickens" has been put into its literal meaning for more than one year - "devil". Dickens firmly believed in the educational function of literature. The didacticism of his works is not intemperate. We just read fascinating books and change internally. (TLANN)

### 3. CONCLUSION:

The work of Charles Dickens is a special phenomenon in the history of English realism. The literary legacy left by him is unique, and his work has an enduring significance. Dickens' books are familiar to us from childhood. Charles Dickens is rightly called the "Great Victorian", because in his rich and diverse work he managed to reflect the smallest signs of the era, all the shades and nuances of life, human characters and destinies. It is observed that the elements of Gothic novel were used in the works of Charles Dickens, as, organically woven into the fabric of his novels, they performed the artistic tasks necessary for the writer. The Gothic novel absorbed the features of national folk art. Folk and medieval legends were combined with fantastic, mystical plots, giving the works a mysterious and gloomy flavour. It is difficult and, perhaps, impossible in a few words to explain the reason for the uniqueness of the artistic world of the great novelist. Many works are devoted to the features of the writer's work in our country, each of which reflects one or another facet of Dickens' talent.



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