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NIKOLAY GOGOL AND RAPHAEL PATKANYAN: THE PHILOSOPHY OF HORROR

Abstract

The article is dedicated to the study of the artistic impact of the Russian writer Nikolay Gogol (1809-1852) on the creation of the Armenian author Raphael Patkanyan (1830-1892). The object of the research is the horror stories and their philosophy. From this perspective, Patkanyan appears as a student of the Gogol school of horrors by masterfully using the artistic technique of his teacher. The first parallel is the place and time of the action. Night becomes the time axis of the stories, and the plot turns around national holidays - Russian Navi day, Ivan Kupala, Christmas, Armenian Carnival, etc. Actions take place in a cursed or enchanted place (a scary house, an old church, hell, a mortuary, a cemetery, etc.), which allows the two realities to collide, as a result of which extramundane forces penetrate into our world. By taking the national folklore as a basis, both authors set the plot of mythical characters in motion portraying witches, demons, spirits, zombies and other terrible creatures as antagonists. The works of both authors are similar in terms of some functional motifs like the sale of the soul to the devil, metamorphoses, dance and laughter of death, implying specific rituals.

Keywords: Nikolay Gogol, Raphael Patkanyan, horror stories, philosophy of horror, literary connections, Russian literature, Armenian literature.

Introduction

The comparative examination of Armenian-Russian literature reveals various connections between literary characters, themes and plots. Russian authors have had a great influence on the thinking of Armenian writers: different artistic, social-philosophical directions, methods, and schools have penetrated into the Armenian reality through the prism of their works. Both during the rule of the Russian Empire and the Soviet

years, Russian literature was a landmark for the development of Armenian literature. Armenian writers and thinkers were influenced by Russian cultural revolutions: they followed all the developments, theoretical, methodological, and ideological innovations and even got acquainted with world art mainly through the Russian language. From this perspective, the role of Nikolay Gogol is especially invaluable. His works “Dead Souls”, “The Government Inspector”, and “The Nose” and the worldview standpoint expressed

in them, as well as the way of perceiving and expressing reality, have found their traces in the works of Armenian creators, which has been the basis for various literary ties (Hovnan, 1952).

Gogol's work had an especially great influence on the literary thinking of the famous Armenian writer R. Patkanyan (1830-1892). In one of his travel notes referring to Russian literature, he states: "Who does not know that Russia's intellectual progress and backwardness strongly affects us, Armenians? Russian literature gives powerful blows not only to Armenian literature but also to its moral direction, perhaps more powerful than even to the Russian nation. We not only take into account the idea expressed in Russian magazines and newspapers, but we completely swallow it" (Patkanyan, 1968, p. 48).

In his letters addressed to his relatives and friends, the Armenian writer several times mentions Gogol's works and the latter's artistic method. For instance, in the letter addressed to his cousin K. Patkanyan, a famous orientalist of the time, Patkanyan (1970) emphasizes the need to write like Gogol in his style and method, even lowering his writing style in the context of that comparison (p. 423).

Gogol's narrative form and the perspective of life perception have found their unique expression in the structure of the Armenian author's literary work: Chichikov's type, for example, is the basis of the image system in a number of his works, and the whole plot is woven around him. The play "Pampulius", the story "Armenian Chichikov", and the novel "The Ambitious" are based on the Armenian version of the hero striving for power, acting in the Armenian environment and in a different time period (Makaryan & Soghoyan, 2016, pp. 105-111).

In terms of observation, the Gogol-Patkanyan parallel, apart from this figurative connection, plays a key role in horror stories, too. In recent years scientific articles considering the problem from different points of view have been published: narrative (Ogurtsova, 2017), psychological (Dubrovitskii, 2017), lexical-semantic (Salty-makova, 2020), interdisciplinary (Bulavina,

2021) studies, etc. The horror stories of Patkanyan are almost unstudied, and the parallel of the two authors in this context is considered only in the Russian-language monograph by E. Aleksanyan (1977), which studies this issue superficially in the context of the general ties of Armenian-Russian literature without using research metalanguage (pp. 135-138).

The problem of our article is the study of the general connections of the philosophy of horror of the above-mentioned two authors and also the observation of the influence of Gogol's works on Patkanyan's literary creations. The main objective is to examine the concepts of horror and fear, to study the all-consuming terror generated from the suspense and uncertainty and also to examine the fear derived from concrete and known phenomena.

Elements of Carnivalization

The most devastating element of horror prevails in the works of the two writers who lived and worked in St. Petersburg. The fear of death, the feeling of its omnipotence, domination and inevitability occupy a central place in the structure of their works which are the reflection of their real fears and feelings, so the parallel between the two writers starts right in the field of reality, i.e., from the peculiar horror of death and burial. Let us recall, for instance, Gogol's fear of being buried alive and the fearsome description of his own body after death in the famous "Testament": "Shame on someone who is attracted by some attention to a rotting finger that is no longer mine: he will bow to the worms that gnaw it" (Gogol, 1952, p. 219).

Patkanyan also experienced a similar fear of death and human corpses. From 1852 to 1854, the Armenian writer studied at the medical faculty of the Imperial Moscow University, but during the course of anatomy, the corpses from the mortuary frightened the young man of writing abilities, and he dropped out of school (Saghyan, 1980, p. 71).

Gogol's prose was a literary ideal and artistic

perfection for Patkanian. He tried to follow the footsteps of Gogol, to project the approaches put forward by the great Russian writer onto Armenian reality and create an Armenian type of Russian horror story giving it a national character.

The horror stories of both authors are based on folklore, in which folk beliefs are embodied. After the failed publication of “Hanz Kühelgarten”, Gogol turned his attention to national literature (Stepanov, 1955, pp. 46-47): he writes letters to his mother and family with a request to send materials about their national life, faith and fairy tales, which he later uses as the basis for horror stories published in the book “Evenings on a Farm near Dikanka” (Mashinskii, 1951, p. 50). This folklore subtext of the works subsequently becomes the key to his success.

Patkanyan’s horror literature also has a folklore basis. Most of these stories are written in the dialect of New Nakhichevan. They were written by the author at the suggestion of his cousin K. Patkanyan, who was considering the mentioned dialect in his study of the Armenian dialects. As a source, he needed materials written in a dialect, and the orientalist professor asked his cousin to collect local beliefs, fairy tales and sagas to create small works based on them (Saghyan, 1980, p. 247). The author liked this method, and in the future, he nourished his works with folklore.

The first commonality of the creative thinking of the two authors is the preservation of heredity: the national thinking, the cyclical linearity of family ties, and the transition from father to son, which proves the veracity of the presented cases. Gogol’s story “The Evening on the Eve of Ivan Kupala”, for example, is told by Foma Grigorievich who constantly mentions that these events are real, witnessed by his grandfather’s aunt, grandfather, father, and even he himself remembers some strange events. Those means of generational transmission of history create a unique connection between the reader and the characters of the narrator, and the narrated material is presented as a fact that has been seen for the narrator’s “trusted people”. The problem of location is also emphasized: “This terrible story did not take

place in a distant world, but in this very place where our village stands” (Gogol, 1940, p. 151). In this way, the problem of inheritance of witnesses is added to the function of soil memory.

Like Gogol, Patkanyan (1966b) raises the same question in his short story “How Do You Understand It?” (pp. 195-199). The heir of the heroes who years ago took part in supernatural events tells about those things as the memories of horrific events that have been passed down from generation to generation. In this case, they again get a real colouring, and the eyewitness’s function is emphasized. The events also take place on the same spatial segment, that is, in the church of the city of New Nakhichevan.

Spatial-temporal units are central in the structure of horror stories by both writers. Gogol weaves his works with carnival elements (Mann, 1988, pp. 5-55), paying special attention to the functions of place and time in their unique philosophy. In terms of time, events take place during national or church holidays, which gives a magical significance to the events, allowing the devils to crawl into the human world (Fair, Ivan Kupala holiday, the night before Christmas, wedding).

For his horror works, Patkanyan also chooses the same structure linking the plots of the stories “Khortlakh” and “New House, Old House” with the Armenian Shrovetide (Barekendan) and “Revenge of the Dead” with the Russian Memorial Day (Navi Day). Armenian Shrovetide is a carnival holiday (Simyan, 2019, 2020) when people dance in masks and play different games. This holiday is also important in the context of relations with the deceased: the doors of the underworld are opened, and the dead come to receive their share of the sacrifice (Simonyan-Melikyan, 2007, p. 100). The Russian Memorial Day (Navi Day) has a gloomier subcontext: on that day, the souls of the other world get the opportunity to penetrate into the human world and take revenge on the living.

Accordingly, the spatial dimension of the work also acquires key importance: the happy carnival place in the works of both authors is

transformed into a gloomy or enchanted place: in Gogol's works, it is the forest ("Evening on the Eve of Ivan Kupala"), ("The Missing Letter"), a terrible house ("May Night, or a Drowned Woman"), an old castle ("Terrible Revenge"), an old church ("Viy") and etc., in the works of Patkanyan it is hell ("Demon Mrus" (1858)), mortuary ("Vengeance of the Deceased Woman" (1864)), the grave of Judas ("Bitten by a Serpent" (1888)), non-residential house ("Khortlakh" (1889)), a cemetery ("New House, Old House" (1888)), a destroyed house ("Emerald" (1874)) and others.

Alongside the accentuated symbolism of the holidays and in parallel with these mysterious spatial places, the two writers use the motif of the night as well. "Gogol is the Poet of the Night" (Zolotusskii, 1984, p. 119), and Patkanyan takes the same road. The events of almost all the horror stories of the Armenian author take place at night, and in the works "Hidden Corners of our Place" (1882), "Vengeance of the Deceased Woman", and "Khortlakh" "guests from the underworld" come at midnight, just after twelve o'clock: "The clock struck twelve o'clock at midnight, and their voice mingled with the sad ringing of the dead, intensifying the horror in my heart" (Patkanyan, 1974, p. 289), "The clock struck twelve o'clock at night, and the last blow had not yet been lost in the air when suddenly a young man entered, and I did not understand how he managed to open three locked doors, and even my yard dog did not bark (Patkanyan, 1966a, p. 211), "One night at about twelve o'clock" (Patkanyan, 1966b, p. 344).

The night gives a unique mystery to the works, and the darkness multiplies the horror of the characters from the uncertainty, which causes a feeling of fear in the reader. The night first awakens a metaphysical fear that has no clear, objective cause: first, it engulfs the hero and then the reader as well. The function of the night is slowly transformed into fear-anxiety, which through the ratio of darkness, sound and silence and the functions of smells begins to become concrete and take on a certain form. While de-

scribing Gogol's main artistic method, Ovsjaniko-Kulikovskii (1907) singles out mystery, simulation and mystification (pp. 56-57), which are best embodied in the artistic system of the night. In the context of the darkness that covers and hides everything, when nothing is visible, the human senses become more sensitive: they perceive all the details that are almost imperceptible in the light. Sounds and smells are perceived more sharply, and the sight in the dark can catch any slight movement or spark of light. Gogol uses this technique of sharpening the senses, which later is also used by his gifted student Patkanyan.

In Gogol's story "May Night, or the Drowned Woman", for example, the darkness is accompanied by silence, and only from time to time the sounds of birds are heard: "Everything is quiet; in the deep thicket of the forest, only the peals of the nightingale were heard" (Gogol, 1940, p. 174). Along with the voices, aromas intensify: "The smell of blossoming apple trees and night flowers poured over the whole earth" (Gogol, 1940, p. 174). And in that darkness of the night, an unusual scene appears before his eyes: the house abandoned in the morning has changed its usual appearance: "Instead of gloomy shutters cheerful glass windows and doors looked out. Through the clean glass flickered gilding" (Gogol, 1940, p. 174). From that house of unusual appearance, suddenly an inhuman voice is heard, and the drowned woman appears.

In Patkanyan's story "Khortlakh", the hero also wanders in complete darkness: absolute silence reigns when suddenly a terrifying voice is heard from afar: "From afar, an incomprehensible voice was heard, either an owl, or a dog's howl, or the plaintive voice of a man lying under a robber's knife... The city was like a dead one" (Patkanyan, 1966b, pp. 344-345). In a terrifying environment, in the windows of an uninhabited house, light is suddenly seen. The house, which usually looks abandoned, was inhabited at night: "There is a light burning in the windows of the house ... the light was not from a lamp or a table lamp, it was something else ... like the white col-

our of a thin slick on the eye of a blind person under the light” (Patkanyan, 1966, p. 345). Suddenly an inhuman voice is heard from that terrifying house, which gives his name: “It was not a human’s voice, it sounded like it was from the phone or duduk” (Patkanyan, 1966b, p. 345).

The dream is also connected with the symbolism of the night. The dream, in general, has an important meaning in horror literature. It allows to represent the existence of the other world, where the imaginary and real worlds intersect, and the new reality creates a new philosophy of horror with its different rules and patterns. Solutions to various problems, issues and revelation of secrets are done through a dream. In the above-mentioned two works, for instance, the heroes meet the souls of the drowned women and deceased “zombie” in the closed structure of a dream. When they meet, everything seems real to them, but then they wake up lying on the ground. In the morning, the symbolism of the horrible house changes again, and before their eyes, the abandoned and uninhabited house rises.

The fears of the night vanish with the rays of the sun, and people begin to associate them with dreams. Being unable to escape from the terrible reality and perceive it logically, a person attributes it to a dream and tries to convince himself that what he saw was fictitious, an unreal dream, an ordinary deception. This self-deception allows a person for a moment to escape from that terror and turn the chaos of his mind back into the orderly system of the cosmos. The last chance to escape from the terrible and unpleasant reality is to perceive it as a dream, which gives birth to hope in the hero's heart that the horrors he saw and the fears he experienced are not real. However, in the morning, there are some prompts and signs that prove the reality of the dream. In the already mentioned story “May Night or the Drowned Woman” by Gogol, for example, the hero finds a strange letter in the morning, and in “Viy”, Khoma Brut sees in the mirror that his hair has turned grey from fear during the night. In Patkanyan’s “Khortlakh” and “New House, Old House”, after awakening, the meeting with

the spirits is presented as a dream; it is not understood whether what has been seen was real or a dream, and in the story “Revenge of the Dead” the hero finds a trace of a zombie bite on his cheek.

As it was emphasized, dreams are also a way to reveal a terrible secret or to solve problems (prophetic dreams). In “A Terrible Place”, for example, the secret of the wizard is revealed through Katerina’s dream: in the dream, the girl’s soul leaves the body and meets her wizard father. We observe a similar situation in the works of Patkanyan – “How do you understand this?” and “Bitten by a Serpent”. In the first case, the Mother of God appears in a dream and, with a “terrifying voice”, reveals the secret of the icon. In the second case, Satan appears in a dream promising to heal the child if he sells his soul to him.

Incarnations of Evil

The Gogol-Patkanyan parallel can also be traced in with the similarity of motives.

As we pointed out at the beginning of the article, the works of both authors are based on folklore, and they both use motifs typical of folk tales. In the context of Gogol’s creativity, for instance, there are motifs of the devil expelled from hell, the metamorphosis of a wizard, the abduction of stars and the moon, a drowned mermaid, the sale of the soul to the devil and so on (Gippius, 1924, pp. 35-36). In the context of his horror stories, the author assigns a primary role to folklore creatures from the other world: devil, witches and wizards; wood creatures; drowned women; dead rising out of the grave; spirits; viy. Patkanyan, too, in the pictorial system of his works, portrays as anti-heroes the negative characters of Armenian folklore. In his short story “The Brewer Galust” (1875), he mentions a number of mythical creatures that live in darkness and terrify people: Khoncholo, that hides in the dark corners of the house, Tune Ter (literal translation: the owner of the house) - a brownie in the form of a belly, a genie living in

abandoned houses, Pogho, scaring children, zombie Khortlakh, who came out of the grave, Eghiat, living in the pantry, Tsovi Mar (literal translation: Mother of the Sea), living in water and killing male representatives, beautiful and ambitious fairies of Mesman Agheki (literal translation: better than us), fluffy and silent creature Mmras, Tsantr (literal translation: Heavy), that sits on a person in a dream and forbids waking up, Tsutsunk (literal translation: Indicating) remindful of hidden sins, Chakatin gir grogner (literal translation: Writers of words on the forehead), determining the fate of a person, and demons. In the given work, the creatures are only mentioned, they are not represented in the field of action, and the author talks about them in detail only in the notes (Patkanyan, 1966b). In addition to these creatures, the Spirit of Masis (a positive image) appears in Patkanyan's horror stories - a mythical hero - the saviour of Mount Ararat, as well as the devil, spirits and human corpses (zombies).

Philosopher Eugene Thacker (2011), studying the logic of incommensurability between life and living, writes: "Let us consider a hagiography of life in the relation between theology and horror: the living dead, the undead, the demon, and the phantasm. In each case, there is an exemplary figure, an allegorical mode, a mode of manifestation, and a metaphysical principle that is the link between philosophy and horror" (p. 172). Zombie, for instance, in the context of life after death, stands for *living dead*, the vampire is *undead* or *immortal*, the demon is an *amalgam* (partially material, partially immaterial), and the ghost is a *phantasm* (the domain of spirit, soul, or, in its secular sense, of memory) (Thacker, 2011, pp. 172-174).

The devil who escaped from hell, or Satan, is one of the key evils of Gogol's horror. If in the works "Sorochinsky Fair" and "The Night Before Christmas" it has a humorous description, in the story "The Evening on the Eve of Ivan Kupala", the relatively carefree villain turns into a terrible Basovryuk: "None other than Satan in human form" (Gogol, 1940, p 151).

In the context of Patkanyan's work, Satan and the devil have no satirical description. In the poem "Demon Mrus", based on a national legend, the demons Belphegor, Anamelek and Mrus gather in the main hall of Hell and begin to discuss ways of turning Armenians away from Christianity and national thinking. In the story "Bitten by a Serpent", in a dream, there appears "an old man with long nails, a dry body and a very black face, from whose eyes fire pours" (Patkanyan, 1966b, p. 316): he is also depicted as "a naked woman, or a man with a bag of gold" (Patkanyan, 1966b, p. 320).

At the end of Gogol's work, "Viy", along with a mythical creature with long eyelids, various spirits come from the other world, who, because of not hearing the rooster, remain forever locked in the walls of the church. Human souls are also embodied in Patkanyan's story "New House, Old House". The hero meets the spirit of one of the dead rich men near the desecrated grave and travels with him through time. The hero describes the spirit with three features: it has no shadow, a small image of the interlocutor is not reflected in its eyes, and next to him, the sense of time disappears: "There were no days, years, months, weeks, minutes: there was only the opening and closing of the eyes" (Patkanyan, 1966b, p. 316).

The spirit in the works of Gogol and Patkanyan appears as an incorporeal entity, the otherworldly image of the soul of the deceased. In the works of both authors, however, there are embodied bodies of the dead that return to the world with their earthly bodies. Those bodies endured all the torments of death and were transformed. In the context of Gogol's work, such entities are the drowned women. Those women and girls who commit suicide do not find a place for themselves in the afterlife, are not accepted in either heaven or hell and continue to live in the waters in which they have drowned.

There are also images of corpses coming out of graves in the story "Terrible Revenge". Human bodies under a cruel curse come out from the underground, and their physical torment is

obvious: “The third cross shook, the third dead man rose. It seemed that only the bones rose high above the ground. Beard to the very heels; fingers with long claws dug into the ground. Terribly, he stretched his hands up as if he wanted to get the moon and screamed as if someone began to saw his yellow bones...” (Gogol, 1940, p. 248).

After the curse is fulfilled, those corpses come out of the graves again and begin to bite the body of the most sinful corpse. “And all the dead jumped into the abyss, picked up the dead man and plunged their teeth into him” (Gogol, 1940, p. 278).

Patkanyan also creates a similar image of a corpse coming out of the grave by using Armenian legends about Khortlaks and Gornapshtik as the basis for the story “Khortlakh”. According to Armenian beliefs, these are the transformed creatures of sinners who come out of the graves with torn bodies or disguise themselves as some kind of animal to intimidate people passing by the cemeteries (Galstyan, 2012).

According to Patkanyan, Khortlakh is a formerly rich man who escaped from hell on the night of Shrovetide: “He was naked from head to toe, so weak and dry that it seemed as if one bone was kissing another. I don’t know if the colour of the body was green, I don’t know if it was yellow or purple, but that’s the colour of meat eaten by worms seven or eight days ago” (Patkanyan, 1966b, p. 346).

In this work, the corpse that has risen from the grave is also attacked by other dead and hellish creatures that bite its body and take it to hell: “They all piled on the dead man, began to bite, scratch, lick, pierce the skin and chew meat... They took him, lifted him into the air and disappeared...” (Patkanyan, 1966b, p. 349).

If in “Khortlakh” creatures are depicted emerging from the grave, then in “Vengeance of the Deceased”, the author presents the unburied bodies as antagonists. In “Navi Day”, the hero accidentally ends up in a medical morgue and at 12 o’clock sees dismembered corpses, which, as

part of the holiday’s ritual, come to life and try to harm those who have disfigured them.

In the morgue, the medical student sees the body of a newly brought young girl: “The young girl had the magical beauty that tuberculosis usually imparts to its victim. I admired her image and could not take my eyes off her face” (Patkanyan, 1974, p. 289).

With such unearthly beauty is endowed the corpse of the heroine of Gogol’s “Viya”: “She lay as if alive. A beautiful forehead, soft as snow, like silver, seemed to be thinking; eyebrows-night in the midst of a sunny day, thin, even, proudly raised above-closed eyes, and eyelashes, fallen arrows on cheeks, blazing with the heat of secret desires” (Gogol, 1937, p. 199).

Both characters, along with beauty, hide the features of a predator and an attacker, and at this point, Gogol’s influence on the thinking of the still young writer Patkanyan is unequivocal. “The girl plunged her knife-sharp teeth into my body, and then began to suck my blood with such force that I thought she wanted to suck my life...” (Patkanyan, 1974, p. 293). “...She was all blue, and her eyes burned like coal. She grabbed the child, bit her throat and began to drink blood from it” (Gogol, 1937, p. 204).

In the works of Patkanyan and Gogol, the encounter with those evils awakens existential terror in the heart of the hero. The fear of the extinction of one’s own existence is paralleled by the sense of meaninglessness of life and the world. Evil forces penetrating into human life from another cosmic dimension absorb all good and positive emotions, leaving behind a cold sense of meaninglessness and emptiness. And at this point, the fear of death is born, that is, the fear of the uncertain, senseless and obdurate new universe that has given birth to these evils that invaded our world.

These various evils, which are based on national folklore, stand out in the context of the works of both authors with a very similar generality of imagery - with a mysterious depiction of the eyes.

The function of the eye and vision is central to Gogol's magic (Yermakov, 1923, pp. 48-50), and Patkanyan also uses this technique of characterization. Let us bring some examples:

- Gogol - "Eyes like an ox" (Basovryuk) (1940, p. 278), "Look how I look with my eyes! Then he brought fiery eyes on me" (Wizard) (1940, p. 253), "Eyes burned like coal" (Witch) (1937, p. 204) etc.
- Patkanyan - "Fire poured out of the eyes" (Satan) (1966b, p. 316), "The eyes were closed, but under the eyelids pupils were visible that looked directly at me, piercing my heart like an awl. This is something terrifying" (Khortlakh), (1966b, p. 346) etc.

Functional Motifs

In addition to the similarities between the folkloric characters of the evils, Gogol's and Patkanyan's horror stories also have similarities in their functional motives.

The first parallel is the ritual, which is also associated with carnival thinking. In the works of both authors, there is a motif of selling the soul to the devil, the realization of which implies a certain ritual chain. In the story "Evening on the Eve of Ivan Kupala", for instance, in order to sell your soul and get paid, you need to kill an innocent child, which is accompanied by a dance of "ugly monsters" and their "devilish laughter".

In Patkanyan's story "Bitten by a Serpent", in order to sell the soul, one must sacrifice thirteen times to the grave of Judas and lubricate the human wound with the blood of an animal by mixing two types of blood, after which evil will settle in the soul of a person, and while he lives on this earth will give him all the treasures of the world. In this case, Patkanyan changes the sacrament of the Holy Sacrifice in Jerusalem by choosing a place which is not the tomb of Christ or any saint but the traitor apostle's grave. Instead of the symbolic sacred number 7, the satanic 13 is used.

The Christian ritual undergoes certain chang-

es in the story "How do you understand this?" To save the life of their only brother, four sisters kneel around the bed of a dying sick man and, by rotating forty circles, ask God to take the life of one of them and save their brother. With each circle, the brother's strength is restored, while the sisters' strength fades away. Within six months, the brother is healed, while all the sisters die.

In the works touching upon horror, life and death are intertwined, woven into a common circle. "Death in the popular mind is conceived not as a final disappearance, but as a new birth, transformation/resurrection, transition to another sphere of existence, as part of life" (Goldenberg, 2007, p. 11). The burial rite is the transformation of a person's earthly life into the afterlife, a ritual by which the deceased passes on to the new form of his existence. And for that transition, there are certain important functions- the dance of death, the laughter of death. In the story "Evening on the Eve of Ivan Kupala", as it was already emphasized, the monsters danced around and laughed with devilish laughter. The dance of death and the demonic laughter of the dying become a kind of ritual means for crossing the two worlds, which acquire a terrifying significance in the horror stories of Gogol and Patkanyan. Let us consider, for instance, the dance of the transformation of a wizard at a wedding ("Terrible Revenge"), a unique union of the dance of murder and wedding, that is, sadness and joy ("Evening on the Eve of Ivan Kupala") or the dance of madness by Khoma Brut before the third night ("Viy"). In the context of Patkanyan's work, a zombie that escaped from the grave claps and laughed while remembering the scene of its burial ("Khortlakh"), and the torn corpse from the morgue with a devilish smile is preparing its revenge ("Revenge of the Deceased"): here you can also hear the sounds of the dance of the dead: "There was a muffled whisper in the hall as if the corpses of the dead had gathered together, singing verses and dancing terribly" (Patkanyan, 1974, p. 290).

The dance of death is, in fact, a ritual function

that ensures the transition from life to death, and its disruption can leave the transformation incomplete. The drowned woman in Gogol's work, for example, cannot calmly move on to the next stage of her existence and swim freely in the water while the witch-stepmother lives and hides: the water draws her in.

In Patkanyan's "Vengeance of the Dead", the natural connection between life and death is also broken. People dismembered the corpse of the old man and defiled his natural physique, which made his natural dance impossible on Navi day, and the transition from this world to another became unreal. Patkanyan presents the torn human body with naturalistic details: "He wanted to raise his head, but he couldn't, because the skin was torn off his head, he wanted to move his arms and legs, but still he couldn't, because they were cut off, cut and torn to pieces... His bloodied, protruding brain slowly spilt out onto board like a wet rag" (Patkanyan, 1974, p. 290).

Like a drowned woman, the mutilated body of the old man also wants to take revenge on those who violated his natural transformation and repeats the following words several times with a devilish smile: "Today is the day of the dead, this is the day when the dead wake up and take revenge on people" (Patkanyan, 1974, p. 291).

The next common functional motif of Armenian and Russian writers' horror creations is the metamorphosis. Gogol's works are characterized by reversible transformations when creatures voluntarily take on different images and then return to their original form (Goldenberg, 2007, p. 84). In the works "The Evening on the Eve of Ivan Kupala" and "May Night or the Drowned Woman", for example, witches are transformed into a dog and a cat. In "Terrible Revenge", the wizard takes the form of Katerina's father and a simple Cossack, and in the story "Viy", the beauty transforms into an old and ugly old woman.

In Patkanyan's works, in order to deceive and destroy the Armenians, the devil takes the appearance of the greatest traitors and enemies from the history of Armenia, like Vasak, Pap, Meruzhan, Hazkert ("Demon Mrus"), while the kind

spirit of Masis turns into an old clergyman to test the rich Armenians ("Hidden hiding places of our place").

Thus, H. Lovecraft (2013) mentions: "Because we remember the pain and the menace of death more vividly than pleasure, and because our feelings toward the beneficent aspects of the unknown have from the first been captured and formalised by conventional religious rituals, it has fallen to the lot of the darker and more maleficent side of cosmic mystery to figure chiefly in our popular supernatural folklore" (p. 3).

While speaking about the structure of Gogol's work, the literary critic V. Pereverzev (1982) sees two opposite elements in the structure of "Evenings": "on the one hand, an ordinary, vibrant life, on the other, a different life, full of fear and danger" (pp. 46-47). In Gogol's horror stories, these two veins are combined and intertwined in a common element. The elements of fear and horror are intertwined in the cheerful and happy images of life. The devils come out of hell, the witches fly, and the dead rise from their graves. These demonic natures, however, are not unusual for Gogol's heroes: the existence of evil is normal for them (Boiko, 2005, p. 303). On the contrary, in the context of Patkanyan's fictitious reality, the existence of underground forces is irregular. People are afraid of facing different creatures and phenomena: the reality-imagination relationship is unusual for the characters of the Armenian author, and in order to explain the existence of evils, the writer connects them with the Armenian reality, patriotism, by giving a moral subcontext.¹

As the philosopher N. Carrol (2004) states: "Horrific imagery can be, and has been, used in the service of politically progressive themes within given social contexts" (p. 194). In the works of Patkanyan, horror is associated with the context of patriotism and love for Armenia and

¹ The only exception to this is the writer's first story "The Revenge of the Dead" the spatial background of which is not the Armenian environment New Nakhichevan, but St. Petersburg. Here the influence of Gogol's work is most vividly seen.

Armenians.

Speaking about the horror and anxiety for the Armenians' loss of identity, the philosopher S. Zakaryan (2022) notes: "The anxiety for the loss of national identity arises when the nation finds itself in situations of physical destruction and assimilation, threatening the existence of homeland and statehood, sovereignty or independence, national culture - language, religion, creed, traditions and way of life. Naturally, the fears for the loss of identity are more specific to a small number of nations that, due to circumstances, were constantly in the borderline situation of existence and extinction and under the threat of assimilation or destruction and were forced to make additional efforts to preserve their image. Those dangerous situations alternately or at the same time have always accompanied the Armenians, turning their history into a history of struggles, rebellions, self-defensive battles for survival, mythical and "irrational" ("moral") victories, persecutions and escapes, pogroms, emigrations and territorial losses, a history of those who renounced and preserved their identity" (p. 5).

The heroes of "Khortlakh" and "New House, Old House", for example, are subjected to these inhuman tortures because they were rich, did not help their affined and didn't try to get Armenians out of a difficult situation. The zombie, who has returned from the other world for a few hours, even as a last wish, asks the hero, whom he encounters, to tell his descendants to give the money he left to the Armenian orphans, otherwise they will suffer in hell after death. In the story "Bitten by a Serpent", a man who has sold his soul to the devil, having acquired demonic power, begins to harm his people, and in the work "Hidden Corners of Our Place", the Spirit of Ararat tries to find ten generous rich Armenians who will help to save the Armenians but fails.

Conclusion

Summing up, we can assume that the motives of horror in Patkanyan's work were written under the influence of Gogol's works. The Ar-

menian author uses the literary devices, technique and structure of the philosophy of horror of the Russian writer, presenting, however, the images of the Armenian reality. His horror takes on national characteristics, linking semantically to national existentialism, the problem of existence or extinction. If Gogol's horror has purely artistic features, then Patkanyan bases it on the philosophical questions of national consciousness, patriotism, protection of Armenians and service to the nation, viewing the idea of homeland as the core of his literature. Like Gogol, he connects the spatial dimension of his works with the place of horror, and the time of action chooses the night before some mysterious holiday, thereby bringing the boundaries between reality and imagination as close as possible. This carnival-temporal environment allows the creatures of the other world to penetrate into the world of people and sow horrors. The demons, devils, zombies and various evil creatures depicted by Patkanyan are the characters of Armenian folklore: in his stories, he realizes the Armenian world and puts the heroes-antagonists from national horror stories in the centre of his works. The works of the two authors are also similar in the abundance of functional motifs. Referring to national rituals, they create various rites and recurring motifs manifested in different existential dimensions - the sale of the soul to the devil, the ritual of death and burial, etc. Being a follower of the Gogol school and creating according to his logic of horror, Patkanyan not only copies the great Russian writer but ultimately creates original and unique works. This circumstance once more speaks about the uniqueness of the perception of the existential philosophy of the Armenian writer.

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