

ARTISTIC PSYCHOLOGISM IN AMERICAN SCIENCE FICTION: THE POETICS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL IMAGERY IN THE WORKS OF RAY BRADBURY, ISAAC AZIMOV, AND STEPHEN KING

Ulugbek Kuchkarovich Kuchimov

ORCID: 0000-0001-7356-4809

ulugbekkuchimov1975@gmail.com

Shakhnoza Azimboyevna Yuldoshova

ORCID: 0009-0009-9553-6353

shaxnozayuldoshova1991@gmail.com

Alfraganus University

Dilfuza Zokirovna Rasulmukhamedova

Dil.Rasulmuxamedova@1970.uz

Uzbekistan State World Languages University

Abstract: This article examines the phenomenon of artistic psychologism in American science fiction based on the works of Ray Bradbury, Isaac Azimov, and Stephen King. Artistic psychologism is understood as a special method of narrative construction in which the psychological states of characters - their consciousness, unconsciousness, affective reactions, and cognitive processes - become the main structural principle of narration. The article examines the theoretical foundations of the category of psychologism in literary studies and demonstrates how each of the three authors realizes this category within the framework of their individual poetics. Comparative analysis allows for the identification of both convergent and divergent features in the approaches of Bradbury, Azimov, and King to the artistic mastery of psychological reality. It is concluded that psychologism is a constitutive feature of American speculative fiction of the second half of the 20th and early 21st centuries.

Keywords: artistic psychology, American science fiction, Ray Bradbury, Isaac Azimov, Stephen King, narratology, psychoanalysis, poetics

Introduction

The study of psychologism as an artistic method occupies one of the central places in domestic literary studies. It is generally accepted that psychologism in a broad sense is “the depiction of a person’s inner world in all its complexity, depth, and dynamics,” a definition dating back to the classical works of Russian researchers of the second half of the 19th century. At the same time, the application of this category to mass and genre literature, particularly American science fiction, remains an insufficiently developed area of domestic comparative studies. This article aims to fill in the gap by focusing on the works of three key representatives of American speculative prose: Ray Bradbury (1920-2012), Isaac Azimov (1920-1992), and Stephen King (b. 1947).

The choice of these authors is determined not only by their outstanding literary merits and wide fame, but also by fundamental differences in their artistic methods, which allows them to be viewed collectively as representative of American science fiction literature of the second half of the 20th century. Bradbury is associated with the tradition of lyrical science fiction and anti-

utopia, Azimov with rationalist, cognitively oriented fiction, and King with psychological horror. Despite genre differences, all three demonstrate a steady interest in the inner lives of characters, the psychological mechanisms of human behavior, and the relationship between the rational and the irrational in human nature ^[1].

Theoretical foundations of the category of artistic psychologism

In domestic literary studies, the problem of psychologism was developed primarily in relation to 19th-century Russian prose, primarily in connection with the works of Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, and Turgenev. In his fundamental study of 20th-century artistic orientations, D.V.Zatonsky demonstrates that psychologism is not an exclusive attribute of literary realism, but represents a universal artistic principle realized in the most diverse genres and literary traditions ^[2]. M.M.Bakhtin, analyzing the dialogic nature of the literary word, pointed out the role of the character's psychological voice as an autonomous artistic instance, indivisible to the sum of author's statements ^[3]. These theoretical positions represent a necessary prerequisite for analyzing psychologism in American science fiction.

Artistic psychologism, unlike the psychologism of implicit (implied) or explicit (declared), involves a special organization of narrative structures in which the character's inner world becomes the main driver of the plot and the primary source of inspiration. The distinction proposed by Western narratology is of fundamental importance: Gérard Genette, analyzing the category of focusing, shows that the psychological saturation of the narrative ^[4] depends no less on "who sees" than on "who speaks." It is precisely the focusing of its type, mobility, and relationship with the author's voice that is the key formal instrument of artistic psychologism.

The psychoanalytic tradition, primarily through Freud and Jung, has significantly influenced both Western literary theory and the artistic practice of American science fiction writers. Z.Freud viewed artistic creation as a form of sublimation - the redirection of unconscious attractions into socially acceptable channels - and pointed to the special role of literature in expressing the exaggerated ^[5]. K.G.Jung supplemented this approach with the concept of the collective unconscious and archetypal images, which, in his opinion, constitute the deep semantic layer of any significant artistic work ^[6]. In American science fiction of the second half of the 20th century, both of these dimensions - Freudian and Jungian - reveal themselves with varying degrees of clarity in the works of the authors under consideration.

Ray Bradbury's work is distinguished by a steady interest in the phenomenon of memory and its role in the formation of individual identity. In "The Martian Chronicles" (1950) and the novel "451 degrees Fahrenheit" (1953), memory acts not merely as a psychological characteristic of the character, but as a true structural principle of the narrative: it is memory that stores and transmits the cultural experience of humanity, and it is its destruction that constitutes the main threat in the dystopian world depicted by Bradbury. G.I.Nudga, analyzing the poetics of American fiction, points to the fundamental importance of the theme of loss of cultural memory for the entire tradition of anti-utopian literature in the USA ^[7].

In "451 degrees Fahrenheit," the psychological transformation of the main character Guy Montag is depicted as a gradual awakening of memory: first in the form of indefinite anxiety and alarm, then in the form of increasingly persistent memories of books read, labor, touches, and the faces of people who have long since departed from his life. Bradbury employs a technique of free indirect discourse to convey this internal process, allowing the reader to directly

experience the character's psychological awakening rather than observing it from the outside. This narrative technique, described in narratology studies as one of the most important tools of psychologism ^[4], gives the novel an unusual affective intensity.

Nostalgia, one of the central categories of Bradbury's poetics in his artistic world, is no longer a definite positive value. "Martian Chronicles" demonstrates that nostalgia can be not only a vicious source of cultural vengeance but also a psychological trap that blinds a person and deprives them of the ability to perceive reality. Martians in chronicles possess telepathic abilities: they read the wishes of Earthlings and project the images of deceased loved ones onto themselves, using human nostalgia as a lethal weapon. The psychological mechanism underlying this motive is close to what Freud described as "over-the-text" - a state in which desire becomes stronger than the perception of reality ^[5].

Azimov's artistic world differs fundamentally from Bradbury's lyrical-nostalgic universe: reason, logic, and scientific method prevail here. At the same time, it would be a mistake to consider Azimov's prose to be devoid of psychological depth. On the contrary, it is in Azimov's work that the cognitive aspect of artistic psychologism finds its most complete and consistent embodiment. The series of stories about robots collected in the collection "I, Robot" (1950) represents a virtuously developed system of thought experiments in which the psychological mechanisms of decision-making under conditions of value conflict, incompleteness of information, and external pressure are investigated with precision close to scientific ^[8].

The Three Laws of Robotics, the central conceptual core of the series, can be read not only as a technological but also as a psychological construction: they reproduce the hierarchical structure of moral obligations, which in real psychology is described in the categories of normative ethics and cognitive theory of decision-making. In his study of American literature, Yu.V.Kovalyov points to the connection between Azimov's concepts and the broad tradition of American pragmatism, which considers thinking primarily as an instrument for solving practical problems ^[9]. At the same time, Azimov's narrative irony - his readiness to demonstrate the boundaries and paradoxes of rational thinking - gives his prose a psychological multidimensionality that goes beyond didactic optimism.

"The Foundation" (1951) and subsequent novels of the cycle represent an attempt to more accurately apply the methods of scientific psychology, Azimov's imagined "psychohistory," to predicting the behavior of human masses. A comparison of psychohistory with Jung's theory of the collective unconscious reveals a fundamental difference in approaches: Azimov thinks of collective psychology in the categories of mathematical statistics, while Jung thinks in the categories of myth and symbol. However, both approaches are united by the recognition that individual psychological behavior does not exhaust psychological reality: there are superindividual psychological structures that determine people's behavior to a greater extent than their conscious intentions ^[6]. In "Fundamentals," Azimov turns this thesis into the main spring of his plot, creating a narrative in which collective psychology is as important as individual psychology.

Of the three authors considered, Stephen King relies most consistently on the Freudian model of the psyche. His artistic method is based on the conviction that the main source of horror is not the external world, but the inner life of a person: their long-forgotten desires, unrealized traumas, and unconscious fears. The novel "The Shining" (1977) is, unfortunately, the most vivid embodiment of this principle: the supernatural phenomena in the "Overlook" hotel

function as an objectification of the inner state of the protagonist, Jack Torrance, an alcoholic and a failed writer whose psyche is shattered by a complex of guilt, fear of failure, and suppressed aggression.

O.Yu.Ansiferova, analyzing the poetics of American fiction, points out that in the best examples of the genre, “genre conventions are used not as a self-same goal, but as an instrument of psychological research that allows the artist to achieve a level of intensity in depicting the inner world of characters that would be unattainable within the framework of strict realism”^[10]. It is this observation that applies to King’s artistic method: his horror is not a genre phenomenon, but a special form of psychological realism in which the grotesque and fantastic act as means of revealing psychological truth.

The novel “It” (1986) is King’s most extensive and at the same time most psychologically developed work. At the center of the novel is the study of the phenomenon of childhood trauma and its long-term consequences for the formation of an adult personality. The seven main characters - members of the “Failure Club” - are united by a common traumatic memory of encountering cruelty, both human (the tyranny of the hooligan Henry Bowers) and supernatural (the encounter with Pennywise). The narrative structure of the novel, alternating episodes from the past (1958) and the present (1985) narrative, reproduces the psychological mechanism of the traumatic return of forced repetition described by Freud in the work “On the Other Side of the Pleasure Principle”^[5].

The figure of Pennywise, a being that takes the form of each character’s most terrifying nightmare, is an artistic embodiment of the Yunga archetype of the Shadow: that part of the personality that is pushed into the unconscious and can be integrated into the whole “Self” only by the price of painful self-awareness ^[6]. The victory over Pennywise in King’s novel turns out to be possible precisely because the heroes are capable of realizing and accepting their fears rather than running away from them: this is the psychological meaning of the finale, which often remains unnoticed when reading the novel as a genre horror.

The comparison of the three authors considered allows for the identification of both fundamental differences and profound structural similarities in their approaches to artistic psychology. Bradbury realizes a lyrical-existential model of psychologism: the inner world of his character is revealed primarily through images of memory, fear, and nostalgia, while the narrative technique (free indirect discourse, poetic saturation of prose, leitmotif symbolism) is subordinated to the task of maximum affective identification of the reader with the hero’s experiences. Azimov presents a cognitive-rationalist model: his characters are revealed primarily as thinking beings, and the narrative interest is centered on the processes of reasoning, decision-making, and problem-solving. King embodies the psychoanalytic model in its most obvious form: the unconscious, the pressed, and the returning with redoubled force is the main driving force of his narratives.

At the same time, all three are united by a common conviction that fiction is capable of penetrating such dimensions of psychological reality that are inaccessible to either scientific psychology or ordinary experience. This conviction constitutes what we call artistic psychologism: not just the depiction of psychological states, but the creation of special narrative structures that reproduce the logic of mental life and allow the reader to experience it in an aesthetically transformed form ^[1]. It is precisely in this sense that artistic psychologism is not a

genre phenomenon, but a poetological phenomenon common to the most diverse genre traditions of American fiction.

Conclusion

The analysis conducted allows for the following conclusions. Artistic psychologism is a constitutive feature of American speculative fiction of the second half of the 20th century, realized in various genre traditions (scientific fiction, anti-utopia, horror) and in various narrative forms. Ray Bradbury, Isaac Azimov, and Stephen King represent three different but complementary models of artistic psychologism: lyrical-existential, cognitive-rationalist, and psychoanalytic, each of which illuminates specific aspects of psychological reality and provides the reader with a specific type of psychological experience.

The prospects for further research are related, firstly, to the extension of the proposed methodology to other corpuses of American fantasy literature; secondly, to a more detailed study of the reception of psychoanalytic and cognitive theories in American literary culture; thirdly, to a comparative study of psychologism in American and European traditions of speculative fiction. This study contributes to the development of the theory of artistic psychologism as a general literary category that is not reduced to national or genre specificity, but reveals the universal mechanisms of artistic mastery of mental reality.

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