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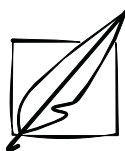
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# STUDIA RUSYCYSTYCZNE

Uniwersytetu Jana Kochanowskiego

TOM 27

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## **«Mystical fear» of naive author: the literary code of ruinous topos in Russian-language internet travelogues**

### **A naive writer of a travelogue: theoretical grounds for studying the problem**

It is difficult to imagine a journey of modern travel bloggers without contemplating dilapidated architectural structures. Modern *strange ruinophilia*, as S. Boym called it (Boym 2011), embraced various levels of representation of such «places» in Internet travelogues: from touristic imitation of antiquity, the exploration of «disappearing» ruins to the experience of post-Soviet abandonment. It must seem that each of them contains an excellent emotional background, the character of self-awareness and meaningful filling. But is it really so? Why are the ruins so similar to each other, despite their different origins, age and geography?

Destroyed buildings captivate both an explorer and a tourist. The search for ruins takes place in different countries and continents. At the same time, I believe, that the fascination with ruins is more of an exceptional practice, which means that it has increased semiotization. Even at a superficial first glance the ruinous theme contrasts with the general background of bloggers' reports and essays – a pragmatic advisory discourse designed for an active tourist audience. The specifics of the development of this theme is also dissonant to a rationalistically weighted documentary attitude.

Travel bloggers offer the concept of how to live and travel, demonstrating the «doctrines» first-hand. It should be emphasized that edification is one of the features of Internet travelogue – it is inherent in *naive writing*, in particular, in different kinds of human documents. Turning «life» and «experience» into basic categories of writing, travelers resort to detailed auto-characteristics, they also stipulate «their not-a-writer status», underlining the inability to write and even indifference to this craft.

So, these descriptions and photographs of ruin places have a capacious meaning, they allow us to reveal the symbolic patterns behind the writing, which in its considerable part can be attributed to naive or amateur texts and which is taken beyond the framework of literary discourse by critics.

Despite the diversity and heterogeneity of the travel blogosphere, the reflection of experiences and understanding of ruins in travel diaries has remarkable similarities. One of the notable coincidences in the narrative structure is the switching of the style of writing from factual to an artistic one. Therefore, the purpose of the presented work is to determine what

tools and literary canons naive writers convey in the Russian-language Internet, constructing the images of ruins in travelogues. Revealing the repeatability and typological proximity of significant signs of the ruinous topos of bloggers' travels will provide an opportunity to show the peculiarities of a naive author's thinking, his attitude to literature.

The parameters of the selection of texts for analysis are determined by several factors. The study includes blogs with various levels of readership popularity, the duration of the blog. The main criterion is author's blogs, which are independent of travel agencies and editorial offices of magazines, and are posted on different systems (travelbloggers.ru, autotravel.ua, livejournal.com). The theme of ruins is also crucial for blogs of stalkers and diggers, but they were not included in the field of phenomena under study, since they represent subcultures with an excellent idea of space and a person in it.

The second important criterion is the language one: blogs of travelers from the post-Soviet countries are created in Russian to expand the reading audience. In addition, to obtain more reliable data, it makes sense to include blogs that cover the topic of ruins in different geographical areas. It should also be noted that the selection of texts in this work did not depend on the recurrence / singularity of the theme of ruins in works of a blogger.

A travel blog is a diary of a *non-professional writer* (Cardell and Douglass 2010; Calzati 2015; Karlsson 2006; Molz 2012). This generally accepted thesis of research of travel blogs is still relevant, despite the variability and dynamism of their development. Amateurism is the starting point in determining the important signs of a travel blog. Bloggers admit: "We are ordinary people [...] We do not spend all our lives travelling, we go to work and to a kindergarten. But, as soon as we have free time, we go somewhere. The more time we have, the further our car takes us [...]" (Medvedeva 2018)<sup>1</sup> In the given quotation, the signs of writing of a person who is not connected with literary activity are clearly visible. The absence of a claim to a «writer's» word is indicated not only to delineate the horizon of perception, to avoid undesirable criticism, but also to become closer to a reader: after all, it is an «ordinary» traveler who writes.

From a literary-centrist point of view, such author is called a graphomaniac or, more gently, a dilettante. According to the sociological approach, it is an «ordinary» author; media studies use the definition «*amateur*». Finally, there is a definition of a «*naive author*», which arises in the process of referring to the examples of a *human document*. Despite various emphases, the general criterion of all definitions is opposition to the term «professional».

The definitions of an «ordinary» author are based on the categories of everyday life, experience, special ways of representing authenticity (Carpentier 2009). The concept of «ordinary» writing is actively developed by researchers of media and mass communications. General interpretation of such author as a «non-professional» one remains (Kornoshenko 2016). However, the sociological focus on a non-professional author in terms of everyday life adds extra touch to the solution of the problem, attention is drawn to the peculiarities of styling authenticity in particular, which is important for travel writing in an online environment. The notion of «ordinary» («everyday») authorship in research practice is often combined with a «naive» one, meaning «plainness of everyday life» of an «ordinary person» (Gotlib 2014: 189).

An attitude to «professionalism» is expressed in the definition of an «amateur» the most clearly. However, today, according to researchers, when comparing amateurism and professionalism, the traditional distinctive features are not efficient (Hamilton 2013: 180). New

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<sup>1</sup> Here and afterwards, unless otherwise indicated, the translation is mine.

forms and models of «liminal» activity are emerging, and against this background the interpretations of an amateur become more extensive, up to the «personification of freedom and democracy, thanks to the openness of communication» (Hamilton 2013: 181). Researches in the field of digital culture have made a significant contribution to the study of the functionality of amateurism, synthesizing its various characteristics: commercial disinterest, free and independent opinion. «Naivety» stands out among the important criteria of amateurism and acquires additional meanings of honest, sincere, and unbiased position of an author. According to their opinion, it is these properties that raise the confidence of the audience, and it becomes wider. At the same time, the effect of drawing a writer and a reader together prompts the designing and fixing of the peculiar «pose» of an amateur, its imitation in a professional environment, a phenomenon that is defined as *a symbolic amateurism* (Hamilton 2013) and which affects the attribution of author's features in travel writing. It can be assumed that the transformation of «ordinary» into a narrative strategy is conditioned by the semantic intention that leads a modern traveler away from capital cities, European geography into places untouched by civilization, leads to the degeneration of the so-called *Robinsonade*, cultivating of exotics and manifestation of rejection of social conditions of the urban environment with its pressure on a personality.

So, most of the characteristics of the studied phenomenon were singled out and refined in the process of sociological research. In the framework of literary approaches actualized in deep work of M. Kozlova, I. Sodomirskaja, «naive» works are defined as «a world of a non-literary written language where the rules of normative usage are not preserved, where people write «as they talk» and a naive author is defined as a literary unskilled subject (Kozlova 1996: 18). He reproduces one of the existing literary forms unconsciously, and life experience turns into material that becomes the subject of description, building in the context of authoritative literature (Kozlova 1996: 22–23).

A «naive» writer who sees and reflects the world as it seems to him outside the literary conventions, turns into a sign of truthfulness and authenticity of evidence to a mass audience. Stylistic simplicity and the predominance of photographs remove barriers of perception. But how far do all these characteristics remove the blog from travel literature, and wider – from the literary tradition in general? Bloggers would probably be surprised to learn how much they are immersed in the literary canon, virtually quoting elements of different genres and plots.

### **Ruins in humanitarian discourse: problems of definition and main study directions**

Studies of ruins in interdisciplinary discourse convincingly show that the modern understanding of «ruins» originates in the XVIII – XIXth century. In search of approaches to the definition of this complex object P. Zucker, the author of the article, which can already be considered «classical», starts from the period of origin of the traditional image of ruins, summarizes and suggests the following set of definitions:

- vehicle to create a romanticizing mood with all its associations
- document of the past-from its architecturally interesting details to the overall architectural form of a specific building
- means of reviving the original concept of space and proportion of periods past (Zucker 1961: 119).

During the period specified by the researcher, such signs of presenting ruins, as dramatization, metaphorism, a play of light and shadow, accentuation of incompleteness of each architectural element were formed and they are actualized and recognized today. Studying the ways of creating an imaginary space of ruins in painting, architecture and literature, the researcher comes to the conclusion that ruins are a gestalt, a specific structural configuration. I started a review of the problem with this article for a reason. In my opinion, it was this article that contained first scientific designation of vectors of understanding ruins that are specified and complemented later.

There are many discussions about what a ruin is in a wide range of humanitarian disciplines, and A. Schönle, the author of a series of general works on ruins, suggests to unite these discussions in a general discourse – *ruinology* (Schönle 2006: 650). Ruinous discourse is notable for contradictory definitions and criteria of this cultural phenomenon. Special attention is paid to ruins in the last two decades, as evidenced not only by the number of different scientific observations, but also by the crystallization of new concepts and approaches to the study of this object. Unfortunately, verbal creativity in the range of works is of secondary importance. So in modern «ruinology» literary aspects seem to be replaced to the periphery of the scientific interest.

At the same time, thematisation of ruins in literary activity has a number of distinctive features, and different perspectives have emerged in its study. Firstly, these are attempts to examine texts about ruins as «those of supersaturated reality, that are inconceivable without the whole behind them and, therefore, are already inseparable from the myth and the whole sphere of the symbolic» (Toporov 1995: 259). The study of the ruinous topos, however, rarely goes beyond the boundaries of the epochs at the intersection of *Enlightenment* and *Sentimentalism*, when the current semantic transformations of ideas about ruins acquire an expressive character.

Secondly, literary analysis is focused on identifying intermedial links. The category of *Picturesque* in the depiction of the ruins caused the impression of randomness of the relationship between a human and nature, its fragility and fragmentarity, urging the reader to supplement the picture in his imagination. I. G. Daemmrich studied the category of Picturesque in the French literature of the XVIIIth century. The author mentions that the originality of the ruins in literature of this period is manifested as a result of the interaction of the arts, the development of picturesque, as well as the interest in archeology and the popularity of travel literature. New principles, according to the researcher, are contrasted with the symbolic, abstract and schematic interpretation of ruins, that dominated during the preceding epochs. The glorification of medieval romantic and Gothic architecture, the discovery of ruins in a new sense in the XVIIIth century also gives rise to a new emotional background for the perception of ruins – melancholy (Daemmrich 1972: 450).

Analysis of the studies allows us to distinguish «top» points in the literature of ruins. Central literary phenomena of ruins are associated with the canon in the embodiment of ruins in painting. Finally, a remarkable way of the interpretation of the artistic properties of ruins in verbal creativity lies in the context of such worldview oppositions as death / life, culture / nature, temporal / eternal. Perceiving a ruin as duration is one of the most influential direction among studies of ruinous topos, which leads to constructivist concept, focused on identifying factors of modeling the image of ruins (Boym, 2011; Kushinski 2016; Murphy 2012; Schönle 2006; Viney 2014).

In a famous essay by G. Simmel *The Ruin* a ruin is understood as a new integrity, which arose thanks to the implementation of the forms of nature into a man-made material object. G. Simmel states:

Wherever we perceive aesthetically, we demand that the contradictory forces of existence be somehow in equilibrium, that the struggle between above and below have come to a standstill. But this form which yields only a perception is rejected by the ethical-psychic process with its unceasing up and down, its constant shifting of boundaries, with the inexhaustibility of the forces playing in it against one another (Simmel 1958: 384).

Taking into account the views of G. Simmel in the definition of a ruin, the researchers, at the same time, argue with him, indicating that a strict nature/culture dichotomy, superiority of natural forces reduces the significance of the potentiality of a ruin. Criticism of Simmel's dichotomy is presented in the article of H. Sullivan, that is devoted to the sources of temporary structuring in the image of a ruin at the intersection of scientific and literary representations of the XVIIIth century. An interesting aspect, represented in this work in detail, is the clash of historical and natural time, linearity and cyclicality, which, for example, in the novels of *Whitehurst* and *Eichendorff* causes disturbing associations with pagan, «feminine» forces. While in the works of *Wallerius*, *Forster*, and *Tieck* ruins are seen not as the signs of disintegration, but as fragments and riddles of other worlds (Sullivan 2001: 3). The work demonstrates the assertion of the chronotopical «fluctuation» of a ruin, which, in the author's opinion, is neutralized in Simmel's definition.

Conceptual delimitation of ruins and debris, garbage accumulation is based on a rethinking of the idea of the past, as well as the associated experience – nostalgia. A. Schönle confirms that such a direction of interpretation of a ruin was set during the Enlightenment with its idea of progress. Historicity, according to the researcher, lies in the manifestation of the process of decline. However, at the same time, the essence of a ruin is the blurring of the boundary between the past and the present. Nostalgia is an experience that connects different epochs in relation to ruins, it is also a kind of palimpsest in the modern world, oscillating with different facets and shades. But the question arises: to what extent can we agree with the researcher that today it is difficult to speak unambiguously about the predominance of a certain tradition or a clearly marked feeling?

The criterion of time becomes prevailing for fundamentally different views on the process of defining a ruin. According to F. M. Hetzler, a ruin is extrahistorical (Hetzler 1988: 54). Time and nature influence the formation of the semiotic boundary between a ruin and what it was earlier (Hetzler 1988: 53). This remark is fundamentally important for the interpretation of a ruin in the context of the problem stated in this article.

In order to follow the process of formation of this semiotic boundary more deeply, the «constructivist» direction suggests to distract from «physicality» of ruin objectification and to think about it as a cultural construct. This approach is more productive in explaining many cultural and historical phenomena associated with ruins for several centuries. For example, in search of differences between ruins and debris, H. Puff emphasizes that a ruin is based on the notion of tradition, visual codes and diverse designations (Puff 2010: 254). These ideas are also supported in the historical perspective of the study. For example, in the article *Ruins as a mental construct*, M. Baridon traces the relationship between fashion for ruins and the revival of the Gothic style with their symbolic function of abandoning «tyranny» (Baridon 1985: 85), reinforced by the political myth of gothic liberty:

It was becoming evident that the ruins which lay here and there in the countryside were evocative not only of the national past but of the immemorial tradition which identified freedom with the woods in which the Germans, the Saxons and indeed all the peoples issued from the 'northern hive' had always experienced as 'the blessings of liberty' (Baridon 1985: 89).

Thus, a ruin carries codes, the formation of which goes back to the cultural and historical processes of the XVIIIth and XIXth centuries. Summarizing the research findings, it can be said that the perception of this multifaceted phenomenon as an «unusual» one is semanticized in the signs of transitional, fragmentary, alienated space. This is a marginal topos, in the description of which, following the researchers, it is appropriate to use the metaphor of «fluctuation», as a mixture of nostalgia and fear, the past and the present. It should be clarified, that a significant part of the semantic construction of ruins in travel blogs is the repetitive strategy of turning the unusual into the supernatural, which comes into conflict with reality. The narrative analysis of the spatial-temporal structure of ruins reveals the predominance of literary codes of Gothic prose, and the consolidation of its canon took place in the Enlightenment and Romantic times. As is known, ruins in this form of artistic writing were one of the key topical variants of the plot.

### **Gothic code of the image of «ruins»: the features of «naive» representation**

Whatever the fashion for ruins is determined by: the picturesqueness of photos, the discovery of unknown and abandoned places, the apocalyptic premonition or the possibility to avoid society and its problems, the experience of meeting with them is unique for a «post-tourist» traveler. At various stages of development of travel literature, specific incarnations of «uniqueness» were inextricably linked with the meaningful search of a traveler. Perhaps in attempts to develop the theme of ruins, naive authors of travel blogs bring the metaphysical idea of travel as a challenge and personal formation back to the travelogue. In general, it turns out that in the descriptions of ruins details, historical or geographical facts coexist with fragments aimed at a more detailed transmission of the feelings of a traveler. An experiment with photography, a combination of narrative speech with expressive metaphorical and allegorical insertions – all these indicate that it is not a copy, but an image of a ruin that is being created.

The main emotional message of the theme of ruins – fear and danger - is not unfamiliar for bloggers. It is the unpredictability and danger, in which they see the value of a travel, its difference from a mere tourist trip. And it is not just extreme practices and risky actions. The reasons may be the intentions of artistic thinking, for example, a search for a resource to create the effects of drama and tension, because the description of a landscape and documentation of data do not have enough of the abovementioned effects. That is why, elements of lyricism and mystery penetrate in the narrative about ruins, and semantic possibilities to update the ways of self-revelation of an author-narrator are formed.

In general, it turns out that in the descriptions of ruins details, historical or geographical facts coexist with fragments aimed at a more detailed transmission of the feelings of a traveler. An experiment with photography, a combination of narrative speech with expressive metaphorical and allegorical insertions – all these indicate that it is not a copy, but an image of a ruin that is being created.

Specific character of perception of ruins in the environment of blogs is largely determined by the attitudes to travel and understanding of what it is. The authors of travelogues in the blogosphere work out a special viewpoint at what a modern journey is. Synthesis of everydayness and exclusivity, as its new idea, manifests itself in the blurring of the boundary between something one's own and someone else's, a «strange» game, consisting in an attempt to merge into a culturally and geographically remote world. The journey begins to be perceived not as a horizontal movement, but as a vertical one: an experiment, a stay and self-analysis in a liminal state. Such plots shatter spatial and behavioral stereotypes. For example, to come to Paris to temporarily become a homeless person, as it is in the blog of Dmitry Berkut (Berkut 2018). Finally, the concept of *traveliver* appears, picked up by many bloggers and embedded in the practice of their travels. A vivid illustration of the main features of a so-called *traveliver* is found in the generalizations of a popular travel blogger Masha Dubrovskaya:

To live in a new place for a longer time, immerse in the environment, study it. If it was enough – to move to another place or country, and so on. Such a passive journey. Find a place to your liking and settle there – it's not a goal, but a possible final (Dubrovskaya 2018).

Such travelers, in the opinion of the blogger, differ in the way they «do not try to go everywhere and do everything. [...] Do not think about the return to their native places as a necessity, they can live in such way for years. They are citizens of the world and can easily adjust to anything» (Dubrovskaya 2018). «Travelivers» surely erase the line between the ordinary course of life and extreme experience; between dynamic (change of places) and static (to settle down somewhere) factors of travel. In sociological literature the concept of «lifestyle travelers» (Cohen 2010) is suggested for contemporary forms of travel, reflecting the trends towards the convergence of the concepts of a road and a lifestyle.

In this context ruins turn into a space of game switching of oppositions of the ordinary / subversive experience, and then into the displacement of other semantically significant concepts of the ruinous topos: the present and the past, the living and the dead, the mobile and the frozen. Therefore, when a blogger sets off to an abandoned hotel on the island of Hachijō-jima in order to «live» there (RalphMirebs 2016b) – it is an attempt that meets the main desire of bloggers. And if you look deeper, it connects the widespread conceptual model of travel blogs with mythopoetic roots. It can be considered as balancing on the border of the worlds, comprehension and experiencing of the limits of life.

On a general mental map of the representation of ruins, two polar points are found. And, despite the different modus characteristics, their semantic basis is identical. So, on the one hand, these are tourist blogs that move ruins into the «present», returning functionality to them, and, accordingly, leveling the semantics of ruins. Imaginary ruins, such as «ruin bars» (Eroha 2016; Zakharova 2014) – are a part of a tourist spectacle, which recalls the imitation of ruins in the XVIII – XIXth centuries in architectural and park constructions. This parallel indicates a special semantic status of ruins in modern culture. It is interesting, that in two mentioned blogs the ruins-bars are called «places of power». The mythological code of space emphasizes the intermediate status of such places.

On the other hand, travel blogs describe the remains of buildings as the signs of a tragic past. For example, the work *Gdan'sk, which you have not seen before. Not for the sensitive* by blogger A. Lapshin. The author views the city as a historical chronicle, in which modernity is mixed with a disastrous military past. It is noteworthy, that the attention of the traveler fo-



cuses on what has been preserved in this war-torn city. Against the background of the ruins of pre-war Gdansk, still not yet demined, the author shows residential blocks built by the Nazis for SS workers, the Gestapo building, which now houses the National Security Bureau of Poland. He ironically emphasizes the loss of the sense of history by contemporaries. At the end of the essay, Lapshin mentions the «most terrible» ruin. Its «transcendence» is emphasized by the fact that the author does not even offer a visual image, explaining:

Behind the scenes there was a terrible house, which you would not want to visit. This is the house of Dr. Spanner, a German sadistic physician, who conducted experiments on making soap from the bodies of prisoners of the Stutthof concentration camp. About 400 disfigured bodies were found in the basement of a plain mansion near a railway station in May 1945 (Lapshin 2018).

Even more expressive is the semantic level of modernization of the city that displaces the ruins, that appears in the essay *Warsaw: the city of ghosts, which died long ago*. Fragmentation and stratification of ruins in the landscape of new blocks create the impression of a «looking-glass». For example, the construction of residential blocks on the ruins of ghetto is the practice of repressing traumatic events. The falsity of these architectural gestures also determined, in the opinion of the traveler, the atmosphere of an inanimate city (Lapshin 2014). Looking ahead, it should be noted that the motif of the mirror – a ritualized border image that matches the living and the dead, is characteristic of the Gothic tradition. The traveler does not cross the line of the past spatially and does not invade the world of such ruins. It's not a place. At the same time, the given semantic contours, which resemble a trailer to a horror film, combined with the lack of detail and visualization, give rein to reader's imagination, and the author can complete the story not in a historical, but in an artistic trajectory, according to the rules of the literary game known as the fragment, which is actively introduced by romantics.

Mythologization and mystification of obsolete buildings can be traced in the writing of bloggers, who represent themselves as discoverers or explorers. Bloggers name a location in the heading, but they do not exactly indicate or reveal it in the narrative. A ruin in their texts is always ambiguous: somewhere («An abandoned sanatorium, somewhere in the mountains of Portugal») (Saliy 2018a), in the wilds, on an island, lost among residential streets («Where Infinity Begins») (Saliy 2018b), not in world at all – «on Mars» (Sator 2018). Spatial distancing is one of the permanent signs of the image of ruins, which indicates their aestheticization in the writing of travel bloggers.

In my opinion, the most interesting and significant process of representing ruins in blogs is the openness of semiotic transcoding in the texts. In other words, the authors of travelogues attribute the meaning of «ruins» to those buildings that do not have the necessary set of values to be related to them: they are functionally ordinary, they do not have a glorious past, outstanding history or aesthetic significance. The reappointment process encompassed the study of ruins of someone's «own» space: Post-Soviet forgotten pioneer camps, houses of culture, restaurants and even shops. The emergence of new ruins indicates that the architectural or historical value of buildings is of less importance, than demonstration of the role of chance, «fate», when the deformation of spatial integrity is transferred into a meta-physical plan. Thus, the abandoned supermarkets of the so-called *LNR* – Luhanska Narodna Respublika, the occupied eastern region of Ukraine, become the embodiment of emptiness, formlessness, and catastrophe: «There was an apocalypse inside» (Kazanskiy 2018). New ruins are not monuments, they are the gaping, scattering of the past. Destroyed supermarkets of a war-struck city serve as a metonymy for breaking the connection between the past and

the present, the loss of spatial certainty. This is now also a symbolic «nowhere», which is inherent in the textualization of ruins of different geographical and chronological affiliation.

Thus, ruins attract naive authors with a wide range of semantic possibilities, a halo of danger and unpredictability. Ruins symbolize the ambivalence of the attitude of modern travel bloggers to the boundaries to some extent: their denial and trial at the same time. Reappearing on the pages of electronic diaries again and again, the image of ruins is built into a kind of symbolic structure that grows on a literary basis.

The transmission of the established models of the notions of ruins in literature, culture, the tendency to aestheticize and create an imaginary space reflect attempts to elucidate the relation of an «ordinary» person to the phenomenon that causes anxiety. «Amazing», «interesting» ruins are imbued with history. But this is also a «strange» place, it is penetrated with mystery.

The ancient city [Palenque] is surrounded by many secrets, one theory is that it was founded by a nation more ancient than Maya, and on the cover of Pakal's tomb there is a man in a spaceship (Plotnikov 2017).

Today this place [the water pump in Kuibyshev] attracts street artists, photographers and thrill-seekers looking for romance in the ruins of their former greatness. But an old water pump has its terrible secrets (Mityagina 2014).

All these buildings, regardless of geographical location and «age», are interpreted within the framework of mystical discourse, bear the significance of mystery and unknown entity. One of the common and fundamentally important features of the representation of ruins in travel blogs is the presence of something outlying, transcendent, threatening. In an atmosphere of growing fear, there is a motive for invisible surveillance, a mystical witness. It is typical that something «unusual» and frightening is comprehended with the help of mythologization. Buildings come to life: they breathe, they hear, and the narrator is able even «to experience the spirit of suffering together with the building» (Mister-marat 2015). So something unreal enters the «ordinary» and «actual» world of a travel blogger, in relation to which a naive author has not developed any methods. They are not prompted by a diary genre, but the whole arsenal provides a genre of fiction – a Gothic novel well known to a modern man through mass culture.

In a mythologized, inanimate and undead space, the very invasion into which is already a borderline event, a traveler seems to grope for a metaphysical border, of course, impenetrable for him, but frightening. That is why, among the most typical figurative representations of ruins in blogs and the Gothic tradition are: the motif of death, murders, images of ghosts and brides. There are many examples. In a Soviet-era pioneer camp, the «screams» of children are heard, «filling the abandoned buildings with silent horror» (Afanasyeva 2014).

In the development of this «mystery», there are significant signs of Gothic mysticism with characteristic attributes of the landscape: fogs, dungeons, the wilds, silence, darkness. An important chronotopical sign that brings a ruin of the travelogue with the Gothic literature together is closed space. Metaphors of labyrinths and traps are used in travelogues, and gloom and devastation are the traditional signs of the objects under study. For example, a fragment from the description of an abandoned Chamber of Commerce in Belgium is written by a blogger *Mister-marat* on the model of Gothic literature. The traveler finds himself in a locked space at night, he hears strange sounds, represents a life boiling here in the past, finally, he is horrified, suddenly facing a terrible discovery:

It was 3 a.m., the windows were boarded up. However, suddenly I became very scared. I listened and found myself in a world of sounds-scrapes, squeaks, rustles. God knows what I could face in this huge building, but I tried to be ready for anything. Trying to walk as quietly as possible and getting used to the darkness, I saw the outlines of a huge hall, which once was full of life. The columns drowned in the dark, leaving only barely visible outlines. I listened again. Nobody seemed to be there. I carefully switched the flashlight and went to the other end of the hall. Having opened a door, a beam of a flashlight caught a grinning face in the darkness [...] (Mister-marat 2015).

The fragment of the Gothic plot does not develop, however it is more expressive and intriguing than the further presentation. In this case, the imagination compensates for the empirical «insufficiency». A ruin is difficult to describe, because of its specific «emptiness». In order to understand the significance and difference of the «ruinous» emptiness, let me consider the example from the blog of RalphMirebs. A blogger found himself in a recently abandoned city, which has not come to the «right» decline yet, and he is disappointed. These are not ruins, because they do not frighten, they are friendly: «like a quality fake, like a worm-eaten apple - attractive outside, but empty inside» (RalphMirebs 2018a). The author lacks the fullness of the emptiness of the ruins. In this image, the ambivalence of the chronotopic organization of ruins in travel blogs is vividly portrayed.

Emptiness turns into the main metaphor of a ruin, capturing not only the verbal part of the narrative, but also the visual one. Visual representation of the inner world of a ruin acquires an aesthetic colouring. Bloggers use the technique of a fragment in the reconstruction of visual values. The deformity of the building is intensified by including a part of the body of a person, who is taking a photo, as if the spatial splitting captures the person, depriving him of integrity (Saliy 2018a). Photos of nature's invasion of a man-made world, for example thick fern in hotel rooms (RalphMirebs 2018b), fish in a flooded part of an abandoned shopping centre (Saliy 2018c) give the impression of artificiality, collage, intensifying the effect of illusiveness.

Just like in the Gothic tradition – danger is an illusion. But in blogs, the resolution of the culmination of tension suddenly ends up. Entering the abandoned Miranda Castle in Belgium, a traveler says that the dreadfulness and monumentality of the building caused «some kind of incomprehensible discomfort». The «irreal» has exhausted itself, the blogger unfolds the topic in an everyday discourse, causing a comic effect: «What if a watchman is hiding somewhere? What if the police come, because someone saw us? I had to get rid of these thoughts and go inside. But only devastation and chaos were waiting for us inside» (Mister-marat 2015).

Describing ruins in a form of a game and their mystification are shown by the motive for theatricalization of mystery of ruins, which also serves as an explicit allusion to the initial plot of the rebirth of a hero and a challenge for him in the Gothic novel. Bloggers emphasize that what they have seen reminds of a film set. Theatricality also extends to visual images: bloggers change their clothes, turn into a part of the ruinous space according to the laws of the Gothic literature.

Attention to the correlation between verbal and visual expression makes us recognize the paradoxical nature of the world of travel bloggers. Both levels of image formation are combined and concentrated on the image of human feelings against the background of the desert-ness of the ruinous space, the absence of the author's figure, the individual author's word.

The objects that caught bloggers' eyes the most frequently performed an ordinary purpose and were closely related to the course of everyday life: abandoned greenhouses, sanatoriums,

hotels, water pumps, warehouses, residential blocks. Their semantics does not differ from the literally marked images of a castle, a tower. Such a lack of differentiation is a feature of naive writing. A naive author uses the main cultural stereotype of ruins, based on mythological models and figurative archetypes. Therefore, the transformation of these buildings into an image of ruins rests on the values that have been developed in literature, the semantic set of which is rather narrow: mysticism, solitude, ghosts, mysterious signs. The Gothic code serves as a means of creating a special atmosphere of space, its alienation and moving beyond the boundaries of «ordinariness».

The appeal to the Gothic tradition by naive writers has a number of specific features. The structure of the Gothic text is complex and branchy, and it cannot be actualized in a blog. And this is a genre restriction that is imposed on the reconstruction of the imagery of the Gothic style and led to the reduction of allusion. More convincing traces of a «naive» transformation of the «Gothic style» are factors of substantial reduction. The main aesthetic mode of the Gothic style, consisting in the collision of the real and the mystical, irrational, is fully involved in blogs. But travel bloggers are not focused on exploring or immersing in the world of the unknowable. Naive writers remain at the mercy of everyday life.

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Olena Yufereva

**«Mystical fear» of naive author: the literary code of ruinous topos  
in Russian-language Internet travelogues**

Summary

A «naive» author who sees and reflects the world as it seems to him outside the literary conventions, turns into a sign of truthfulness and authenticity of evidence to a mass audience. The descriptions and photographs of ruin places have a capacious meaning, they allow us to reveal the symbolic patterns behind the writing, which in its considerable part can be attributed to naive or amateur texts. The purpose of the presented work is to determine what tools and literary canons travel bloggers as naive authors convey, constructing the images of ruins in travelogues in the Russian-language Internet. Revealing the repeatability and typological proximity of significant signs of the ruinous topos of bloggers' travels will provide an opportunity to show the peculiarities of a naive author's thinking, his attitude to literature. The paper reveals the tradition of depicting ruins, synthesizing Gothic and Romantic formulas and techniques in ruinous images of bloggers' texts.

**Keywords:** «Naive» author, ordinary writing, ruin, topos, travel blog, Gothic code.