Gothic and neo-gothic in the architecture of modern European cities

N I Basina, A Yu Rybalka*, S L Popova

Don State Technical University, 1 Gagarin Square, Rostov-on-Don, 344000, Russian Federation

E-mail: rybalka-yuliya@mail.ru

Abstract. This article analyzes the value social dynamics of European culture based on the analysis of the semantics of Gothic and Neo-Gothic styles in the architecture of European cities. The semantic and social status levels of these phenomena are investigated. It is revealed that the Gothic style, having appeared at a symbolic level as a mature expression of the spirit and dogma of Catholicism, in the urban space appeared to be a marker of the social, property and political superiority of status groups (clergy, monarch, burghers, feudal nobility; status cities).

Introduction

The Gothic revival, which began in the 18th century in England, on a symbolic level went beyond the embodiment of Christian meanings, becoming the personification of the ideas of patriotism, national tradition, a symbol of national identity. In the modern eclectic urban space, Gothic and Neo-Gothic styles of urban architecture play the role of the rationalized support, acting as a means of self-identification of European culture. The city is the environment inhabited by man is a place of special concentration of meanings and symbols expressing specific historical transformation of culture. The theme of this work is the city in its architectural embodiment where the phenomena of Gothic and neo-Gothic styles in the spatial area of European cities serve as a cultural marker that has access to the most acute problems of our time. The goal of research is to clarify the peculiarities of the value social dynamics of European culture based on the analysis of the semantics of Gothic and Neo-Gothic styles in the architecture of European cities. Consideration of the city semiotic field was carried out by many authors (among them R. Barth, V. V Abashev, M. V Gorbanevsky, O. A Lavrenova, etc.). Representatives of the Tartu school V.N. Toporov, Yu.M, Lotman etc. investigated the urban text as a cultural phenomenon.

Structuralism theorists R. Barth, J. Lacan, M. Foucault laid the foundation for the analysis of the symbolic spaces of European cities as special “imprints” of the social society condition. The Gothic style was actively studied by F. Kugler, A. Pugin, N. Pevzner, Ruskin, G. Jansen, G. Zendlmayr, E. Panofsky, M. Camille, G. Binding, Ikonnikov AV, Yu.A. Grieger, P. Bourdieu and others. The city architecture as a semiotic field for the study of social dynamics value creates truly endless opportunities. The most distinct properties of architecture are its historical evidence and stability, thanks to which it is “architecture that gives an unmistakable idea of what really happened in a certain period” (Gideon Z.) [1, 8]. Cities, these silent witnesses, inexorably preserve the past for their descendants. E. Durkheim suggested that the architecture types be considered morphological social
facts, reflecting social realities in the “material substrate” [5]. Reflecting the material conditions of human existence (materials for construction, construction technologies, methods of painting, etc.) the architecture was able to express a state of mind (in the words of G. Simmel [6]). The city and the architectural elements of Gothic / Neo-Gothic need to be considered on several levels. At the first level, our subject is analyzed as a symbolic reproduction of hierarchical ideas about the world with the designation of a person’s place in it, since the structured urban space displays a structurally ordered model of the universe in the perception of a particular culture. At the second level, urban space is viewed as a reflection of the social, property and status differentiation of society. Actually, the social dynamic aspect arises in the spread theme of the Gothic style, its transformation into the Neo-Gothic, with corresponding changes at the two levels mentioned above. Such problem formulation allows covering both spatial (distribution of Gothic in Europe) and temporary (new “reading” of Gothic in the XVIII-XIX-XX centuries) existence aspects of architecture as a structure-forming element of urban integrity.

**Thesis 1**
The symbolic level of the Gothic style was a mature expression of the spirit and dogma of Catholicism. Recall that the Gothic style was born in church architecture: the “formal” birth of the Gothic style belongs to the French church of Saint-Denis and the abbot initiative of the eponymous Sugeria abbey. The medieval picture of the world gave rise to the extreme semantic density of the body of the Gothic cathedral. It is significant that, despite the contrast in our eyes of cities such as Florence and Rome, the views of a medieval chronicler perceived them as similar. This is due to the dominance of the city image as a symbols system where relations between churches and their location in relation to the city walls are emphasized [7]. The topological properties of the main city elements dictate the formation of its symbolism.

The peculiarity of medieval symbolism in the interpretation of the urban space stems from the recognition of the supreme reality of the Divine being and the shadow nature of the physical world. The independent existence of universals, asserted by the medieval realism, was embodied in the perception of the architectural forms of the Gothic cathedral, semantic loading, semantic concentration, emotional stress were concentrated in Gothic points of the medieval city. The secular architecture, which adapted Gothic forms, only used its original symbolism. On a symbolic level, the Gothic cathedral is the whole Divine Universe, the place of God's residence (in repulsion from the prototype of the Old Testament tabernacle), Noah's Ark (the way of salvation of the Christian world). In the structure of a Gothic temple, this is expressed by the dominance in the construction of the Trinity as a symbol of the Holy Trinity (three-row nave and three-row transept, the division of the rib cube into adjacent triangles); its vertical aspiration, where the vertical is perceived as a symbol of infinity, the man aspiration to the sky; in the "light metaphysics" of the Gothic cathedral (stained glass) etc. The Gothic cathedral in its classical form was established as a mature expression of the spirit of Catholicism and the European experience of Christian spiritual life. Thus, the clearly expressed vertical aspiration of the Gothic cathedral was the visualization of the Catholic dogma Filioque consequences about the Holy Spirit emanation not only from the Father, but also from the Son that according to A. Losev gave rise to the Divine essence abstracting, the loss of the feeling of God as a Person, the gap of personal communication between God and man. On the other hand, the Filioque dogma leads to the sensuality increase in the Catholic mystic of “experiencing God,” which was reflected in the interiors of Gothic cathedrals, giving birth through stained glass windows and the diversity of plastic sculpture the dematerialization feeling and intense mystical expression. The absence of a dome symbolizing the head of the Church - Christ - can be viewed as an expression of the Catholic idea of Cesarepapism (the secular authority establishment of the Pope of Rome over the whole world) and as a result of the legacy of legal maximalism of restored pagan antiquity.

**Thesis 2**
Gothic style is a city project, a marker of social, property and political superiority of status groups (clergy, monarch, burghers, feudal nobility; status cities). The Gothic meaning was not limited to the Christian ideology: like any architectural object, the Gothic temple was filled with political and social meaning. In this regard, the figure of the “father of the Gothic” Suger, the children's comrade of Louis VI, the regent in the crusade of Louis VII, who laid down his life in the monarchy defense and conceived a new type of temple building as a way of strengthening the status of monarchical power is indicative. Gothic cathedrals were a factor contributing to the spread of French domination in the European world of the Middle Ages. Thus, the construction of the Amiens Cathedral had a political goal - to weaken the nobility power, strengthening the monarchist power on the sacred foundation [D. Kimpel and R. Zulkale, "Gothic Architecture in France 1130-1270"].

Being born in cities and being called upon to reveal “a visible image of supernatural spectacles” (Dionii Areopagiti), the Gothic style initially became a marker of the high status position of the people involved in it: participating in the construction of Gothic cathedrals, they “joined the sacred”, finding a higher position in the symbolic colored pyramid of values. If originally Gothic cathedrals personified the king authority and episcopate consecrated by the Christianity authority (it is not accidental that Gothic came from France - the first country where the procedure for the monarch coronation - Pepin the Short - was carried out in the church at a bishops meeting), then later the construction of the Gothic cathedral was already carried out by urban communities. The latter represented a kind of middle class that had developed as a result of the active use of commodity-money relations by the burghers. Commodity-money relations were doomed to low status as belonging to the world of bodily needs. (We refer to the demonstration of the low status of the middle class by assigning officials to the stomach and intestines within the whole body of society [8]). On the frescoes dedicated to the hell theme, the usurer image appeared more than once, with whom the figure of the middle class who was concerned about profit was associated, in the image of an obese sinner, in whose mouth the devil defecates (fresco "The Last Judgment" in the San Gimignano Collegiate Church). The architecture transformation in the Gothic direction takes place in those cities that had strong, aspiring to autonomy, and associated with royal power, urban communities. Therefore, the first urban communities include Noyon, Senlis, Sanaa, Laon, Bourges, Reims, Amiens, and it is in these cities that the first Gothic cathedrals are erected.

The special status of Gothic cathedrals in the structure of medieval Christian Europe is also reflected in the attitude towards the architects and builders of these structures. The builders of Gothic cathedrals were no longer monks, as it was in the construction of Romanesque cathedrals, but artisans. It is worth mentioning the version of G. Kloss about the origin of the masonry movement from the handicrafts of Gothic cathedrals builders that later became an influential international spiritual movement in Europe, belonging to which raised the status position in society. The status of the masters-masons and architects, who were almost at the same level with the cathedrals customers is testified by the fact of the middle of the XIV century: the construction leaders of the Prague Mathieu Cathedral from Arras and Peter Parlare were not only buried in the center of Saint Vitus cathedral but also immortalized with sculptural portraits, placed next to the busts of Emperor Charles IV and his family members [12].

Thus, the existence of Gothic cathedrals in medieval Europe went beyond religious functions, becoming the solution to many secular problems. This is evidenced by the interiors of early Gothic cathedrals (spacious halls without internal divisions and places inaccessible to all who are present) - the cathedral became the central place of cultural life of the medieval city, and not only religious masses and holidays were held there, but public and municipal assemblies, civil holidays, theatrical mysteries, etc. The townspeople, who perceived the Gothic cathedral (as opposed to the monastic churches) as a “monument to themselves”, sought to exceed the height, decoration, and pomp its cathedral, similar structures of neighboring towns. Bourges, Paris, Amiens, Reims, Beauvais participated in this competition. Later evidence of the use of the Gothic style for secular needs (demonstration of the social status height of secular authorities and certain social groups) was the emergence of secular Gothic architecture in the form of town halls that became the second leading
center of many medieval European cities. Both on the towers of the cathedrals and on the towers of the town hall, clocks saturated with symbolic elements began to set, measuring the course of earthly time in conjunction with the sacred time. Numerous dials (showing the calendar and dates of Easter, the position of the Sun and the Moon, hours, minutes, day of the week, etc.), symbolic figures, including moving (figures of the apostles, death with a scythe, an hourglass, representatives of different classes as allegories of virtues or vices, figures of the king surrounded by Electors etc.). Naturally, in the town hall building the symbolism density of the Gothic style was reduced, but not canceled completely.

In the XVIII century the era of active hostility towards Gothic as the embodiment of values alien to the Renaissance ideology Europe is replaced by the era of the Gothic revival, Neo-Gothic, which source was England.

**Thesis 3**

The Gothic revival that began in England in the 18th century at a symbolic level went beyond the incarnation of Christian meanings becoming the personification of the ideas of patriotism, national tradition, a symbol of national identity. If in the Middle Ages, the Gothic style was a means of communion with eternity, then the Neo-Gothic style of New time becomes the initiation means of time. Actualizing national and ethnic meanings, bringing state-political ties to the forefront, neo-Gothic becomes the "last attempt" calling for the integrity of European culture and history.

In the 40s of the 18th century, in the epoch of eclecticism, historicism, hobby for medieval studies, Gothic elements of architecture in the form of buildings rushing up, frame vaults, lancet windows, stained glass inserts, jagged walls, "bundles" of columns, etc. are being revived. Appeal to the stages of the development of Neo-Gothic, or "pseudo-gothic," in England (aristocratic, "early Victorian" Gothic and "high Victorian" Gothic XIX century) reveals the novelty of symbolic meanings carried by urban architectural objects of the New Age. The early, or "aristocratic" stage is represented by secular architecture in the form of landscape parks elements for the upper class (D. Gibbs "Temple of Freedom" - garden pavilion for Stowe Park for Viscount Cobham, 1741), country villas and castles (G. Walpole castle "Strawberry Hill", 1747, architect John Chute), and others. In fact, these buildings were not Gothic - both in meaning and in design; moreover, they were brought both beyond the cities boundaries (and Gothic was originally an urban style of architecture), and beyond the confines of Christianity. The illustration of the latter can serve as the interior of the castle of Walpole, where the cabinets are decorated as the altar barrier of the old cathedral of St. Paul’s Cathedral and the lobby wallpaper as the barriers of the Winchester Cathedral in Worcester [9, 86]; where the rooms resembled medieval tombs, the ceiling drawings followed the patterns of gravestone chapels, and the tomb of Westminster Abbey served as a prototype for the fireplace.

In architectural terms, Gothic principles of construction at this stage were not respected at all, as evidenced by the repeated collapse of the tower in the manor Fonthill Abbey. Obviously, for this reason this movement was called Gothic Survival ("Remnants of Gothic"). In addition, as architect T. Jackson noted the attempt to restore the Gothic art through its imitation was similar to the desire to return "the Crusaders and the Last Judgment".

Initially, as a romantic-aesthetic imitation of antiquity in oblivion of the actual Gothic symbolism Neo-Gothic passed into another state historical level in the next century. Reflection of the new stage was carried out by the books of O. Pugin “Contrasts” (1836), declaring the old Gothic style truly Christian and national, and J. Reskin “Seven Lights of Architecture” (1849), where the author declares the basic principles of neo-Gothic, among which he calls: sacrifice, truth, power, beauty, life, memory, obedience. At this stage, not only government institutions (including the Westminster Palace reconstructed after the fire) are built in the Neo-Gothic style, but also railway stations, universities, private buildings, as well as cathedrals and town halls. The subsequent announcement of the Neo-Gothic national style in England was associated by the researchers with the advent of the "era of doubt" (J. Crook), when in the conditions of the industrial revolution, the crisis of faith, the spread of historicism and the development of medieval studies, the Gothic style was perceived as a way of moral and ethnic-cultural renaissance.
Thesis 4
Being the embodiment of the archetype of European culture, which has undergone semantic transformations in the course of history, while remaining as a means of self-identification of European culture, the Gothic style has now become organic as a rationalized support within the eclecticism of urban space.

Modernist discourse regards Gothic as an EU-wide "original symbol" [11]. The Gothic spread throughout Western Europe after her birth in Saint Denis Abbey was phenomenal. For the period from 1180 to 1270 in France alone, about 80 cathedrals were built, not counting the restoration of other types of buildings. The Gothic style swept Europe "like a plague" (in the words of J. Vasari). Germany famous claim to the authorship of this style only indicates the kinship of the Gothic and Germanic spirit. The appeal to the Gothic archetypes in the Neo-Gothic style of England, which perceived Gothic forms as a call to the moral anthropic ideal that links the English nation with its historical past speaks of the same relationship.

From the phenomena of the same series, it is necessary to mention Neo-Gothic in the American continent, which has become a means of self-presentation of the American bourgeois in its dignity through the involvement of the European tradition. Gothic revival of the early twentieth century in South America, which took place under specific ethnopolitical conditions, became a search for both the basis for civil association and a new source of inspiration for various Christian churches [13]. The British community, which was striving to mark the Anglo-Saxon cultural tradition, set the tone in asserting the South American fashion for Neo-Gothic [14].

Therefore, Neo-Gothic initially as a reanimated archetype of Teutonic or Anglo-Saxon origin becomes a symbol of immaculate Christian past architecture then a marker of social status, a successful bourgeois and finally a visual image affirming the prestige of big business [10].

Summary
Having traveled from the personification of the "city of God", descending to the "earthly city", Gothic forms retained the enormous reserves of symbolic energy necessary for the historical self-determination of European peoples. The modern architecture of European cities is an eclectic phenomenon that no longer gives rise to new European styles. The chain of great styles, breaking off on classicism was replaced by a plurality of development ways in the architecture of the XX-XXI centuries. Modern cities, human-oriented masses become crowded but impersonal, standardized, focused on simplified forms of the media language. Cities lose the integrity and density of the semantics of their semantic structure. In the modern urban space of anonymity, information redundancy, aggressive obsession of advertising stereotypes, moral permissiveness - Gothic and Neo-Gothic architectural monuments continue to be the "verticals" of great meanings that help navigate the semantic spaces of culture.

References
[1] Gideon Z 1984 Space, Time, Architecture (Stroyizdat, Moscow).
[2] Toman R 2000 Gothic. Architecture. Sculpture. Painting (KONEMANN).
[3] Griber Yu A 2017 The Color Field of the City in the History of European Culture (Soglasie, Moscow).
[4] Durkheim E 2006 Sociology. Its Subject, Method, Purpose (Kanon, Moscow).
[5] Simmel G 2002 Florence, Logos 3-4.
[6] Ikonnikov A V 2001 The Architecture of the XX Century (Eutopieae and reality, Progress-Tradition, Moscow).
[7] Ikonnikov A V 2006 Space and Time in Architecture and Urban Planning (KomKniga, Moscow).
[8] Macklin E 2000 Medieval Cities. Gothic. Architecture. Sculpture. Painting (KONEMANN).
[9] Mikhailova Y 2014 Gothic Renaissance in the Architecture of England in the 18th-19th Centuries (Bulletin of Saint Petersburg State University of Culture) 4 (21) 86.
[10] Mikhailova Yu 2015 *Interpretation of Gothic in American Architecture* (Bulletin of Saint Petersburg State University of Culture) 3 (24).

[11] Nasonova S 2004 *The Gothic Phenomenon in the System of Culture* (Extended Abstract of Candidate Sciences (Cultural science), St. Petersburg).

[12] Freigang K 2000 *The practice of construction in the Middle Ages. Gothic. Architecture. Sculpture. Painting* (KONEMANN).

[13] *The Catholic Church and the Province of Buenos Aires* 2015 (Postmedieval-A Journal of Medieval Cultural Studies. FAL) 6 (3) 304-323.

[14] Fernando Bujan J *Neo-Gothic Style in Argentina: Shaping the British National Identity in Exile* (Postmedieval-A Journal of Medieval Cultural Studies. FAL) 6 (3) 324-339.