

FEATURES OF THE NARRATIVE DISCOURSE IN THE NOVEL BY V. NABOKOV

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Abstract. The author of this article made an attempt to study a narrative discourse of V. Nabokov's novel *Despair*. To implement this purpose the author selected the object-oriented approach for information analysis. The chosen method allowed to consider a discourse with other, than it was traditionally accepted in relation to the novels, point of view and allowed to receive the important result connected with writer's postmodern game with Freud's ideas.

Key words: V. Nabokov, discourse, object-oriented approach, object, information.

1 Introduction

V. V. Nabokov remains one of the most popular writers among the readers, literary critics and philologists. There are many years spent on studying different aspects of his artistic heritage, but it is early to speak of a sufficient knowledge of his works.

2 Methods

The methodological basis of our study is the object-oriented approach which helps to study the information of the work of art. V. V. Nabokov's discourse has been studied and still continues to be studied by the leading specialists. If V. V. Nabokov's contemporaries, for the most part, did not accept the novel *Despair* (Jean-Paul Sartre, G. Adamovich, etc.), today there is the rethinking of this work. The researchers' special attention is paid to Nabokov's reinterpretation and replay of F. M. Dostoevsky's works (A. Dolinin, L. Tselkova, etc.).

3 Results and Discussion

The Study of The Narrative Discourse of The Novel *Despair* By Vladimir Nabokov

To achieve this goal, we set the following tasks: to study how the information in the work is submitted, to attempt to decipher this information, to compare the final portion of the information of the work with its final.

Nabokov's novel *Despair* is a complex system in which the information flow is presented textually on behalf of Herman, the main character of the work and the author of *Despair*. Deciphering this information is a new vector of the study of Nabokov's creativity, and therefore it is relevant.

Studying the novel *Despair* we noted some remarkable facts at deciphering of the information given by Herman. We should consider them.

Herman gives the recipient the information about the brilliant plan, careful preparation for the murder, the commission of one and the subsequent unsuccessful result. If we retrace the state of Herman, we can note a curious detail: being the main object, he always tries to prove to himself that he is better than Felix, that Felix is like him, and not vice versa. 'I saw my double in him, a creature that is physically equal to me – this complete equality excited me so painfully.' [Blo Jean. Nabokov. 2000, p. 404]. Herman as an object affects the state of other objects:

- Felix: inspires him to hope for a job, helps to find the benefits in such an acquaintance;

- Lida: gives her a precise instructions on what to do and how to do after her imaginary death;
- Ardalion: sends him to Italy hoping to get rid of him forever, because he is sure that he will not have money for the return trip;
- the doctor: at first he causes a sense of guilt, and later – professional curiosity and even help.

Giving the first portion of the information about the seen double, Herman presents it not at once, but tries to recreate the entourage and emotional state, usually experienced by people at a circus performance in front of a dangerous or especially difficult performance: 'Orchestra, play the fanfare! Or better: the ruffle, as in a choking acrobatic trick! Such an incredible minute!' [Blo Jean. Nabokov. 2000, p. 400]. The information is given in an unusual way: with the pomp, brought to the props, and its sense is stretched over the several pages. Such an external effect, categorically attracts the attention of the recipient of the information. This is more like a theatrical performance than the transfer of the information, which is what Herman wants, considering the author's cherished dream of turning a reader into a spectator.

Obviously, Herman has no information about the influence of Felix as an object on the state of any other objects. It indicates only the change of Herman's state under the influence of Felix, for example: 'I slowly raised my right hand, but his left hand did not rise, and I almost expected it. I squinted my left eye, but both his eyes remained open. I showed him my tongue.' [Blo Jean. Nabokov. 2000, p. 403].

We should focus on the information containing in the separate places of communication, but united by a common sense: Herman has difficulties in writing his message. These are the difficulties of the creator (there are blotches of autocommentary how someone should begin to write, what style it would be better to choose and so on, although the author claims that he is able to write; sometimes it feels like he forgets what he was talking about before) and the difficulties of the physical state (his hands shake when he can not tell his story properly; he physically feels the discomfort being aware of the incompleteness of the work).

Analysing the information about Herman from his own narration, we determined a whole set of qualities, basing on which we can say about the obvious mental illness of the author. Of course, Herman suffers from a nervous disorder:

- he often feels bad for no reason: his heart 'itches' (cardiophobia) when he writes the text, there are the signs of suffocation, sleep disturbance (the novel has been written for a week), tearfulness, sudden changes of mood, the feeling of fear not to have time to finish the work;
- - the moment of candaulism is described (German made Lida sit naked for Ardolino) – the pathology when a person takes pleasure in demonstrating to others a naked partner or his/her images and photos. There is dual candaulism in the submitted information: Herman demonstrates not just his wife, but forces her to sit for, and makes Ardalion draw a nude model;
- Herman confesses his philemaphobia – the fear of kissing. He never kissed his wife because of the dislike of touching his lips to the epithelium of the lips of his wife. However, going 'to the patient', he suddenly wanted to kiss her, only her head, in a fatherly way;
- it seems to the author of the message that he is prevented from speaking, although his text is a monologue that is written in loneliness. The repeated mention of the memory as an assistant suggests that the one who interrupts Herman is his memory, that is, he does not just talk to himself (the written text), but even argues and quarrels with himself. At

the time, Orlovius says that Herman wrote himself the letter – this is both true and not true: he really wrote to himself, with ‘other’ handwriting, but he did it consciously, with the intent to divert suspicion from himself;

- Herman is prone to onychophagy – he bites his burrs waiting for the letter;
- Herman admits the obsessions in himself: ‘< ... > this lonely pillar, later turned into an obsession for me. <...> Seeing it for the first time I recognised it <...>’ [Blo Jean. Nabokov. 2000, p. 417];
- the author of the message seeks to shift the guilt of the conceived murder and the letter written by him to the random girl who at his request put the letter in a mailbox;
- the author has the narcissistic traits: talks a lot about himself, considers himself as an ideal husband and man. He has an extremely low opinion about his wife. He considers other people to be narrow-minded: he does not respect Orlovius, Ardalion because, in his opinion, they are poor losers;
- there is a big interest in his own and someone else's faces, which is reflected in the narration, for example:

* Lida likes looking at Herman’s appearance, she measures his face with two fingers like with a divider;

* Lida lets out smoke, twisting her mouth;

* the face of Ardalion is ‘big-nosed’;

* Orlovius pulls himself over the earlobes, when he is dissatisfied or puzzled;

* with the help of painting techniques Herman describes his facial features, compares them with Felix’s ones;

* Herman tries to find out the opinion of Ardalion as an artist about different types of faces.

According to Herman, he has no mirrors in the house. However, he has an increased interest in faces and types. Here we see the dysmorphic disorder – a mental disorder in which a person pays excessive attention to the features of his body or appearance. We are not talking about the defect or delusions of the physical disability. On the contrary: German is so perfect that it seems improbable the existence of another person with the same facial features. In Herman's message there are a lot of mirrors, reflections, reflexes and hints at the mirrors. He writes that when he first met Felix, he asked him to look in a small mirror to help him understand the resemblance. The mirrors, many times encountered in the information, show the change of the object's states (Herman) : from admiring to a panic fear, bordering on spectrophobia;

there is a noticeable aggression of the message sender towards the recipient: ‘I wish at all costs and I will have to convince all of you to get you villains, to be sure, <...> what I talk about’ [1, p. 406]. This outburst of negative emotions can be explained by the pain of speaking out in a way that is understood correctly, as if the author is suffering from obsessive-compulsive disorder, as a result of which he writes his work. This is very similar to the method of free association, which was the basis of Z. Freud's work with his patients. According to this method, the patient was offered to freely, without concealment, tell everything that came to his or her mind, even if it seemed that it has no weight or value, even if it seemed disgusting or obscene. The scientist believed that thoughts did not arise by themselves, they unconsciously moved in the direction of what caused troubles, so it could help to get a better idea of the nature of neurosis or mental abnormality. The doctor's task was to decipher the hidden unconscious in the conscious said, overcoming the patient's resistance by creating a friendly atmosphere. The relationship

between what happened and its reproduction in each case may be different. The doctor should help the patient to relive the event, because of which he perceives real life as the reflection of the forgotten and pushed past. It seems that the displaced unconscious is written by Herman and entitled as *Despair*.

It should be reminded of the extreme skepticism that V. V. Nabokov experienced in the methods of analysis and treatment of Dr. Z. Freud. The presence of so many mental disorders and such a variety of personal characteristics of Herman Karlovich indicates a deliberate parody of the method of self-analysis of Z. Freud and his medical practice in General.

There is a tendency to the invention and falsification in Herman, he accuses himself in it in the beginning of his narration, describing the mother as an old princely lady in purple, he recognises that it is not true, in fact, she was the daughter of a small tradesman and wore not silk, but a short jacket. The lady in purple is depicted on the wrapper of the chocolate bar, that is not invented, but borrowed by Herman from the real wrapper for him

In our opinion, this image was given to Herman by V. V. Nabokov, in this place prompting additional information to the recipient: the lady on the chocolate wrapper was a hint at the picture of M. A. Vrubel *The Lady in Purple*, at the technique and color spectrum of M. A. Vrubel.

There is the virtuoso technique of M. A. Vrubel, drawing certain forms of color shades, which is why there is an effect of crystal faces, and the picture resembles a stained glass window. It is his technique that Herman tries to imitate. Vladimir Nabokov – the writer – peeks through the veil of the narrative of Herman, and character of the lady in purple gives a hint of ‘artificiality’ of the statements, of Vrubel’s style in the creation of Herman. Imitating M. Vrubel’s technique is also confirmed by the description of the finished portrait of Herman, created by Ardalion. The style, with which the portrait was painted, was a geometric figure, similar to a loop or gallows.

Vrubel's style is found in the non-standard text of the message of the unfortunate genius: the plot elements are in the most unexpected places, they are mosaic, the ‘joints’ of the narrative are very noticeable, as at the stage of the creation of the artistic canvas the joints of planes and shapes are visible, transmitted by curved polyhedra. It is also easy to retrace a subtle hint of Herman’s mental disorder: he, like the creator of M. A. Vrubel, was obsessed with his creation, outwardly his insanity is noticeable, his physical state is deplorable, but the creator is still alive and continues to improve his work.

4 Conclusions

Herman, being an unreliable narrator, cannot serve as a source of true information – his message should be taken into account, and nothing more. The information given by Herman is sometimes contradictory (for example, he writes that he offered Felix to look in the mirror at their first meeting, later he assures that he does not use mirrors), which proves the far-fetched similarity of Herman and Felix.

Thus, offering the reader to believe the story of Herman, V. V. Nabokov hyperbolises the diagnoses of the narrator, ridiculing the method of the doctor Z. Freud, who is unloved by him. The saturation of the mental flaws should alert anyone exploring the information of the novel. This postmodern game with the reader begins to acquire its evidence precisely because of the object-oriented approach to the study of the work

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