

# СТРУКТУРА ПОВЕСТВОВАНИЯ РОМАНА В. НАБОКОВА "ЛОЛИТА"

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**Аннотация.** В статье будут рассмотрены особенности повествования романа В. Набокова «Лолита». С точки зрения авторов данной статьи подобная разветвленная интертекстуальность романа призвана изобразить неадекватное, мифологизированное сознание маргинального героя – Гумберта Гумберта, филолога, специалиста по романской литературе, воспринимающего все происходящее с ним как через призму известных библейских образов, так и образов мировой литературы и искусства, воспевая и поэтизируя свое влечение к американской девочке подростку, ориентируясь на лучшие образцы любовной лирики и стремясь сравняться с ними в своем повествовании, в связи с чем слово в романе представлено во всем богатстве его семантических связей, поэтической выразительности и ритмической организованности.

**Ключевые слова:** Лолита, роман, Гумберт Гумберт, интертекстуальность, мировая литература, совершенная поэтическая проза.

**Abstract.** The article deals with the metaphorical style and the peculiarities of the poetics of Nabokov's novel "Lolita". Nabokov's novel "Lolita", including artistic layers and types of intertextuality, from the embodiment of biblical images-symbols, developing the theme of the Fall and the parallel Lolita - Lilith (the apocryphal wife of Adam) to the constant correlation of Lolita with the prototypes of famous heroines of world literature, glorified by Dante (Beatrice), Petrarch (Laura), E. A. Poe (Virginia) and others. A. Poe (Virginia), L. Carroll (Alice), etc. Such branched intertextuality of the novel is intended to portray the inadequate, mythologized consciousness of the marginalized hero - Humbert Humbert, a philologist, a specialist in Romance literature, who perceives everything that happens to him through the prism of both known biblical images and the images of world literature and art, Singing and poetizing his attraction to the American teenage girl, focusing on the best examples of love lyrics and striving to equal them in his narration, in connection with which the word in the novel is presented in all the richness of its semantic relations, poetic expressiveness and rhythmic organization. V. Nabokov's novel "Lolita" (1955) was created in the early 1950s, its literary forerunner was the story "The Magician", written in France in 1939. Both works by the author depict an unconventional marginal hero with his manic passion for nymphets - girls aged 10-12, in whom he discovers a "demonic, i. e. nymphomaniacal beauty".

**Keywords:** Lolita, Novel, Humbert Humbert, intertextuality, world literature, perfect poetic prose.

## **Introduction.**

In artistic terms, however, the novel is very different from the novella-just as a symphonic work or a large artistic canvas is superior to the original sketch. Paraphrasing the American critic who noted that *Lolita* is the author's account of "the novel with the novelist," Nabokov writes that replacing the last words with "with the English language" would clarify this elegant formula.<sup>1</sup> The novel written in English is, indeed, the novel of the novel. Indeed, a novel written in English is the writer's perfect poetic prose, wonderfully rhythmic, musical, extremely associative, saturated with alliteration and sonority, with repetition at all linguistic levels: phonetic, semantic, syntactic and compositional. "Lolita, light of my life, fire of my loins. My sin, my soul. Lo-lee-ta: the tip of the tongue taking a trip of three steps down the palate to tap, at three, on the teeth. Lo. Lee. Ta." <sup>2</sup> .

This musical-rhythmic phrase opens the first chapter of the novel, in which the first two syllables of the heroine's name are associated by both sight and consonance with "life", "light", "fire", "loins", "sin", "soul", each of which is itself associative and generates a following in the phrase, and the last syllable "ta" appears time and again in the continuation of the sentence, which describes the tongue movement when pronouncing the girl's name, as the tongue runs down the steps from the tip of the palate to the teeth. The metaphorical style of narration and various kinds of layers and types of intertextuality to a large extent also allow us to talk about the writer's "novel" with the poetry and prose of world literature. Thus, the plot of the work is based on the axis of the binary opposition of "good and evil", "Heaven and Hell", because by its genre it is a novel-confession: Its subtitle - "The Confession of a White Widowed Male", where the word "confession" is translated not only as "confession", but also as "confession of guilt", because Humbert Humbert throughout the novel repeatedly refers to the expected jury trial, repenting of what he has done and explaining in detail the reasons for his immoral behavior. Indeed, throughout the entire plot of the novel the hero, who lusts after nymphets, is in constant struggle with himself, and this situation he both sees and describes through the prism of familiar biblical images - angel and devil, Hell and Paradise. For example, it was the devil McFatum, the narrator believes, who led him to Ramsdel and helped him find Lolita there (a fire in the McQ house), he also contributed to the death of her mother under the wheels of a car, while Humbert Humbert himself, although on the verge of drowning her in a lake, never dared to do so. In his notes he writes that on the eve of the fateful night in the hotel an angel behind Lolita's back (an "exhausted angel") advised him to leave his room key with the doorman and leave the hotel, because "nothing but torment and terror will bring the expected bliss" (3, p. 128)<sup>3</sup> . And indeed, much later, when he had already lost Lolita, he came to know this "abominable, indescribable unbearable eternal terror," which was then "only a black dot in the glow of my happiness" (3, p. 173). This triad: temptation, the fall into sin, expulsion from paradise (with the ensuing infernal torments) is the basis of the plot of the novel. The theme of Humbert Humbert's fall into sin is also continued and developed by Old Testament biblical images-symbols running through the whole work: images of the temptress serpent, the Garden of Eden, the apple ("le fruit vert"),

once plucked by the foremother Eve from the tree of knowledge at the instigation of Satan, which she then offers to Adam.

### **Literature review.**

Thus, Charlotte Geis, Lolita's mother, at her first meeting with Humbert Humbert and in conversation with him, like a serpent, "as if unwrapped the rings of her body" (3, p. 35), and the hero clearly felt that she was ready to seduce her future lodger. However, the nibbled brown middle of the apple lying on the mantel hints that she will not be the object of his passionate adoration. While inspecting his future dwelling, Humbert notices in the bathroom the foreseen "wriggles of a rubber snake" (3, p. 36), a thin rubber hose stretched over the faucet and used in place of a shower. On his way to the garden on the green veranda of the house, the stunned hero sees in "apple-green color" (3, p. 38) a half-naked child, Lolita, who suddenly reminded him and merged in his troubled mind with Annabella Lee, his unhappy teenage love. Thus, the garden of the house, where Humbert finds himself, turns out to be a paradise for him (3, p. 54). At the hero's first close contact with Lolita, she eats an "Edenically ruddy" apple (3, p. 56), sitting on the couch next to him, leafing through an illustrated magazine, and her casual touches create a storm of emotions in him. Lolita brings "the scent of fruit orchards" into Humbert's life (3, p. 99). When he picks up the girl from the camp, she wears "a bright chintz dress with a pattern of red apples" (3, pp. 113-114), and in the morning at the hotel she gives him her unchildishly subtle kiss, and provokes him to physical intimacy herself. Their first sexual experience is shown emotionally and metaphorically in the novel, again using biblical symbolic images: Humbert in his imagination draws wall murals for the dining room of the Enchanted Hunters' Retreat, in which he represents the lake, "a living arbor in dazzling color" (3; p. 137); a tiger chasing a bird of paradise; a snake swallowing an animal; poplars, apples, and girls' summer camp activities: "camp activities ... Canoeing, Coranting, Combing Curls in the lakeside sun ... poplars, apples, a suburban Sunday" (2, p. 134), where the insistent repetition of the sound ("k") emphasizes the main character's growing erotic excitement, which is associatively consonant with the word "come," which for the English-speaking reader means approaching orgasm.

### **Research methodology.**

The very image of Lolita and Humbert's attraction to her is presented in a multidimensional, intertextual and metaphoric way. Repeatedly throughout the novel, Humbert says that together with Lolita he lived "in the depths of his chosen ... (his) paradise - a paradise whose skies were blazing like hellfire - but a paradise nonetheless" (3, p. 170). Lolita herself is sometimes compared to a temptress-snake: "She smelled bananas and twisted her body toward the table" (3, p. 222). By using similar Old Testament image-symbols and leitmotifs that develop the theme of the Fall, Nabokov continued the tradition of mythologizing text, artistically developed by European modernist writers in the twenties of the twentieth century. Joyce and

T.S. Eliot, who turned to myth as a new way of depicting reality, conveying the lost perception of the world in the unity of man and nature, in order to somehow arrange in his mind the absurdity and chaos of the new reality discovered by humanity<sup>4</sup>. A follower of M. Proust, who recreated through the associative stream of consciousness "a huge building of memory" - the forever lost, decayed world - and J. Joyce, who, by analogy with Homer's *Odyssey*, creates his epochal novel-myth *Ulysses*, wishing to embody in it his idea of universal laws of life and being. Nabokov, orienting his novel on mythopoetic models, however, does not try, as A. Dolinin noted, to tie the plot of his work rigidly to any one myth, although his century-old prototypes shine through the modern everyday life of his novels. Instead, the writer uses the principle of multiple thematic parallelism, when the narrative refers us to a number of mythological and literary pretexts, which are linked to it (and among themselves) by a common theme.<sup>5</sup> In our opinion, this is done in order to ensure that the plot of his work is not tied to any one myth. In our opinion, this is done in order to deepen the theme of the narrative as much as possible, giving it the stability of an iceberg by introducing into it numerous associations, which invariably arise in the reader who has a good knowledge of biblical and literary texts. In connection with the above, another layer of intertextuality can be distinguished - these are the historical antecedents of the images of *Lolita* and Humbert Humbert and their literary prototypes.

### **Analysis and results.**

Already on the first page of his confession, the hero-narrator mentions his semi-child love for a girl named Annabelle Leigh "in a certain principality by the sea... almost like Poe" (3, p. (3, p. 5), who sadly soon left this world, as did Edgar Poe's young wife Virginia, sung in the famous poem "Annabel Lee", a line from which Humbert quotes: "When I was a child, and she was a child", at the same time noting that "everything is Edgar's fault" (3, p. 14). And just below, trying to justify his morbid passion for the twelve-year-old *Lolita*, he recalls the love of the young Dante for Beatrice, who was only nine years old - "so sparkling, painted, lovely, in a crimson dress with expensive stones" - and Petrarch's love for Laura - "a blond nymphette of twelve, who ran through dust and bloom ... like a flying flower" (3, p. 16). I have fallen in love with *Lolita* like Virginia Poe, and like Dante with his Beatrice (3, p. 109)," the hero narrator sums up in a peculiar way. The novel also has a less obvious, but undoubted parallel to Lilith, praised by Nabokov in his eponymous poem of December 13, 1930, which the lyrical hero posthumously remembers as a nympho and messenger not of Paradise, as he first thought, but of Hell. She appears to him as a red-haired green-eyed naked girl "with a river lily in her curls" and eloquently invites him to share with her the bliss of physical intimacy, which she mockingly stops halfway through. As if in contrast to Alice, Nabokov creates the image of the young *Lolita*, who did not have a happy childhood, she was by no means courteous, but retained her curiosity and taste for life. But Humbert is attracted not so much by her inner world, the life of her soul, as by the purely carnal charm of an unformed teenage girl, and it is *Lolita* who fully gets to experience, in accordance with her name Dolores<sup>11</sup>, what Sin and Sorrow are! V. Nabokov senses

in this name "roses and tears" and the name itself, in his opinion, conveys well "the heart-breaking fate...of a girl together with her charm and transparency" (6, pp. 134-135). In his interviews, in particular with A. Appel and N. Garnham, Nabokov mentioned the "touching similarity between Humbert Humbert and Lewis Carroll in their "love for little girls", "the grave sin" which the latter "concealed behind the walls of the darkroom" (6, p. 241), taking ambiguous pictures "in darkened rooms" (6, p. 197). Like him, Quilty, Humbert's double, also set up a special studio in his home for filming nude children. At the same time, Nabokov, appreciating the fairy tale dilogy, calls L. Carroll "the great children's writer of all times and peoples. (6, c. 241). An important artistic feature of Nabokov's novel *Lolita* is the presence of doppelgangers in it, both purely narrative, such as Humbert - Quilty, and parodic. The novel is replete with secondary characters whose names are either taken from the great works of world literature or borrowed from famous writers: they are Dr. Cooper and Dr. Byron, the head of the "Jughead" camp Shirley Holmes; the names of the students of the Ramsdel Grammar School are taken from the plays of Shakespeare: Antony and Viola, Duncan, Rosaline, Miranda; in addition, Scott, Byron, Sheridan are listed. With these, as well as other names, the novel enters a parody-grotesque *modus operandi* that reaches its climax at the end, when Quilty, taking Lolita away with him, plays an endless game with Humbert, scribbling his messages to him in the motel registration books, where the guests inscribe their addresses and names. For example, the entry "Adam N. Epilnber, Esnop, Illinois" contains both a question and a statement: "Adam did not drink, did Noah drink?" - referring the reader to the Old Testament progenitors; the entry "P.O. Temkin, Odessa, Texas" refers to the famous Soviet film by S. Eisenstein; "D. Orgon, Elmira, New York" are two of Moliere's characters; Frater Grimm refers to one of the German storytellers, the Brothers Grimm, and Erutar Romb is an anagram of the names of Arthur Rimbaud. As B. Boyd, one of the most perceptive researchers of V. Nabokov's life and work, rightly notes. As one of the most insightful researchers of Nabokov's life and work has rightly remarked, "Something strange and sinister is going on: it is as if Quilty completely possesses the will of Humbert, as if he were no more than a character in one of Quilty's plays, a figment of his imagination. "12 We should add for ourselves - as does the Poet in *Enchanted Hunters*, written by Quilty under the influence of Lenorman and Maeterlinck, who claims that all the other characters are the product of his imagination. But Diana, the village girl whose role was to be played by Lolita, convinces him otherwise. On the other hand, by introducing into the text an ironic, sometimes parodic-grotesque style of narration, full of puns, wordplay, jokes, rebuses and riddles, Nabokov thereby deliberately reduces the tragic intensity of the novel, in which all the main characters die like in the plays of Shakespeare ("Hamlet", "Macbeth", "Romeo and Juliet", "King Lear"); At the same time, it nullifies the reader's sympathy for Humbert - the hapless detective, by no means Arsène Lupin, who up until the very last moment could not understand who had taken Lolita away from him, though it was easy to spot Quilty's name in Mona Dal's letter, where she underlined the most difficult letter combinations for pronunciation in the Russian text especially for Lolita (3, p. 231).

231), and in English, his name sounds twice in a combination of French words: "qu'il t'y" (2, p. 221).

## **Conclusion.**

Thus, V. Nabokov's novel *Lolita*, with its branched multi-layered intertextuality, depicts the inadequate mythologized consciousness of the hero, who, being an erudite philologist, a specialist in Romance literature, perceives everything that happens to him not only through the prism of biblical images, but through the images of world literature and art, praising and poetizing his attraction to the American girl, while being oriented to the best examples of love lyrics and even aspiring to compare with them. Therefore, the novel presents the artistic word in all the richness of its semantic connections, poetic expressiveness and rhythmic organization. At the same time, the author, introducing the parody-grotesque mode of narration, underlines his distance from his marginal hero, demonstrating in the novel the infinite freedom of the artist-creator and his new poetic vision of the world.

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3 Quotes from the text of the novel *Lolita* in Russian are given according to: Nabokov V. Collected Works:

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