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Ways to Study Meaning (R.O. Jakobson vs. V.V. Nabokov)

The problem addressed in this paper is to compare different models of expressing meaning in texts. The matter is that the theory allows supplementing verbal expression of meaning with, in the words of James Joyce, “ineluctable modality of the visible”. In ancient Greece, the “theorists” were “carefully peering” spectators at sports events, and “the theory” helped these spectators anticipate results more accurately than participating athletes could do. Thus, the roots of both commonly used scientific terms are also associated with the “modality of the visible”.

When in 1948, V.V. Nabokov was invited by Cornell University to give a literature course, R.O. Jakobson (already an internationally recognized linguist at that time) opposed this nomination. He objected that Nabokov was a big writer: Jacobson said metaphorically, “The elephant is the biggest animal, but it is not invited to teach zoology.” However, as the Germans say, “any competition is lame”, and Nabokov was invited.

Jakobson did not accidentally resort to this comparison. The basis of his comparison was an adjective, and Kubie believes that as far as psychology is concerned it is better to use adjectives. (3) Moreover, according to Jakobson’s theory, the construction of a text psychologically lies at the intersection of two axes: selection and combination. (1) At the first axis, the movement of thought aimed at choosing the means of its expression takes place. When choosing words, that movement covers a domain of similarities. When moving along the second axis, the contiguity of image elements is dominant.

This is no accident: it appears that this act laid the foundation of speech understanding. But the understanding of texts consists in understanding their content and meaning.

At the same time (M. Merleau-Ponty thought), imagination promotes the understanding of literary texts. And as for the analysis of scientific problems, understanding promotes imagination. Nabokov’s approach, as we shall see, was exactly like that.

When Nabokov was preparing course 311-312 (Master of European Fiction) for the Department of Slavonic Studies at Cornell University, he sought the advice of Edmund Wilson, even though Wilson, characterized R.L. Stevenson as a “second-rate” writer. It is impossible to agree with him, and I will refer to the *Portrait of a Rebel. The Life and Work of Robert Louis Stevenson* by Richard Aldington, who writes that *Dr. Jekyll* is essentially original, and thanks to the power of dramatic effect has been very popular for eighty years¹.

Dr. Jekyll was a nearly perfect film script. For the first six months, over a quarter of a million copies were sold in the U.S, and *Dr. Jekyll* was a great success with the public – “the Success with a capital S, for which Stevenson had worked.” (8). It is quite clear that success with the American public is not a criterion of artistic skill for E. Wilson, but in this case, it is a Success that the author of a classic literary work has earned.

Stevenson foresaw the success that the idea of *Dr. Jekyll* continues to enjoying on the screen – it really is “a nearly perfect film script” that was written in the era when film scripts (and movies!) did not exist. There is no doubt that the “little men” who perform plays on the stage of sleep (in particular, Stevenson and Bulgakov refer to them) are a psychological prototype of programmed dreams, which will face a great future in the 21st-century.

The essence of the work done by Nabokov becomes clear when we turn to his content model of *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. The model had a semantic nature.

Stevenson’s idea was that *Dr. Jekyll* in addition to his positive features had negative elements: he is not void of rancor, a risk lover, and yet risk is a base plate of human behavior embedded in us at the early stage of development when good and evil are not yet differentiated. And when *Jekyll* takes the drug (the composition of which remains unknown), the differentiation of evil is madly accelerated, and *Mr. Hyde*, small and scary, separates from *Jekyll* and “precipitates”. There is a feeling that *Jekyll* has turned into *Hyde*. Nabokov depicts and comments upon this situation as follows. (See Figure 1) (7).

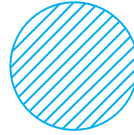
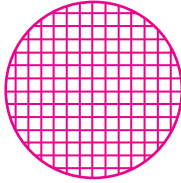
¹ Now over a hundred years.

Figure 1

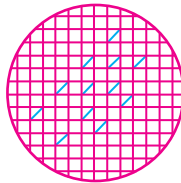
“This situation can be illustrated in the following way:

Henry Jekyll
(big)

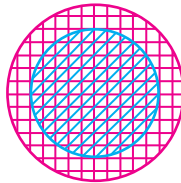
Edward Hyde
(small)



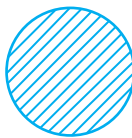
Looking closely, you will see that big, bright, homely Jekyll is sprinkled with germs of evil.



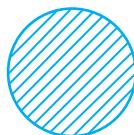
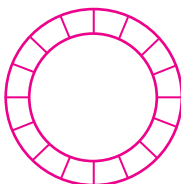
Under the influence of wonderful drink evil deepens



and transforms or detaches in



And yet, if you look intently at Hyde, you can see that over him, shuddering with horror, but relentlessly hovering is what's left of Jekyll – something like a misty ring, or halo, as if a dark bunch of evil has dropped out of the ring of good, but the ring has not disappeared. Jekyll still strives to return to his aspect, and this is important.”



Nabokov proposed a model that goes beyond the psychological semantics of text. This model has to do with the diversity of society. In addition to vertical and horizontal lines in Figure 1, there are oblique lines among squares. What is it? For a Russian who has lived through the revolution, it is a secret society. It is a society within society.

Meaning can often be expressed in a symbolic (is not it synonymous with “the visible”?) form. According to Rapoport, the process of transmitting accumulated knowledge, which Korzybski called “time-binding”, is accomplished by the use of symbols. (4).

Until recently, while chimpanzees have not deprived us of a cherished illusion, it was believed that the use of symbols was a crucial and unique characteristic of man. Unlike a signal, and by a signal I mean nothing more than a stimulus to which a response has been conditioned, a symbol evokes response only in a relation to other symbols. Thus the ‘same’ symbol in different contexts can elicit essentially different responses, or to put it in another way, a given symbol cannot be properly defined outside of a context. Put together in sequences, symbols compose a language, a ‘symbolic environment’ that helps people perceive, understand, communicate, and shape man’s natural environment, and is, in turn shaped by it. (6)

Again, meaning is there. Therefore, we do not notice it, like we do not notice the normal temperature until it is replaced by chill. Remember how Hans Selye began the stress study. He noticed that patients, before diagnosis, before the emergence of symptoms, specifically intrinsic to some disease even before and instead of what doctors call the “general malaise”, have a state of tension indicating that something has been lost. This something is the norm.

And so is meaning: it is primary tangible as something that disappears when there is a feeling of incomprehensibility, a feeling that there was something that suddenly has been lost. Specifics of this feeling require an elementary self-analysis, which will tell you not that the feeling of understanding has disappeared, but that an actual (and therefore transparent and rather intangible) meaning, an object of understanding, has disappeared. And immediately, it becomes clear that meaning, according to a good Losev’s analogy, is like good spectacles – through it, and by means of it, objects find a genuine connection.

What is the difference between a genuine connection and a simple sequence, which we will call a “non-genuine” connection for simplicity? The difference is that one link can not metonymically replace another. Thus, the day can not replace the night, so the metaphor “the moon is the sun of the night” seems strained and unsuccessful, while the metaphor “to eat a plate” is quite possible and trivial if it’s a plate of porridge or soup. You can even “wrap the wind” – remember now forgotten Lugovsky, who wrote:

So begins a song about the wind,
The wind wrapped in soldiers’ gaiters,
The gaiters on the way of wars,
Wars, which do not need verse...

It is clear that here we are not talking about the analogy (soldiers do not march “as fast as the wind”), but rather the homology. The soldiers are driven by an invisible (as the invisible wind) will of history, a will that people tend to attach meaning to. And perhaps, not without reason.

As suggested and justified by D. Sydykbekova, three positions are applicable to the text: the position of author (the position of Creator), the position of the character, and the

position of the reader (or external position). For example, it is possible, to apply this triad to a city: the position of an architect, a resident, and a tourist (or, if time shift is allowed – an archaeologist). If we consider history as a text that has its Creator, it becomes apparent that to play a role of the same character, it often selects a few individuals (more often two), and then choose the most appropriate one.

Robert Louis Stevenson invites the reader to take part in a very unusual experiment: he metonymically combines metaphorically Good and Evil-like persons in one person. The thought of Jean Baudrillard's idea that today metonymy makes its way through the ruins of metaphor is automatically recalled. Remarkably, the basis of Baudrillard's idea originated not "today", but in the distant "yesterday".

The simplest interpretation of a symbol is that it replaces a symbolized object. The author gives the symbol meaning, connecting it in the reader's mind with a feeling, a thought, after all.

But, as noted by Olga Andreyeva, there is symbolism of another kind. The symbolism in which biographical experience becomes a part of modern history and a symbol is bound neither to a state, nor a feeling, nor a thought, nor something much bigger. These symbols are dictated. They are chosen by history. Authors may only honestly submit a form, but meaning, if it comes, will come independently.

When the architect Trezzini was building Petropavlovskaya Fortress, it is unlikely he intended to impersonate something specifically Russian in it. Just a very flat place. Not less flat Amsterdam had to be tied to it. What Trezzini actually did, secretly suspecting that real Amsterdam would not turn out. Something else would turn out, but what? At that time, not only Trezzini did not know about it, but so did Tsar Peter and the country. Well, and then things began to take off. While Petersburg was acquiring pretty Rastrelli's, Petropavlovka kept the memory of royal coups, silent suffocation of unwanted heirs, the Decembrists. Freedom, Griboyedov, Pushkin. Once, all guessed that Russia and Petropavlovka had lived together one strange and terrible life and come to symbolize one another. Trezzini mysteriously built not just a fortress, but foresaw something what then was called the country. (5)

Hyde is quite expressible. But why is he clear? Is it because oblique lines in the figure proposed by V.V. Nabokov are drawn in the soul of each of us?

In his paper on *The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor* V. Rozanov supposed and explained with these (so to say) "oblique lines" that the semantic perception of evil portrayed on the stage is quite clear, and we can feel if the artist who plays Othello is false. And how do we know it? None of us (hopefully) has strangled their girlfriend, but we can feel that Othello does it "wrong".

It appears that V. Rozanov was wrong – the taste is not based on competition with the "personal imagination", and even more so – with the personal memory.

But according to Carl-Gustav Jung, Hyde has something in common with the structure of our psyche.

And it only remains for us to marvel at how wonderfully Stevenson discerned one of the essential (according to Jung) sides of our psyche: the Shadow.

In dream often comes a stranger of the same sex as the individual who sees the dream. For example, this stranger is a thief. The stranger seemed angry, aroused hostility in the individual. The individual did not realize that part of his personality, did not accept it. However, it existed and was active. Other people knew about it, pointed at it, reacted to it, and reproached the individual for unpleasant behavior. He thought that people did not understand him, and

sometimes he lost his temper trying to justify himself. In the dream, this situation is played by roles, an unknown part of himself appears before the individual, but he did not see that the dream had to do with his personality. The shadow prevents the individual from seeing it as a hidden aspect of self-consciousness, but, if a conscious acceptance of it takes place, life may change unexpectedly. Nobody can see one's shadow without considerable mental effort. To recognize it means to see the dark side of one's own personality as present and real ... its nature is emotional ... by the way, emotion is not something that an individual does, but what happens to him ... The main difficulty in getting acquainted with one's shadow is that it is closely connected with the projections that are, being unconscious, not perceived by man, and this leads to the fact that he begins to blame someone else.

Projections, "Jung continues", transform the world the individual lives in into a model of his own but unconscious self. (2)

Here's how Jekyll perceives the model.

There was something strange in my sensations, something indescribably new and, from its very novelty, incredibly sweet. I felt younger, lighter, happier in body; within I was conscious of a heady recklessness, a current of disordered sensual images running like a millrace in my fancy, a solution of the bonds of obligation, an unknown but not an innocent freedom of the soul. I knew myself, at the first breath of this new life, to be more wicked, tenfold more wicked, sold a slave to my original evil; and the thought, in that moment, braced and delighted me like wine. I stretched out my hands, exulting in the freshness of these sensations; and in the act, I was suddenly aware that I had lost in stature.... Even as good shone upon the countenance of the one, evil was written broadly and plainly on the face of the other. And yet when I looked upon that ugly idol in the glass, I was conscious of no repugnance, rather of a leap of welcome. This, too, was myself. It seemed natural and human. In my eyes it bore a livelier image of the spirit, it seemed more express and single, than the imperfect and divided countenance I had been hitherto accustomed to call mine. And in so far I was doubtless right. (10)

It is quite possible that Stevenson mentally turned to the idea of searching possible images that symbolize Good and Evil. After all, the process of word selection involves (or even precedes) their combination in semantic lines running through the text. The selection occurs in the space of rather similar lexical meanings and is close to metaphor, and the combination is reflected in the complexity of lexical items and is close to metonymy.

Hence several conclusions follow:

- Consciousness is what Others expect of me.
- Unconscious is what the Self hides from Others.
- Ego is a system of hypotheses about the Self and Others.

Ego's structure hides something from others because the hidden represents Unbewußtheit, Id, a spring of Ego mechanism. Without it Ego doesn't work. If we metaphorically depict psyche as a clock, then consciousness is a clock dial hiding the mechanism that moves hands. A Johari window includes the clock dial, what others can see on it, what they can't see on it, and what I can't see, though this invisible (unconscious) works.

Body and soul also work under this principle. Not without reason is it dark in body. And propaedeutics begins with what is visible – rash, pupils-dilated, temperature reading in the thermometer (though use of a thermometer is an attempt to look inside, and it is not without reason that a thermometer is put in the mouth in western medicine).

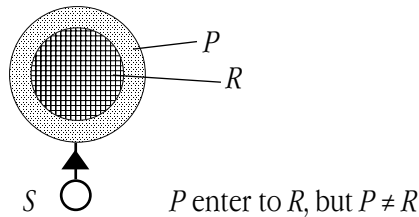
That is, the Will shifting up forms Intelligence, shifting down – Behavior, and this movement creates the Self, which shifts to the behavior (this is the explicit Self) or a shift of thought to the implicit Self.

Hence it is clear that focal points occur as points of contacts of the Self translated into the routes of conduct, drawn along cognitive maps.

It is clear that machines, which turn fears into reality, express the very essence of our hypotheses about ourselves in the refraction of consciousness, which contains hypotheses about the expectations of Others.

Perhaps, the reader will find schematization proposed by Nabokov a manifestation of dilettantism, but it is not. Let us turn to the researcher, whose professionalism is beyond doubt – J. Searle. (9). I mean, his scheme of indirect act (where $S \rightarrow$ is the subjective expression “S is P”):

Indirect speech act. The speaker has in mind what he said, but he also has in mind something more. Thus the meaning of speech includes the meaning of sentence, but goes beyond its limits:



Actually, this is a schematic expression of the concept of *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, where Stevenson had in mind exactly what he said, but also “something more”.

It lies in the fact that the Shadow is an integral part of human psyche (according to Jung).

This also applies to advertising – a hypothesis regarding expectations of Others because my Self shifted the Self (partially) into a service or a product.

We shall compare with I. Weiss’ – a woman is goods and a seller, she is an advertisement of a possible (expected, desirable) service, the product of which is children. In the interpretation of F. Paul, coherent concept of right needs reassessment, since the universal law is clear: the rights of the higher exceed the rights of the lower, just as a fluorine atom displaces oxygen atoms from the substance. But is it fair?

Anyway, this has been happening for a long time – if, of course, we can consider this an answer.

Only one thing is beyond doubt: the whole system of classes, privileges, and laws pursues a certain goal, and this goal is the production of a product with unique properties. One can not get it in the short term, the need for it can not be completely satisfied, and there must be a market. This product is children.

Note: Nabokov delivered lectures at Cornell University in 1951-1958. They were published in 1980, and the chapter from Searle’s book, to which I refer – in 1979. Thus, the given figures are completely independent of each other.

It is natural to assume that an answer to the question that particularly occupied Nabokov “Why, in fact, there were no female characters in Dr. Jekyll?” is hidden here. Perhaps, because Stevenson, without realizing it, metonymically combined in the characters of his novel the one who creates with the one who’s created.

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Пути к исследованию смысла (Р. О. Якобсон vs. В. В. Набоков)

Задача, поставленная в этой статье, состоит в том, чтобы сопоставить различные модели выражения смысла в текстах. Суть вопроса состоит в том, что теория позволяет дополнить речевые выражения смысла «неотменимой реальностью зримого», говоря словами Джойса. Напомню, что «теоретиками» называли в античной Греции «внимательно всматривающихся» зрителей спортивных соревнований, а «теория» помогала этим зрителям предвидеть их результаты более точно, чем спортсменам-участникам. Таким образом, корни обоих общепотребительных научных терминов тоже связаны с «реальностью зримого».

Когда в 1948 году В. В. Набокова приглашали в Корнеллский университет читать курс литературы, Р. О. Якобсон, в ту пору уже всемирно признанный лингвист, высказался против этой кандидатуры. Ему возразили, что Набоков – крупный писатель, на что Якобсон ответил метафорически: «Слон – самое крупное животное, но его не приглашают читать зоологию».

Однако, «всякое соревнование хромает», как говорят немцы, и Набоков был приглашен.