

Catalectics of V.V.Nabokov's Classical Verse in the Context of Russian Poetic Tradition*

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Abstract. The article is devoted to the problem of identifying the specificity of the verse of the Russian-language poetry of V.V. Nabokov in the context of the Russian literary verse of the XVIII–XX centuries. For the first time in modern literary criticism, the poet's clause repertoire is investigated: on the basis of the complete corpus of all currently available texts by Nabokov, the ratio of clause variants of classical poetic dimensions is examined. It is shown that the proportions of catalectic, akatalectic and hypercatalectic forms in the poet's work are not typical for any of the historical eras of the development of Russian literary verse. The results of the study cast doubt on the thesis about the conservatism of Nabokov as a poet, which has become firmly established in poetry, and testify to the experimental nature of his work.

Keywords: V. V. Nabokov; Russian verse of the XX century; metric of Russian verse; catalectics of Russian verse; quantitative methods of poetry.

Out of the field of vision of the researchers of V.V.Nabokov's verse to the present time remains such an important structural factor as the verse endings. This is partly due to the fact that in Russian syllabotomics the foot is not a real, but a conditional measure of verse; hence the generally accepted idea of the optional role of endings, therefore “the division of rhythmic

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endings into catalectic, akatalectic and hypercatalectic for Russian verse is only a terminological fiction" [6: 66]. It is no coincidence that J. Smith, considering in his article on the Russian-language verse of Nabokov the poet's rhyme, completely neglects the clause forms [see: 3: 109-111]. At the same time, given the fact that almost 96% of the author's poetic heritage is written in classical poetic meters, the nature of the correlation between the meter and the ending is, in our opinion, of particular interest.

The material for the statistical description was all currently available poetic texts by Nabokov (578 works, 18470 lines of poetry, among which 513 works, 17703 lines written in classical sizes). Table 1 presents the statistical data on the distribution of akatalectic (*A*), catalectic (*C*) and hypercatalectic (*D*) forms in different meters near Nabokov. For comparison, the average statistical data for Russian verse of the XVIII - early XXI centuries are given in parentheses. [5: 254].

Table 1. The ratio of akatalectic, catalectic and hypercatalectic forms in classical poetic meters (in %)

	Horey	Iamb	Dactyl	Amphibrach	Anapaest
<i>A</i>	48.6 (45.8)	43.1 (48.9)	4.2 (13.0)	39.7 (46.7)	49.7 (46.4)
<i>C</i>	48.7 (44.9)	–	95.8 (84.2)	53.6 (47.5)	–
<i>D</i>	2.7 (9.3)	56.9 (51.1)	no (2.8)	6.6 (5.8)	50.3 (53.6)

As you can see, the contrast between the data on the verse of Nabokov and the average data on the Russian verse is obvious, although for each of the classical meters it is specific. So, in the choreic sizes, the difference in the proportions between the *A* and *C* endings in Nabokov is actually reduced to zero, which is not surprising, since the proportion of choreic texts in the poet is extremely insignificant, but the statistically significant decrease in the *G* endings (by 6.6%) is symptomatic. And the point is not even that the poet prefers to use exclusively male (*m*) and female (*f*) endings in chorea. Dactylic (*d*) are not only rare with him, but as part of unusual patterns of verse - as separate inclusions in texts written by a free and multi-foot chorea (see: "Dark blue wallpaper ...", "Ladder" ("I hear the ringing of the clock cold and measured ..."), the first link in the polymetric composition" Evening on a vacant lot "). Among Nabokov's poetic models (see about them: [2]), we do not find any of the well-known Russian tradition, such as, for example, the semantically marked 4-foot trochee *dmdm* [1: 19–32].

In iambic scales, where *A* and *G* are traditionally balanced, the poet perceptibly prefers the *f* endings, which generally prevail over the *m* in his verse, but also uses *d* and even

hyperdactylic (*h*) endings. And here, just as in chorea, *d* and *h* endings - as a rule - are found in the composition of the free, uneven iambic, transitional metric forms. Only in two poems does Nabokov refer to the model marked by the symbolist tradition - the 4-foot iamba *dmdm* [see: 1: 33–49] ("First Love" and "Everything from which it shrinks...").

The specificity of the poet's strategy is even more indicative on the example of three-syllables. It is obvious that *A* dactyl is not found so often in Russian poetry (in 13% of texts), it is no coincidence that M.L. Gasparov calls him "a loser size" [1: 176]. Significant in this case is not only the fact that the share of *d* endings in Nabokov is sharply reduced in comparison with the average statistical data on Russian verse, but also the complete absence of *h* endings. Rare *d* endings are found in Nabokov's composition of polymetric structures and free dactyl as separate inclusions. In amphibrachia, where the shares of *m* and *f* endings in Russian classical verse are approximately equal, that is, $A \approx C$, in Nabokov we observe a sharp redistribution of priorities: *m* endings are found almost 14% more often than *f* (and this despite the general predominance of *f* endings in verse by the author). Finally, in the anapesta, the statistically significant predominance of *G* over *A*, characteristic of Russian poetry, is replaced by their almost absolute equality in Nabokov.

The prevailing idea of the conservatism of Nabokov's verse [see: 3; 4; et al.] is resolutely refuted not only by the variety of models he used (structures that imply a specific combination of poetic size, stanza structure, the order of alternation of rhymes and endings) [see: 2], but also by comparative and comparative data on different stages of the development of Russian verse and different preferences for *A*, *K* and *G* forms. Table 2 shows statistical data for the verse of the XVIII, XIX, the end of the XIX - the first half of the XX, the second half of the XX - the beginning of the XXI centuries. [5: 254], as well as the complete body of Nabokov's classic verse.

Table 2. Historical evolution of the catalectics of Russian verse and verse by V.V.Nabokov (in%)

	XVIII century	XIX century	end of XIX — I half of XX century	II half XX — early XXI century	Nabokov
<i>A</i>	47.7	47.7	46.6	45.2	43.0
<i>C</i>	3.8	8.7	18.5	15.3	6.5
<i>G</i>	48.5	44.7	34.9	39.5	50.5
<i>C + G</i>	52.3	53.4	53.4	54.8	57.0

In general, Russian verse is characterized by the highlighting of the end of the line of verses: this happens even more often than in every second line of poetry due to the use of *C* (truncated) or *G* (additional) syllables, which does not allow leveling the verse vertical (merging neighboring verses into a single metric -rhythmic series). At the same time, the priorities in the methods of marking the verse series are historically changing. So, for example, if the *A* forms remain practically at the same level for three centuries, decreasing by 2.5% only in the second half of the XX - early XXI centuries, then the ratio of *C* and *G* fluctuates within tangible and statistically significant limits. In the XVIII century, the share of *C* was extremely small, but then it increased by the era of the Silver Age by almost 4.5 times; and on the contrary, the share of the *G* verse at the beginning of the XX century decreases by almost a third, again slightly increasing in the second half of the XX - beginning of the XXI centuries.

We see a picture incomparable with any of the epochs in Nabokov. Despite the generally accepted ideas about the "literary conservatism" of the poet's verse, his clause preferences are obviously not comparable with any of the historical eras. Thus, endings contrasting with anacrusis are 14% more frequent in Nabokov's work than "leveling" ones; in addition, such a high proportion of *G* and a low proportion of *C* does not allow us to correlate his verse with any of the indicated eras.

The reasons for this obvious contrast are explained, in our opinion, by the following circumstances. In contrast to the ancient and a number of new European traditions of syllabic verse, in Russian syllabotonic, catalectic acts as a rhythmic, rather than metric, parameter of verse. But it was precisely the searches and conscious experiments in the field of rhythm that especially interested Nabokov, who in his youth was strongly influenced by A. Bely's articles on the rhythm of the 4-foot iambic, published in the collection "Symbolism". Thus, the unusual priorities in the choice of verse endings are on a par with the unusual rhythmic forms of the 4-foot iambic ("Wrong iambic", "Easter", "Laughing paint, laughing line..." and many others), trisyllables with variable anacrusis, complex logaedic structures, micropolymetry and summary forms.

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