

DOI: 10.22363/2312-9220-2025-30-2-281-288

EDN: JBUCZV

UDC 821.111(73).09

Research article / Научная статья

The Role of Architectonics in the Novel-Puzzle *Trust* by Hernan Diaz

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Abstract. The architectonics of the novel *Trust* by a contemporary American writer Hernan Diaz is examined, its role in explicating the authorial intent, presenting different points of view, defining vectors of interpretation. The purpose of the article is to demonstrate the novel's architectonics significance in developing the author's image of the depicted aspect of reality. The novelty of the work is determined by its appeal to the problem of relation between the architectonics of a literary work and its narrative strategies – genre characteristics, the type of narration and narrator, the narrative style. The research material is also new, as it has not yet become a subject of study in Russian literary criticism. The introduction of the article offers a review of theoretical literature on the issues of architectonics of a literary work, its functions and constituent elements, and provides a distinction between the concepts of 'architectonics' and 'composition'. The discussion section presents the analyses of H. Diaz's novel, which has allowed to conclude that its architectonics plays a significant role in creating a unique authorial outlook, ensuring the aesthetic integrity of the text, implementing internal connections and relations between individual elements of the novel, primarily due to specific explication and alternation of points of view.

Keywords: architectonics of a literary work, novel-puzzle, delegated narration, focalization, a switching point of view, unreliable narrator, effect of defeated expectancy, H. Diaz

Author's contribution. Development of the idea, manuscript writing and editing – Galina I. Lushnikova; research analysis & data collection – Tatiana Yu. Osadchaia. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

Conflicts of interest. The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Article history: submitted May 14, 2024; revised June 20, 2024; accepted September 20, 2024.

For citation: Lushnikova, G.I., & Osadchaia, T.Yu. (2025). The Role of Architectonics in the Novel-Puzzle *Trust* by Hernan Diaz. *RUDN Journal of Studies in Literature and Journalism*, 30(2), 281–288. <http://doi.org/10.22363/2312-9220-2024-30-2-281-288>

Роль архитектуры в романе-конструкторе Э. Диаза «Доверие»

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Аннотация. Рассматривается архитектура романа современного американского писателя Эрнана Диаза «Доверие», ее роль в экспликации авторского замысла, представлении разных точек зрения, определении векторов интерпретации. Цель статьи – демонстрация значимости архитектуры данного романа в формировании авторского образа изображаемого объекта действительности. Новизну работы определяет обращение к проблеме соотношения архитектуры художественного произведения и его нарративных тактик – жанровых характеристик, типа повествования и автора-повествователя, стилистики изложения. Новым является и материал исследования. Во введении предлагается теоретический обзор вопросов архитектуры художественного произведения, ее функций и составляющих элементов, дается разграничение понятий «архитектура» и «композиция». В основном разделе проводится анализ романа Э. Диаза, который позволил заключить, что его архитектура играет существенную роль в создании уникального авторского образа бытия, обеспечении эстетической целостности текста, реализации внутренних связей и соотношения отдельных элементов романа, в первую очередь за счет специфической экспликации и определенного чередования точек зрения.

Ключевые слова: архитектура литературного произведения, роман-головоломка, делегированное повествование, фокусировка, переключение точки зрения, ненадежный рассказчик, эффект обманутого ожидания, Э. Диаз

Вклад авторов. Разработка идеи, написание и редактирование рукописи – Г.И. Лушникова; сбор и анализ исследовательских данных – Т.Ю. Осадчая. Все авторы прочли и одобрили окончательную версию рукописи.

Заявление о конфликте интересов. Авторы заявляют об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

История статьи: поступила в редакцию 14 мая 2024 г.; отрецензирована 20 июля 2024 г.; принята к публикации 20 сентября 2024 г.

Для цитирования: Лушникова Г.И., Осадчая Т.Ю. Роль архитектуры в романе-конструкторе Э. Диаза «Доверие» // Вестник Российского университета дружбы народов. Серия: Литературоведение. Журналистика. 2025. Т. 30. № 2. С. 281–288. <http://doi.org/10.22363/2312-9220-2025-30-2-281-288>

Introduction

In contemporary literary studies the notion of architectonics is viewed differently. According to one approach architectonics and composition are regarded synonyms, according to another – architectonics is one of the aspects of composition. Within the third point of view, it is believed that these notions are radically different and should be differentiated.

M.M. Bakhtin's standpoint in this question is thought to be the most well-founded. He defines architectonics of the work of fiction as the writer's esthetic

attitude towards the events of reality, as the process of selecting and ordering of separate segments of this reality and creating an esthetic object on its basis: "... a form of a novel regulating an order of words in the text, having become the expression of the author's attitude, creates an architectonic form which orders and concludes an event irrespective of the unique and always open event of reality" (Bakhtin, 1975, p. 69). M.M. Bakhtin underlines the fact that fragmentary and disconnected parts of fiction are connected architectonically only in the case when they are united by the author's message, by the unity of meaning. According to the scholar, an architectonic form determines the choice of a compositional one (Bakhtin, 1975, p. 21). It means that creation of architectonics in fiction as an esthetic image of reality reflected in the author's mind should precede the choice of the work's composition. In other words, if composition is constructed on the basis of a text of fiction, its architectonics is supposed to create its esthetic object (Berdnik, 2014, p. 8).

We fully support the definition given by E. S. Berdnik: "... architectonics is a fragmentary set (while composition is fractionary) acquiring its wholeness in the result of the reader's activity interworking with the aspect of immanence" (Berdnik, 2014, p. 10). It is necessary to add that architectonics serves as a main tool for arranging the author's accents; forms the uniqueness of the work and recreates the atmosphere of the world depicted in the work.

The reader, in turn, forms their personal understanding of the relationship between the parts and the whole, and also creates their own image of the object of reality depicted in the work, in other words, an aesthetic object: "... direct cognition of the aesthetic object occurs at the moment the recipient creates their version of the author's work, at the moment of its creative perception" (Berdnik, 2014, p. 9). It can also be argued that the architectonics of the work is a key link in the co-creation of the author and the reader: "... the architectonic techniques of the work are means of 'collaboration' with the reader" (Sadchenko, 2020, p. 170).

If we consider architectonics in a narrow sense, it is necessary to note that in addition to the functions of creating an aesthetic image of being, building an aesthetic integrity of an artistic text, architectonics determines internal connections and relationships of individual elements of a work, and the author's narrative strategies.

It should be particularly emphasized that switching of points of view, the way they are explicated and alternated in the text, is a separate aspect of architectonics of the work and is the key to its interpretation: "... a point of view is a separate perspective of presenting the artistic world in the text and a necessary condition of discourse. The linguistic forms of the point of view and dynamic patterns of their alternation in the artistic text are not simply the keys to an adequate interpretation of the world of story, <...> they become the main factor in comprehending this world as a harmonious whole" (Tataru, 2009, pp. 8–9).

The novel *Trust* written by a contemporary American writer Hernan Diaz (Diaz, 2022) has been used as the material for practical study of this issue. It was published

in 2022, was awarded by Pulitzer Prize in 2023 and in the same year was translated into Russian.

The interest of researches in studying architectonics of a work of art, its main functions and role in the implementation of the author's ideas determine the relevance of this study. The novelty of the work is determined by the fact that architectonics of a literary text is considered in connection with the author's narrative tasks, the main one of which is presenting various points of view. The material of the study is also new, since the work of H. Diaz has not yet become the subject of study in Russian literary criticism. The purpose of the article is to prove the significance of architectonics of this novel as the key factor of the unique author's image of the depicted object of reality.

Results and Discussion

The novel *Trust* by H. Diaz can be called a novel-constructor, as it is a text in which separate works of literature or their large fragments are used as structural components of a secondary text (Matekhina, 2016, p. 85). Architectonics of the novel under study is similar to a kind of verbal-artistic constructor, firstly, due to the fact that its individual parts can be called primary texts, which are united by the author's concept and connected to each other in a special way, and the entire novel is a secondary text that generates its own meanings. The novel contains four parts, in fact four independent books each of them has its own title and its own fictional narrator: Book One. *Bonds. Harold Vanner*; Book Two. *My Life. Andrew Bevel*; Book Three. *A Memoir, Remembered. Ida Partenza*; Book Four. *Futures. Mildred Bevel*.

The second reason why we may regard the novel *Trust* as a constructor is the fact that all its books tell us about the same characters and the same events which are presented by different narrators. So, the reader compares these stories, puts them together into a whole to create their own idea of characters and events, just as separate building elements are put together to create some kind of structure.

According to foreign scholars Book One of the novel under study is a novel within a novel while subsequent ones are a kind of a commentary on it. Such architectonics allows the author, using the technique of metanarrative, to comment on the status and degree of the novel's influence on the public worldview and its attitude to the key concepts of socio-economic development of contemporary society: "Diaz's *Trust* employs a metafictional structure that offers a contemporary commentary on, and re-imagining of, the symbolic content and status of the modern novel in its engagements with capitalism, liberalism, finance, and law" (Kelly, p. 492).

It is of special interest to consider each element – each part (book) – in relation to the whole work which is a complex structure distinguished by its narrative strategies, the most essential of which being genre characteristics, narrative style, types of narration and narrator.

The genre of the novel is quite difficult to define, since it contains elements of several genres. It can be said that it is an industrial novel, since it tells in detail about

economic and financial situations, and a family novel, since it pays much attention to family relationships, and a political novel, which reveals various aspects of US policy in the international arena, in domestic affairs, in the financial and labor market. As for the books that make up the novel, it should be said that each of them is written in its own genre: biography, autobiography, memoirs, diary.

The narrative strategies and style of narration in each book also differ from each other. Book One is written in a manner that claims to be objective, strictly and consistently presents the facts of the life of its protagonist, Benjamin Rusk. One cannot fail to note the satirical tone of the narrative, aimed primarily at the financial market and economic system behind it: “yet the omniscient narrative voice of ‘Bonds’ has a satiric tone, simultaneously giving voice to Benjamin’s naturalization of the market and mocking this absurdity” (Vint, 2023, p. 1207). The narrative is replete with details of Rusk’s financial activities, the analysis of the stages and reasons for his dizzying career. The author-narrator (Harold Vanner) characterizes his personality, behavioral characteristics, relationships with others – relatives, wife, partners. Direct assessments are not given, but the descriptions of the actions clearly show the negative attitude of the narrator towards his personage. The style of this book corresponds to the genre of biography, although the names of real people have been changed, which we learn from the subsequent books of the novel.

The second book, which is a kind of response to the first one, is written from the point of view of its protagonist in the form of autobiography and has a different narrative style. It has a confessional character, its author-narrator reveals his feelings and emotions. The biography in the first book and the autobiography in the second are presented differently: the names of the main characters, some facts are also different and, most importantly, the events’ interpretation and the characters’ assessment differ significantly. Another feature of the second book is that it looks like a draft, imitates the outlines of a planned but unfinished book. Why the text is presented in this form, the reader will learn from the next book of the novel.

The third book is also written in the first person, and is narrated by a character who appears in the novel for the first time. This is Ida Partenza, a secretary-typist who, as the reader learns, took down the Bevel’s autobiography from dictation. This book is called a memoir and, in accordance with this genre, is written in a subjective manner, conveying the narrator’s personal attitude towards the characters and events. Their collaboration suddenly ends due to Bevel’s unexpected death, which throws light on the nature of the narrative of the previous, unfinished second book of the novel.

The fourth book, the shortest of all, is written in the form of a diary of the wife of the protagonist of the previous three books. The author of the novel gives the floor to a new narrator and creates the text similar to real notes made by a woman suffering from an incurable illness and realizing the nearness of the end of her life. Her grave condition affects the style of narration, which is characterized by chaotic presentation, sudden transitions from one topic to another.

Of greatest interest, in our opinion, is the change of the type of fictional author-narrator in each book of the novel. In literary criticism, this type of narration

is called delegated, the type of narrator – unreliable, and the change of voices in the same work is defined as switching points of view (angles, focuses), or a variable focalization. These phenomena are quite common in fiction, especially in contemporary literature. We offer just a few examples of well-known works of this kind: the novel *Talking It Over* by the English writer J. Barnes, in which each chapter is written from a different character perspective; the novel *Flipped* by the American writer, V. Van Draanen, where the same events are first presented from one main character's viewpoint, and then from another's; the novel *Gone Girl* by the American writer G. Flynn, in which different narrators offer totally opposed interpretations of what is happening.

In H. Diaz's novel focalization is rather unusual, it differs from the given above and many other examples. All the narrators in this novel are unreliable. According to the principles of documentary fiction, which the author imitates (biography, autobiography, memoirs, diary), the facts in each book of the novel are presented as the narrator wants them to look: something is depicted truthfully, reliably, something is distorted, something is hidden, something is added, something is borrowed from other stories. Each subsequent book sheds light on what is presented, although it does not completely debunk the veracity of the previous book version. All the books of the novel give rise to the defeated expectancy effect, the strongest impact of which is felt in the fourth book. The difference in the facts' presentation allows the reader to choose the narrator to trust. The word 'trust' in this context has special significance, since this word is the title of the novel – *Trust*. The author thereby highlights and emphasizes the main objective of his work – to show the importance of choosing the right person to trust, of believing their interpretation of events, the difficulty of proving someone's perception of reality to be adequate. In his work the author shows that there are always different options for seeing and interpreting reality. He demonstrates that a person is free to choose the facts they want to interpret and evaluate, some facts they remember, some facts they choose to erase from memory, some facts they think fit to present in a different light.

Despite the above-mentioned distinctive features of each book (part) of the novel, they are closely connected with each other by such components as plot, themes, problems, as well as characters (with some exceptions), time and place of the events described.

Common to all the books of the novel is first of all its central plot, unfolding around the life of an outstanding American financier, who for many years, both in favorable and critical political and economic circumstances, thanks to brilliant financial operations, remained the richest and most influential person in the country and even the world. Equally important in the plot of the entire novel and each of its books is the line of relationships between the main character and his wife. Minor plots are subordinate to the main one, directly or indirectly interact with it.

Secondly, in each book, regardless of the narrator, events interpretation, and characters images, the author examines common themes. There are quite a lot of them and it is difficult to say which of them is most important. The theme of relationships between parents and children, between spouses is explored quite deeply.

In this regard, the problem of loneliness is raised, the author shows that people can feel lonely even in seemingly happy families, where people experience a so-called ‘loneliness together’.

Other themes also occupy a significant place in the novel, for example, the role and place of women in the society of the early twentieth century. This theme is raised in the description of the financier’s wife and secretary fates (all books of the novel). The themes of rapid development of business and financial relations (the first and second books), social inequality, marginal political movements, situation of emigrants (the third book) are also important.

Thirdly, the same characters, act in all four books of the novel, the main ones being the married couple (repeatedly mentioned above). In the third book, a new character, Ida Partenza and several secondary characters appear. They are involved in additional plot lines that help to reveal the central themes of the novel. But, despite the new character, the images of the novel’s main characters remain in the foreground. The author needs Ida to present another point of view, to introduce another observer and narrator.

The connection between the books of the novel is also achieved through internal citation –the first book is repeatedly mentioned in the second and third books, it is either referred to or criticized; the facts presented in it are either agreed with or refuted. The descriptions of episodes and characters from the first book are repeated in other books with a certain shift in points of view.

Conclusion

The presented observations allow us to draw the following conclusions. The architectonics of H. Diaz’s novel *Trust* performs the following functions: creating a unique author’s outlook; ensuring an aesthetic integrity of the text; implementing internal connections and relationships between individual elements of the novel, primarily due to the specific explication and certain alternation of points of view.

In the H. Diaz’s novel, the reader is offered stories about the same events, the same people, which differ significantly in their narrative characteristics. This difference is realized by introducing different narrators, each of whom turns out to be unreliable. The change of focalization creates a defeated expectancy effect which is enhanced by special architectonics of the work: the novel’s parts are arranged in such a way that each subsequent book undermines trust in the first, changing its perception and forming an increasingly complex image of the reality depicted.

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