

## WILL THE SNAIL MAKE ITS WAY? Symbolism in Virginia Woolf's 'Kew Gardens'

*Olga Vorobyova*

*Kyiv National Linguistic University, Ukraine*

The art of stylistics, in its both instrumental and epistemological dimensions, involves as the key conceptual and aesthetic personages two ubiquitous literary phenomena — imagery and symbolism. While imagery has been closely scrutinized through the cognitive lens, cognitive underpinning of symbolism still remains a modestly explored territory. A breakthrough in this area has been made by Terrence Deacon (2006) who suggested a three-layered model of symbolic relations, in which the symbolic layer is related to the field of referents not directly but via a virtually constructed semantic space (Deacon 2006, 35). Extrapolating this model on a literary text, here Virginia Woolf's 'Kew Gardens' (Woolf 1972, 28-36), as a web of mental spaces mediated by symbolic representations (here by *snail* and *butterfly*), one can trace an in-built iconic isomorphism between these symbols, in their physical shape and range of meanings, and the composition of the short story. The latter is arranged as a double spiral scrolling around a flower-bed as a space-builder in the contradistinction to "*a curiously irregular movement not unlike that of white and blue butterflies*" (Woolf 1972, 28-29) of men and women strolling past the oval-shaped flower-bed as a compositional reference point. Regarding the semantic space of 'Kew Gardens' from the overall perspective of Woolf's idiosyncratic symbolism with its entomological (*snail, butterfly, fly*), aquatic (*waves, fin, liquid thoughts*), optical (*light* with its refractions), acoustic (including *silence*) and other dominants, we can speak of her particular sensory symbolism as part of a wider symbolic field of modernist literature. All this adds a few more dimensions to the model of symbolic infrastructure suggested by Deacon — from (i) textual symbols to (ii) symbolic chains of mental spaces and other discursive constructs to (iii) individual or collective intertextual symbolically charged domains and further to (iv) ethnospecific and/or universal symbolic matrices that emotionally resonate with our perception of being.

### References

- Deacon T.* (2006). The aesthetic faculty // *The Artful Mind: Cognitive Science and the Riddle of Human Creativity* / Ed. by Mark Turner. — Oxford etc.: Oxford University Press. — P. 21-53.
- Woolf V.* (1972). *A Haunted House and Other Short Stories*. — San Diego, etc.: A Harvest Book, Harcourt.