

THE NABOKOVIAN

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## NEWS

by Stephen Jan Parker

Virtually all of the news to be reported is Centenary related. A list, surely incomplete, of past and future events includes:

January 14-17. "International Vladimir Nabokov Seminar." Tallin, Estonia. Sponsored by the Departments of Philology of the Tallin Pedagogical Institute and of Tartu University.

January 19-late April. Munich Centenary Celebrations. Featuring the traveling exhibit of Nabokoviana by Daniella Rippl.

March 12-14. "1799, 1899, 1999: Pushkin, Nabokov and Intertextuality.." A Pushkin and Nabokov Centenary Conference. Wesleyan College, Middleton, CT.

Early April. "The Event." A literature-art exhibit devoted to Nabokov's works at the Institute of the History of Material Culture, Ekaterinburg, Russia.

April 5-May 13. "Nabokov on Film." A five-week film series of Nabokov's works adapted to the screen. Cornell University, Ithaca, NY.

April 10-23. Nabokov Gala Festival at the Nabokov Foundation, St. Petersburg and at the Nabokov estates of Rozhdestveno, Vyra, and Batovo.

April 15. "Nabokov. A Centenary Celebration." Town Hall, New York City. Sponsored by PEN American Center and *The New Yorker*, and co-sponsored by the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, the University of Kansas, in collaboration with Vintage Books. Hosted by David

Remnick, editor of *The New Yorker*, with reflections and tributes by Martin Amis, Alfred Appel, Brian Boyd, Richard Ford, Elizabeth Hardwick, Dmitri Nabokov, Joyce Carol Oates, Michael Scammell, and Stacy Schiff.

April 15-18. "Alexander Pushkin and Vladimir Nabokov." International Conference sponsored by the Institute of Russian Literature of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Pushkin House), the Pushkin Commission of the Russian Academy of Sciences, and the Nabokov Foundation. St. Petersburg, Russia.

April 19-21. "Vladimir Nabokov in Russian and World Literature." Nabokov Centennial International Conference. Gorki Institute of World Literature, Russian Academy of Science, Moscow.

April 21. "Revised Evidence: Vladimir Nabokov's Inscriptions, Annotations, Corrections, and Butterfly Descriptions." Installation of first editions by Vladimir Nabokov inscribed to his wife. At the offices of Glenn Horowitz Bookseller, New York City.

April 23. Nabokov celebration and exhibit at the Montreux Palace Hotel, Switzerland; unveiling of Filipp Rukavishnikov's bronzed sculpture of Nabokov. Also a Nabokov exhibit at the Montreux municipal museum.

April 23-August 21. "Nabokov Under Glass: Celebrating a Hundred Years." New York Public Library Exhibit.

April 23. Introducing Nabokov to China; a lecture on Nabokov by Vladimir Mylnikov at Xiamen University in China.

April 23-24. "A Celebration of the Hundredth Birthday of Vladimir Nabokov—Creative Writer, Entomologist and Founder of the Wellesley College Russian Department." Wellesley College, Boston, MA.

April 29. A Nabokov centennial celebration at the Russian Community House, Jerusalem, Israel.

May 4-June 2. "Vladimir Nabokov: An Exhibition Marking the Centenary of his Birth." Houghton Library, Harvard University, Boston, MA.

May 8. A Nabokov Centenary Symposium, marking the first meeting of the Japanese Nabokov Society, Tokyo University.

May 27-30. Nabokov centenary panel at the annual meeting of the American Literature Association (ALA), Baltimore, MD.

June 12. "Pushkin 200 - Nabokov 100." A gala celebration at Carnegie Hall, New York City. Presented by the American University in Moscow in cooperation with the Embassy of the Russian Federation in Washington and the Consulate General of the Russian Federation in New York.

July 6-9. "Nabokov at the Crossroads," Vladimir Nabokov International Centennial Conference, Cambridge University, England.

November 20. Nabokov centenary panel at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, St. Louis, MO.

December 27- 30. Nabokov centenary panels at the annual meetings of the American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages (AATSEEL) and the Modern Language Association (MLA), Chicago, IL. **NOTE:** Nabokov Centennial Panels I and II will be held back-to-back on the evening of December 27, and will be followed by a Society get-together (supper or snack) at a local restaurant after the panel sessions. All members are invited.

Space constraints and incomplete information limits our coverage of these events at this time. In the coming fall and spring issues we hope to include detailed reports from organizers and participants.

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#### Recently Published Books:

David Andrews. *Aestheticism. Nabokov and LOLITA*. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press.

Sarah Funke. *Vera's Butterflies: First editions by Vladimir Nabokov inscribed to his wife*. New York: Glenn Horowitz Bookseller.

Stacy Schiff. *Vera (Mrs. Vladimir Nabokov)*. New York: Random House.

Maxim Shrayer. *The World of Nabokov's Stories*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Gerard de Vries, ed. *Nabokov-nummer. De Tweede ronde*, Winter 98/99. Amsterdam.

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Our thanks to Ms. Paula Courtney for two decades of irreplaceable assistance in the production of this publication.

St. Petersburg

(Berlin, 26 May 1924)

Come hither, nebulous Leila!<sup>1</sup>  
Forsaken spring, to me return!  
Sails of pale green, sails that will billow,  
the palace gardens will unfurl.

Along their boundary eagles<sup>2</sup> shimmer.  
With lazy murmurs the Neva  
like Lethe flows. An elbow mark  
was left by Pushkin on the granite.<sup>3</sup>

Leila, stop it — that will do,  
stop weeping, O my springtime bygone.  
Just look what a fine fish, light-blue,  
is limned upon that floating signboard.<sup>4</sup>

In Peter's pastel sky all's hushed.  
There's a flotilla of aery vapors,  
and the octagonal wood paviers  
still have their layer of golden dust.<sup>5</sup>

Vladimir Nabokov

Translated by Dmitri Nabokov

Санкт-Петербург

Ко мне, туманная Леила!  
Весна пустынная, назад!  
Бледно-зеленые ветрила  
дворцовый распускает сад.

Орлы мерцают вдоль опушки.  
Нева, лениво шелестя,  
как Лета льется. След локтя  
оставил на граните Пушкин.

Леила, полно, перестань,  
не плачь, весна моя былая.  
На вывеске плавучей —глянь —  
какая рыба голубая.

В петровом бледном небе — штиль,  
флотилия туманов вольных,  
и на торцах восьмиугольных  
все та же золотая пыль.

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> A name of Arabian origin that figures in Persian and other legends, but is used here in a generically romantic sense. As in the Russian, the stress should fall on the i, pronounced e [LONG E IMPOSSIBLE].

<sup>2</sup> Eagle-like ornaments topped the metal fence along one side of the Summer Garden.

<sup>3</sup> Of the parapet on the Neva quay, which the Summer Garden adjoined. See also VN's 1937 lecture/essay "Pushkin or the Real and the Plausible," pub. in English in NYRB, 31 March 1988.

<sup>4</sup> On the Fontanka, a tributary of the Neva that bordered the Summer Garden at right angles to the larger river, fish was sold from permanently moored barges (and kept alive in underwater cages accessible through a rectangular aperture in the boat's deck). The reference here is probably to an advertisement atop such a vessel.

<sup>5</sup> Dry, pulverized horse dung.

This poem is characterized by playful variations of rhyme scheme and line ending: strophes One and Three have a traditional *abab*, *FMFM* structure, while strophe Two has *abba*, *FMMF*, and strophe Four *abba*, *MFFM*. The translation preserves the rhythm of the original, and, where possible, attempts to echo its rhymes.

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## NOTES AND BRIEF COMMENTARIES

by Gennady Barabtarlo

[Submissions should be forwarded to Gennady Barabtarlo at 451 GCB University of Missouri, Columbia, MO 65211, U.S.A., or by fax at (573) 884-8456, or by e-mail at [gragb@showme.missouri.edu](mailto:gragb@showme.missouri.edu) • Deadlines are April 1 and October 1 respectively for the Spring and Fall issues. • Most notes will be sent, anonymously, to at least one reader for review. • If accepted for publication, the piece may be subjected to slight technical corrections. Editorial interpolations are within brackets. • Authors who desire to read proof ought to state so at the time of submission. • Kindly refrain from footnotes; all citations and remarks should be put within the text. • References to Nabokov's English or Englished works should be made either to the first American (or British) edition or to the Vintage collected series. • All Russian quotations must be transliterated and translated.]

### AND A NEARCTIC ZEMBLA

Zembla has fascinated Nabokovians from the time of Mary McCarthy's review of *Pale Fire* in *The New Republic* (4 June 1962 pp 71-77; see also, *Encounter*, Oct 1962) up through comments on an eponymous Rhododendron (Sam Schuman *Nabokovian* #6, 1981 pp 30-31, plus a few more recent postings on the Nabokov Internet forum).

Much of the discussion has concerned Alexander Pope's use of Zembla as a fictional place in his 1733-74 *Essay on Man* (Epistle 2, v) as appropriate in the context of John Shade's identity as a Pope scholar and as a writer in Popean style. In this regard, we should remember that Pope also used Zembla in his 1728 *Dunciad*, and was preceded by Swift's 1704 *Tale of a Tub*. (see Jay Arnold Levine's 1966 commentary on these in *English Literature Handbook History* 39 pp 217-27). To keep the record straight, we must add that Swift used Zembla also in his

1704 *Battle of the Books*; it is also worth pointing out that Pope's first literary use of Zembla was in his 1711 *House of Fame* (line 53), a retelling of Chaucer's work (the latter has an ice mountain, but not the name Zembla), and that he discussed Zembla and his sources in a letter to Richard Caryll dated 21 June 1712 which may interest the curious. The Swiftian connection, as Levine emphasizes, is as interesting as the Pope one; and the fact that Sterne also mentions Zembla in *Tristram Shandy* (vol. 3) is worth remembering: Nabokov clearly liked a double or triple allusion.

Be that as it may, the geographic play involved is even more "Nabokovian". Of course we know of the appearance of the family name as a toponym in that northern Russian land we call Nova Zembla, which likewise will have pleased our author, adding another layer of meaningfulness to the toponym and thus another connection between the world of the novel and the "real" one. But, as he said on a different occasion, there is more! A post on the Internet by Dustin C. Pascoe (22 Mar 1997) warns us properly, "I know well enough what Nabokov thought about any [critical] approach that didn't include maps." (To which we might add, even, or perhaps especially, imaginary and fictional maps—as those familiar with his *Lectures on Literature* well know, and we recall that Kinbote sketched the map of his "royal residence" for Shade.) Further, Nabokov loved to find and make connections between his Russia and his America, as is most evident, of course, in *Ada* with its superimposings of the lepidopterist's Nearctic and Palearctic lands.

If we now turn to earlier Russian maps, we are struck by the fact that the Russians, long interested in the northern parts of America and maps thereof, typically supplied these with Russian toponyms. While today Russian maps of the territory we call Newfoundland label that place with a simple Cyrillic transliteration of its English name (Nyufaundlend), they had called it earlier by the same name they still call that northern Russian territory, *Novaya Zemlya*: See, for example, the 1737

map numbered 76, and labeled Map of America from the School Atlas for Youth in *Atlas of Geographical Discoveries in Siberia and Northwestern America*. Edited by A. V. Vefimov, Moscow: Academy of Sciences, 1964!

Thus Zembla really did exist simultaneously and coincidentally in the old world and the new, ready-made for Nabokov's delight; for, as Priscilla Meyer suggests in *Find What the Sailor Has Hidden*, "Throughout *Pale Fire* Nabokov creates pairings that establish a mirroring relationship between Eastern and Western hemispheres," (p 176) and further, "Nabokov uses the historical Vineland to link Russia, Scandinavia, England, France, and America" (p 75). And we recall Nabokov's fondness for the far north running from the Ultima Thule of *Solus Rex*, through the fact that there was a real Dr John Rae (sic), explorer of those magnetic polar regions near Melville Sound where Humbert later toiled, and for whom Rea Point (again sic) is named and, of course in *Ada*. Those who might wish that Newfoundland had kept its Russian name may take heart from the fact that there is still Nova Zembla Island in Baffin Bay at about 73N North, 74N West, where we might dream of Humbert's passing it on his way to Melville Sound. And I am also happy to report that in the Russian original of *Zembla* there is a Mount Chum he could have noticed.

—John A Rea, University of Kentucky

#### MELVILLE IN PALE FIRE

In a 1966 interview with Alfred Appel, Nabokov, when asked about the great American writers that he admired, replied, "When I was young I liked Poe, and I still love Melville, whom I did not read as a boy" (SO 64). According to Andrew Field, it was through Edmund Wilson's influence that Nabokov grew to respect Melville's writing (VN, *the Life and Art of Vladimir Nabokov*, p. 263), although no mention of Melville is made in the published correspon-

dence of the two. The uses to which Nabokov put Poe in *Lolita* have long been recognized, but references to Melville in Nabokov's works seem strangely absent for a writer whom Nabokov claimed to love. This certainly seems true of *Pale Fire* in which Nabokov names, or alludes to, about forty-five English and American authors, but which has no director reference to Melville or any of his works. But several indirect references do occur. Melville seeps into the text of *Pale Fire* in particularly cunning and hidden ways.

Melville refers to Zembla (or Nova Zembla) in three of his works — *Mardi*, *Redburn*, and *White Jacket* — where its use is the standard on in English and American literature, that is, a way of referring to a very cold place (see *Mardi*, Northwestern-Newberry edition, pp. 479-80; *Redburn*, NN edition, p. 140; *White Jacket*, NN edition, p. 100). [It is impossible to know at this point what editions of Melville Nabokov read therefore, for ease of reference I will usually cite the on-going scholarly edition of Melville published by Northwestern University and the Newberry Library. For three works — *Moby Dick*, *The Confidence Man*, and *Clarel* — I will cite the Hendricks House editions, which were all published before the composition of *Pale Fire* and which Nabokov, if he were seriously interested in reading Melville in the years leading up to that novel, might well have used because of their extensive introductions and annotations.] But references to Zembla are so common in eighteenth and nineteenth century literature in English that a specific Melville connection here is hard to justify. Melville, however, uses a number of rare words that turn up in *Pale Fire*: "parhelia" occurs in Kinbote's Foreword (Vintage paperback edition, 13) and, in its singular form, in *The Confidence Man* (188); "architrove" occurs both in Conmal's "sonnet" (286) and in *Clarel* (3.28.2, p. 386), although Nabokov's use of this word most probably derives out of Pope [but this word is hardly rare and certainly need not come from Pope. G. B.]; the very uncommon "scarf skin" is used in "Pale Fire" (40, 1. 194) and in *Mardi* (507);

finally, "goetic" occurs both in Kinbote's commentary (183) and in a set of pencilled notes that Melville made in the volume of his Shakespeare set containing *King Lear*, quoted in the Hendricks House *Moby Dick* annotations: "not the (black art) Goetic but Theurgic magic" (643) — compare here Kinbote's parallel implicit rejection of black magic in favor of what he calls "blue magic" (289). Finally, *Clarel*, Melville's long narrative poem, contains two passages that link into "pale fire" references. At the end of Part II, the poem's characters see a rainbow, a "counter object," which "showed half spent — / Hovered hand trembled, *paled* away, and — went" (my italics; 2.29.151, 161-2, p. 274). Rainbows are among a number of reflections and deceptions mentioned in the novel (parhelia, iridule, rings around the moon — see 13, 36-7). Moreover, *Clarel's* narrator describes the rainbow as coming from "behind the veil" (1. 150, p. 274), which is echoed in the title of Mrs. Z's article, "The Land Beyond the Veil" (61, 11. 750-1). The second passage from *Clarel* also contains a pale fire:

Distempered! Nor might passion tire,  
Nor *pale* reaction from it quell  
The craze of grief's intolerable *fire*  
Unwearied and unwearable.

(3.1.173-6, p. 281; my italics)

This passage throws an interesting light on "Pale Fire," for through his poem Shade endeavors to make pale the "craze of grief's intolerable fire" that he experiences as a result of Hazel's suicide.

Three of Melville's stories contain links to *Pale Fire*. In "Billy Budd" the narrator contrasts the life of sailors to that of landsmen which is like a chess game: "Life is not a game with the sailor, demanding the long head; no intricate game of chess where few moves are made in straightforwardness, and ends are attained by indirection" (*Shorter Novels of Herman Melville* [Liveright, 1942], p. 278). Shade's perception of the "correlated pattern in the game" of existence (63, 1.813) leads him to the same analogy of a chess game:



there they were, aloof and mute,  
Playing a game of worlds, promoting pawns  
To ivory unicorns and ebon fauns.

(63, 11.818-21)

Melville's 1855 story "Jimmy Rose" is a rewriting of *Timon of Athens* — a wealthy and generous bon vivant in New York City, rose loses all of his money and is consequently rejected by the beneficiaries of his largesse. Like Timon he withdraws into loneliness and what the narrator describes as half-madness. Unlike Shakespeare's character, however, Rose avoids misanthropy, dying a peaceful if poor old man. The story does not contain any direct reference to Shakespeare's play but its rewriting is plain, especially in view of the large number of overt references to the play in the two novels of Melville's that surround the story, *Pierre* (1852) and *The Confidence Man* (1857). *Pierre*'s disillusionment is twice described as his being "timonized" and the notes to the Hendricks House edition comment on the Shakespeare allusion (see 297 and 300). *The Confidence Man* also contains frequent allusions to Timon, also discussed in the commentary (see especially 332). Melville's fascination with what he calls Shakespeare's "dark characters," among whom Timon is explicitly included (see "Hawthorne and His Mosses" in *The Piazza Tales and Other Prose Pieces*, Northwestern/Newberry, p. 224), fits so well with his literary and psychological preoccupations that it is hard to see his purpose in removing the misanthropy and pessimism of the Timon story in favor of a much more benign ending. One can speculate nevertheless that Nabokov's reading of Melville is what stimulated his interest in Shakespeare's play in the first place.

It is Melville's 1856 story, "The Apple-Tree Table, or Original Spiritual Manifestations" that provides the most direct connection with *Pale Fire*, so much so that one can't help but think that Nabokov intended a direct allusion to its parallel situation with Hazel Shade's investigation of the spiritual manifestations in Hentzner's barn. The story, essentially a comic one, concerns the

narrator's investigations of a mysterious ticking sound coming from an apple-tree table that he has recently acquired. His two daughters believe the sound to be "original spiritual manifestations"; the narrator investigates and find that the sound results from a "bug" encased in the wood digging itself free and emerging from the table: "it shone like a glow-worm", a "pale lustre on the table" (*The Piazza Tales and Other Prose Pieces*, NN edition, p. 389). To convince his wife and daughters that this is the explanation for the mysterious sounds, the narrator and the three ladies keep an all-night vigil around the table waiting for a second bug, whose ticking is heard, to emerge. In describing the ensuing events, the narrator "transcribe[s] from memoranda kept during the night" (395). The memoranda begin:

"One o'clock. No sign of the bug.

Ticking continues. Wife getting sleepy."

and concludes after similar entries for two, three, and four o'clock:

"Five o'clock. No sign of the bug.

ticking faint. Myself feeling drowsy. The rest still asleep." (395)

Eventually the second bug emerges "beautiful as a butterfly" (395), convincing the daughters. The story ends with a "scientific" explanation. The parallels are both obvious and striking: sceptical parents hold a late night vigil with believing daughter(s) to investigate a "spiritual manifestation" which takes the form of a "pale light" (*PF* 188) or a "pale lustre" (389), and which is reported in directly quoted "memoranda" (compare Hazel's "notes" on 187-8). Unlike the pale fire of Melville's story which is not a spirit but an entrapped insect, Nabokov's pale fire is apparently the genuine thing: Aunt Maud warning John Shake of his encroaching death. Melville's skepticism toward the popular nineteenth century interest and belief in paranormal phenomena is not exactly mirrored in Nabokov's apparently much more open attitude toward ghostly visitation. Tuuli-Ann Ristkok, in her "Nabokov's 'The Vane Sisters' — 'Once a thousand years



of fiction" (*University of Windsor Review*, XI, 2 (1976), 27-48), presents evidence for Nabokov's considerable knowledge of nineteenth and early twentieth century spiritualism and psychic research in relation to a story very closely related to *Pale Fire*. Among other things Ristkok shows Nabokov's knowledge of the Fox sisters who engaged in a series of fraudulent mediumistic presentations beginning in 1848 (Ristkok 32-3). Nabokov mentions the sisters in his story, and Melville mentions them, too, in "The Apple-Tree Table" when his narrator claims that the events he recounts "happened long before the time of the 'Fox Girls'" (382). The story was first published in May 1856, in the heyday of the Fox sisters' fame. One can only speculate whether Nabokov's interest in the paranormal and spectral contact with the dead led him to read Melville's tale, or whether his reading of Melville initiated his interest in nineteenth-century American "spiritual manifestations" that was to generate both "The Vane Sisters" and *Pale Fire*.

*Moby Dick* supplies further source material for Nabokov's novel. Kinbote at one point recounts how Shade, exasperated with his nose neighbor, tells a "rather offensive anecdote" about King Alfred's brushing off an officious "norwegian attendant" by saying "Oh, there you are": "and thus a fabulous exile. . . . [and] northern bard is known today . . . by the trivial nickname: Ohthere" (170). Priscilla Meyer (in her *Find What the Sailor Has Hidden*, 1988), discussing the considerable quantity of Anglo-Saxon material in *Pale Fire*, traces the source of Shade's anecdote to Alfred's Anglo-Saxon translation of Orosius's Latin *Universal History* (see Meyer 69-70 for full discussion). Melville may have led Nabokov to both Alfred and Ohthere, for he refers to them twice in *Moby Dick*, first in the "Extracts" that open the book, where "Other or Oother's verbal narrative taken down from his mouth by King Alfred. A.D. 890" describes his whale hunting (xli), and again in Ch. xxiv where "no less a prince than Alfred the Great . . . with his own royal pen took down the words of Other, the Norwegian whale-

hunter" (109). These passages are discussed in the Hendricks House edition annotations, which speculate as to Melville's source for this material. Wherever Melville may have gotten it, Nabokov may well have been led to Ohthere and Alfred by way of Melville.

The last and most significant Melville allusion also comes from *Moby Dick*. Late in the commentary Kinbote describes "one of the most famous avenues in Appalachia" into which have been planted or transplanted various kinds of trees mentioned in Shakespeare; he enumerates a few of them, beginning with "Jove's stout oak and two others: the thunder-cloven from Britain, the knotty-entrained from a Mediterranean island" and ending with a "clown's sad cypress from Illyria" (291). A number of previous commentators have traced each of the trees to its place in Shakespeare's text (the trees themselves apparently bear textual inscriptions regarding their Shakespearean sources — see 154). They have pointed out that "the thunder-cloven [oak] from Britain" comes from *King Lear*: Lear at the height of his madness refers to the storm's "oak-cleaving thunderbolts" (III, ii, 5). Although Shakespeare's play is indeed the ultimate source, an intermediate source exists, for Melville in Chapter xxviii of *Moby Dick* describes Ahab as "the barest, ruggedest, most thunder-cloven old oak" (122). The Hendricks House edition's annotators discuss Melville's considerable overall indebtedness to Shakespeare (see 641-44 especially), and point out a large number of allusions to Shakespeare throughout *Moby Dick* which virtually saturate the novel, but they do not notice this one. Melville's metaphor of Ahab as a "thunder-cloven oak" derives right from Shakespeare, and Nabokov, picking up an allusion that Melville commentators have completely missed, imports his "thunder-cloven" oak to Wordsmith's avenue of Shakespearean trees from Melville rather than from Shakespeare directly. (Note that Kinbote's words ["the thunder-cloven" oak] are much closer to the phraseology of Melville ["thunder-cloven old oak"] than they are to the

Shakespeare original ["oak-cleaving thunderbolts"].) Wordsmith's oak tree is transplanted from British soil to American; likewise, the allusion to Britain's most famous writer is transplanted to Nabokov's American novel via an American intermediary — Herman Melville, who cunningly steals the words of the Bard, only to have them stolen in turn by Kinbote/Nabokov, another double "pale fire." Indeed, one begins to wonder whether other Shakespearean tree allusions in the *Pale Fire* passage (or all of them) derive from Shakespeare only indirectly, being filtered through an intermediary source (American?) which acts as their transplantation stage into another literary clime. Certainly the derivation of the oak tree reference in *Lear* coming indirectly from Shakespeare via Melville fits into a large-scale pattern operating throughout Nabokov's novel: a large number of the extensive literary allusions in the book come indirectly through an intermediary source (or sometimes a series of them), a hidden source as it were which further pales the reflected light of the original. The possible derivation of Ohthere from King Alfred via Melville's text is another example of the same textural phenomena so widely used but so little recognized within Nabokov's book — the omnipresence of linked chains of allusions which signal the appropriation (and mis-appropriation) of another writer's words, the very act, on a small scale, that Kinbote, on a much larger and crasser level, attempts in his "influencing" the composition of Shade's poem, his literally stealing the manuscript, and finally his creative interpreting of "Pale Fire" as a poem about his own Zemblan phantasms.

All in all, the totality of these parallels with, and allusion to, Melville's works suggests that the great American writer whom Nabokov loved has indeed a hidden presence within *Pale Fire*, nowhere named, but everywhere reflected in that great involuted mirror that is Nabokov's novel.

--Ward Swinson, Colorado State University at Fort Collins

#### ST. PETERSBURG IN NABOKOV'S PUBLISHED WORKS

The following very useful index has been sent by Professor Pekka Tammi. It is an excerpt from his most recent book *Russian Subtexts in Nabokov's Fiction. Four Essays*. (Tampere: Tampere University Press, 1999), available directly from the publisher (P.O. Box 617, FIN-33101, Tampere, Finland). G.B.

Year	<i>In Verse (Drama)</i>	<i>In Fiction (Memoirs)</i>
1916	<i>Stolitse</i>	
1916	"U dvortsov Nevy ia brozhu, ne rad"	
1921	<i>Peterburg. Poema</i>	
1921	"Mechtal ia o tebe tak chasto, tak davno" - "[...] knigu o liubvi, o dymke nad Nevoi / [...] / ia perelistyval"	
1921	V. Sh. - on meetings with V[alentina] Sh[ulgina] in St. Petersburg (cf. <i>Speak, Memory</i> )	
1921	<i>Detstvo</i> - "[...] kogda khodil zimoi / vdol' skovannoi Nevy velikolepnym utrom!"	
1922	<i>Peterburg</i>	
1923	<i>Peterburg</i>	<i>Sounds</i> - the émigré narrator's recollections of St. Isaac's Cathedral. (observed in a paperweight)
1923	<i>Petr v Gollandii</i>	
1923	"V kakom raiu vperveye prozhurchali" - "I vdol' Nevy, vsiu noch' ne spav [...] / [...] / ia shel"	
1923	<i>Pamiati Gumileva</i> - "[...] s toboi govorit o letiashchem / mednom Petre	

	<i>i o dikikh vetrakh afrikanskikh - Pushkin</i>	
1923	"Sankt-Peterburg - uzornyi inei"	
1924	Sankt-Peterburg	<i>A Matter of Chance</i> - A. L. Luzhin's recollections
1924	<i>Iskhod - "[...] p perekinulis' iz temnoty / v temnotu - o, muza, kak nezhdanno! = / iavstvennye nevskie mosty"</i>	<i>Christmas</i> - takes place in St. Petersburg (Sleptsov returns from the city to the country house)
1924	<i>K rodine - "[...] kak nebo nad Nevoi"</i>	
1925		<i>Paskhal'nyi dozhd'</i> - the governess's dream
1925		<i>A Guide to Berlin</i> - the narrator remembers St. Petersburg trams
1925		<i>A Letter That Never Reached Russia</i> - the narrator's recollections of a romance in St. Petersburg (cf. "Tamara," <i>Speak, Memory</i> )
1925-	<i>(The Man from the</i>	
1926	<i>USSR - the theme of return)</i>	
1926	<i>Lyzhnyi pryzhok - the theme of return</i>	<i>Mary</i> - Ganin's recollections of his romance (cf. <i>Speak, Memory</i> )
1926	<i>Ut pictura poesis - "Ia pomniu, nad Nevoi moei / byvali sumerki, kak shorokh / tushuiushchikh karandashei"</i>	
1927		<i>The Doorbell</i> - Galatov's recollections
1928		<i>The Christmas Story</i> - takes place in the contemporary Leningrad

1929	<i>"Dlia stranstva nochnogo mne ne nado"</i> - the theme of return	
1929-		<i>The Defense</i> - Luzhin's school years
1930		<i>The Eye</i> - Smurov belongs "to the best St. Petersburg society"
1930		<i>A Bad Day</i> - Peter's recollection of the lantern slides (cf. <i>Speak, Memory</i> )
1931		<i>Lips to Lips</i> - the setting of Ilya Borisovich's novel <i>Glory</i> - the theme of return
1931		
1931-		
1932		<i>The Reunion</i> - the pun on "Leningrad"
1932		<i>Orache</i> - takes place in St. Petersburg (cf. V. D. Nabokov's duel in <i>Speak, Memory</i> )
1932		<i>The Admiralty Spire</i> - the narrator's recollections of a romance in St. Petersburg
1933		<i>The Circle</i> - Bychkov's recollection of the Godunov house "on the Quay"
1934		<i>In Memory of L. I. Shigaev</i> - the "view of Neva" hanging on Shigaev's wall
1934		<i>A Russian Beauty</i> - the heroine's recollections
1934		<i>Despair</i> - Hermann enters the University of St. Petersburg in 1914
1935-		<i>Invitation to a Beheading</i> - "Vyshnegrad"
1936		<i>(Mademoiselle O</i> [ - Chapter Five, <i>Speak Memory</i> )

1937-		<i>The Gift</i> - Fyodor's recollections
1939		<i>The Visit to the Museum</i> - the theme of return
1939		<i>Ultima Thule</i> - Falter hails from St. Petersburg
1941		<i>The Real Life of Sebastian Knight</i> - V's recollections
1944		<i>A Forgotten Poet</i> - the narrator's (re)construction of a history taking place in St. Petersburg
1947	<i>To Prince S. M.</i>	<i>Bend Sinister</i> - "Padukgrad"
	<i>Kachurin</i> - the theme of return	
1948		( <i>First Love</i> [ - Chapter Seven, <i>Speak, Memory</i> ])
1951		( <i>Speak, Memory</i> )
1955		<i>Lolita</i> - "St. Petersburg, Fla.," "Krestovski"
1957		<i>Pnin</i> - Pnin's (and the narrator's) recollections
1962		<i>Pale Fire</i> - "Leningrad used to be Petrograd," "Gradus," "Vinogradus"
1969		<i>Ada</i> - the pun on "Nevada"
1974		<i>Look at the Harlequins!</i> - the theme of return

Verification of the chronology based on Juliar's 1986 bibliography, Boyd's two-volume biography, and also on D. Barton Johnson's and Wayne C. Wilson's "Alphabetical and Chronological Lists of Nabokov's Poetry," in *Russian Literature TriQuarterly*, No. 24, 1991, 355-415.

—Pekka Tammi, Tanfere University, Finland

## THE STEEL-AND-LEATHER GUYS

Readers may be interested in this follow-up to a short piece I wrote for *The Nabokovian's* "Annotations & Queries" section, issue number 32.

In that piece ("Signs and Symbols and Signs"), I argued that VN's stories, as originally published in *The New Yorker*, were edited to a much greater degree than either he or his biographer, Brian Boyd, cared to acknowledge. I compared the *New Yorker* version of his classic story, "Signs and Symbols," to the book version eventually published in *Nabokov's Dozen*. The variances between the two versions revealed what might be called "the *New Yorker* style," applied in a heavy-handed and detrimental manner to the text. I noted how, in the book version, all these omissions and alterations were restored, to the great improvement of the story.

I acknowledged the possibility, however, that to use the word "restored" might be begging the question. Perhaps VN had simply reworked the piece between the two publications — despite the "smoking gun" of that highly characteristic *New Yorker* style in the first version, which so strongly suggested an editor's hand. Still, just possibly, the magazine may have published the story as VN gave it to them, and VN may then have rewritten it to suit his more mature style and vision when it came time to collect it in book form.

Now I can offer some additional evidence against this possibility.

VN's first story to be published in America, "Cloud, Castle, Lake," appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly* in its June 1941 number. Does this version of the story differ markedly from the eventual book version (also in *Nabokov's Dozen*)? If it does, this would suggest that VN did indeed rewrite his early stories for book publication — or else that *The Atlantic*, like *The New Yorker*, also subjected VN's work to intrusive editing.

But the *Atlantic* version of "Cloud, Castle, Lake" is nearly identical to the book version. The style is mature,

and characteristically Nabokovian — in a story written in 1937, eleven years before “Signs and Symbols,” our *New Yorker* example. Six small alterations in word choice can, however, be discovered. Two examples will give the flavor of these alterations.

The *Atlantic* version has this phrase: “his fat wife sketched out in the air the preface of a backhand box on the ear” (738). In the book version, “preface” has been changed to “outline” (115) — surely preferable, since “preface” does not, at least for this reader, evoke an easily imaginable gesture. Then, later in the *Atlantic* version, we have this: “there is a certain grace in the motions of silky wood lice” (739). The book version replaces “wood lice” with “silverfish” (118). This is not only truer to nature (a graceful louse?), but adds a highly Nabokovian harmony between “silky” and “silverfish.”

The point about these small alterations, though, is that they are most unlikely to represent restorations of editorial changes on the part of *The Atlantic*. Would an editor, seeing “outline,” insist that VN change it to “preface”? Would he reject “silverfish” in favor of “wood lice”? Surely not — and therefore we may conclude that the original words were VN’s, and that he himself later improved them for book publication.

Two additional changes appear in the book version of “Cloud, Castle, Lake” which fall under a different category. We might call them felicities of historical perspective. The first merely sets the time period for the readers of 1958, when *Nabokov’s Dozen* appeared. VN inserts into the first paragraph the sentence “That was in 1936 or 1937” (113), thus placing the story firmly in the pre-war era, when Nazism was at its strongest.

The second change also allows the resonances of the Nazi period to sound in a way that would have been impossible in 1941. VN changes the final verse of the song being sung on the hideous train journey. In the *Atlantic* version (739), that verse reads:

One mile, two miles, five and twenty,

Sunny skies and wind in plenty . . . [ellipsis in original]

Come a-tramping with the guys!  
In the book version (117), we have:

In a paradise of heather  
Where the field mouse screams and dies,  
Let us march and sweat together  
With the steel-and-leather guys!

We can easily guess the genesis of this change: Twenty years after writing the story, and armed with the full knowledge of what the Nazis were and what they wrought, VN chillingly evoked this evil by giving the train-song a prescient whiff of apocalypse.

To sum up: The original “Cloud, Castle, Lake” shows no evidence of an editor’s interference, and the book version of the story is nearly identical to it, except for small alterations that give no sign of “restoring” text. So we may suppose with even greater confidence that, in contrast, VN’s *New Yorker* stories were indeed heavily edited, and that the final, book versions of these stories represent restorations of original text rather than reworkings by VN.

— J. Morris, Arlington, VA

#### ANGELS ON THE PLANKS: THE WORKMEN IN THE TWO SCENES IN MARY.

In the last scene of *Mary*, Ganin returns to his “real” life from his journey through the past. In other words, his revelation finally brings him back from the world of shades and ghosts to his “real” world, in which he seems to live on at will. His realization that love has ended occurs as he watches the workmen passing a slab, as well as the yellow sheen of fresh timber and the skeletal roof in the ethereal sky. The description of the men working on the frame of a house strangely alludes to the workmen in the film-shooting scene in Ch. 2. “The figures of the

workmen on the frame showed *blue* against the morning sky. One was walking along the ridge-piece, as light and free as though he were about to *fly away*" (114, italics added). Cf. "...the lazy workmen walking easily and nonchalantly like *blue-clad angels* from plank to plank high up above (21, italics added). Though Ganin seems to recover from his shadowiness and launches out into "real" life, his realization is still triggered by the workmen as he was directed as a film extra by similar workmen. In Ch. 2, the workmen illuminate the Russian extras, including Ganin, and make them into the shades in a film of which they know nothing. Watching the film, Ganin feels ashamed of himself as one who had to act blindly as directed and has become one of the shades which will wander from city to city while being completely ignorant about it. His shame is from his ignorance and objectivity rather than the poverty that makes him a miserable extra. At last he seems to realize the truth subjectively, but in his very realization, he is still influenced by the workmen. Leona Toker mentions that Ganin's awakening is canceled together with the protagonist himself and that the calming effect of the sight of the workmen is the author's feelings upon completing the novel (*Nabokov: The Mystery of Literary Structure*, 46). The workmen, who once directed him and are passing a slab like a book, prompt Ganin to leave, alluding that the book in which he has been the protagonist is coming to an end; the workman who looks as if to fly away from the roof stands for the author, who is rising to a new stage after finishing his first novel.

—Akiko Nakata, Japan

#### FROM NABOKOV'S PRIVATE LIBRARY

Books from Nabokov's private library, particularly editions of his own works with authorial inscriptions and annotations, are currently (through June 18) on display

at Glenn Horowitz Bookseller (New York City). Here I intend to show how Nabokov's footnote in one of them illuminates two episodes from *Glory* and *The Gift*. (I am indebted to the Estate of Vladimir Nabokov and Glenn Horowitz Bookseller, Inc. for their kind permission to reproduce the footnote and inscription from Nabokov's personal copy of *Podvig* [catalogued as V18].)

The history of contentious relations between Vladimir Nabokov and Georgy Ivanov (1894-1958), a poet, essayist, and prose writer, is well known and by no means requires any detailed account. Suffice it to say here that they quickly deteriorated after Ivanov's brutal review of Nabokov's earlier works in *Chisla (Numbers)* (I [1930]: 233-36). The review apparently came, as Nabokov himself maintained (see his letter to Gleb Struve of 3 June 1959—*SL* 289), in response to his unfavorable critique of *Izol'da*, a novel by Irina Odoevtseva, Georgy Ivanov's wife (*Rul' [The Rudder]* [30 October 1929: 5]). In 1963, more than thirty years later, Nabokov still recalled how Georgy Ivanov, a "scurrilous critic," had "retaliated with a grossly personal article about me and my stuff" (*SO* 39).

It is very telling how Ivanov and Nabokov handle this confrontation. While Ivanov resorts to brutal assaults bordering on verbal abuse reminiscent of Faddei Bulgarin's vicious attacks on Pushkin exactly a hundred years earlier, Nabokov, who always "weigh[ed]" "honor and life" "on Pushkin's scales" (*PP* 67), remains within the realm of Pushkinian tradition, employing such forms as epigram or parody for his rebuttals.

Thus, in his aforementioned letter to Gleb Struve, Nabokov cites the following epigram on Georgy Ivanov which he composed for Vladislav Khodasevich's album: "You could not find in all of Grub Street / a rogue to match him vile enough! / 'Whom do you mean—Petrov? Ivanov? / No matter . . . Wait, though—who's Petrov?'" (*SL* 289). Two examples of parody of Georgy Ivanov's poetry appear in, respectively, *Podvig* (1931-32) and *Dar* (1937-38; 1952). One of them can be found in the episode which describes Alla Chernosvitova. This young woman whom

Martin met on the ship en route to Constantinople "wrote poetry," and her poems are characterized as "so sonorous and spicy." They "always addressed the man in the polite form ('you,' not 'thou') and were asparkle with rubies as red as blood" (*Podvig* 38 / *Glory* 29). A sample of Alla's poetry is given in the following stanza:

Na purpure shelkov, pod pologom ampirnym,  
On vsiu menia laskal, vpivaia's' rtom vampirnym,  
A zavtra my umrem sgorevshie do tla,  
Smeshaiutsia s peskom krasivye tela.

(On purple silks, beneath an Empire pall,  
You vampirized me and caressed me all,  
And we tomorrow die, burned to the end;  
Our lovely bodies with the sand will blend.) (ibid.)

In his personal copy of the novel's first edition (Paris: *Contemporary Annals*, 1932), Nabokov sheds light on the origins of this quatrain. In the appended footnote, he remarks that its "[P]osledniaia stroka-parodiia na stikh prinadlezhashchli peru Georgiia Ivanova" ("The last line is a parody of the verse that came from the pen of Georgy Ivanov").

Indeed, the last line of Alla's quatrain points to Ivanov's untitled piece that opens with the line "Zelenoiu krov'iu dubov i mogil'noi travy" ("Into green blood of oaks and of sepulchral grass," 1921) from his collection *Sady* (*Gardens*) which was initially published in 1921 in Petrograd and was reprinted the following year in Berlin. The first line of the poem's second stanza reads: "Prekrasnoe telo smeshaetsia s gorst'iu peska" ("A beautiful body will blend with a handful of sand") (Georgii Ivanov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 3 vols. [Moscow: "Soglasie," 1994], 1: 216.) In 1921-22 publications of *Sady* the poem had an additional, concluding, stanza, later deleted:

Zachem zhe togda veselee zemnoe vino  
I zhenskii guby tseluiut khmel'nei i nezhnei  
Pri mysli, chto vskore rasseiat'sia nam suzhdeno  
Letucheiu pyl'iu, dozhdem, kolykhan'em vetvei...

(Why, then, merrier is earthly wine  
And woman's lips kiss more intoxicatingly and  
tenderly  
At the thought that we are soon destined to vanish  
Into flying dust, rain, branches' swaying...) (Ivanov, 1:  
604).

As appears from this stanza, Nabokov derides Ivanov's poem in the *Glory* quatrain even further: more intoxicating and tender kissing is mockingly hyperbolized in "you vampirized me" (in the original: "vpivaia's' rtom vampirnym," that is "sinking [your] vampire mouth into [me]"), and the thought about various ways in which "we are soon destined to vanish" that triggered such ardor of sensuality is caricatured in the foreboding that "we tomorrow die," "our lovely bodies" "burned to the end," in the heat of passion. Overall, Nabokov pokes fun at Ivanov for employing the *carpe diem* motif which often took the form of fatal love-making bacchanalia in the poetry of Symbolists, such as Konstantin Baltmont and Valery Bryusov, and which degenerated by the early 1920s into tattered cliché.

In continuation of the same footnote, Nabokov points out that "[S]trofa iz drugogo, znachitel'no bolee ranniago ego stikhotvoreniiia, tsituetsia v Dare, qtr. 146." ("A stanza from his [Ivanov's] other, considerably earlier, poem, is cited in *Dar*, p. 146").

Indeed, on that page of the novel (1st edition; New York: Chekhov Publishing House, 1952) we find the following "stishki, posviashchennye voine" ("versicles dedicated to the war") (*Dar* 146 / *Gift* 128):

Teper'ty bich sud'by nad rodinoiu miloi,  
No svetloi radost'iu zablëshchet russkii vzor  
Kogda postignet on germanskogo Attily  
Besstrastnym vremenem otmechennyi pozor!

(Today thou art Fate's scourge o'er our dear land,  
But with bright joy the Russian's gaze will shine  
When he sees Time dispassionately brand  
The German Attila with Shame's own sign!)



Although not present in the corpus of Ivanov's poetry, this stanza evokes his early verse collection *Pamiatnik slavy* (*A Monument of Glory*) published in 1915. To this also points the temporal reference given in *The Gift*—"vesnoi 1915-go goda" ("in the spring of 1915") (*ibid.*). In particular, the novel's versicle, with its "German Attila" image, echoes Ivanov's poem "Vragam" ("To the Enemies") which refers to the German troops as "dikari" ("savages"). The concluding lines of Ivanov's poem, "Srazhennyi v serdtse, rukhnet Kain / I Avel' mech otbrosit svoi!" ("Stricken in his heart, Cain will crash down / And Abel will cast away his sword!") (Georgii Ivanov, *Pamiatnik slavy*, Petrograd: "Lukomoré," 1915, 21-22) reverberate in "Shame's own sign!," the concluding phrase in the novel's versicle, which, too, alludes to the infamous Biblical fratricide and ends with an exclamation mark.

*The Gift* versicle also calls to mind Ivanov's other poem of the period, "Godovshchina voiny" ("The War Anniversary"), which is very much akin in its imagery and tonality to the *Pamiatnik slavy* collection and which was published in the weekly *Lukomor'e* (*Cove*). The poem contains the following lines: "I tiazhelye koni Batyia / Rastoptali rodnye polia!" ("And the heavy horses of Batu / Trampled the native fields!") as well as "Znaiu—sginet prokliatoe likho, / Verno,—Rus' odoleet vraga!" ("I know—the cursed evil will vanish, / Truly,—Rus' will overcome the enemy!") (*Lukomor'e* 30 [25 July 1915]: 13). As can be seen, *The Gift* versicle mocks the jingoism of Ivanov's poem in which the German enemy is likened to another "savage" invader, this time to Batu—the grandson of Genghiz Khan and the conquerer of medieval Russia.

Nabokov's parody of Ivanov's war poetry undoubtedly struck a sensitive cord: ashamed of this collection, Ivanov excluded most of its poems from his later books. Nabokov's derision might have been especially painful to Ivanov since it reminded him of his collaboration with the disreputable *Lukomor'e* magazine and publishing house, both founded and funded by Aleksei Suvorin, a journalist

and publisher, whose main creation was the ultraconservative and anti-Semitic *Novoe Vremia* (*New Time*). (We may recall that Nabokov's father once challenged Suvorin to a duel for printing an insulting article about him in *Novoe Vremia* [see *SM* 188].) In addition, by mentioning *Vova Makes the Best of It*, "a play on draft dodgers," immediately before *The Gift* versicle, Nabokov perhaps intimated that Ivanov, even though he wrote jingoistic war poetry, never served in the military despite his earlier being enlisted in the St. Petersburg Cadet Corps and his turning twenty shortly after the outbreak of WWI.

What prompted Nabokov to append this footnote? It seems that in 1970, when working on the translation of *Podvig*—his last Russian novel to be rendered into English—Nabokov came across Alla Chernosvitova's versicle which reminded him of Ivanov's parodied original, and this, in turn, evoked a similar occurrence in *Dar*. As a result, Nabokov decided to pen down the footnote for his most important and precious readers—Vera, to whom this copy of *Podvig* was inscribed and presented, in all likelihood upon completion of the novel's English translation (hence the wordplay in the inscription: Glory to Vera. Montreux. Dec. 1970), and Dmitri, who collaborated with his father on this translation and in part on that of *Dar*. Further, Nabokov apparently decided to comment on the origins of the two quatrains because he farsightedly realized that this presentation copy would eventually become accessible to the reading public. As we may recall, in his "American years" Nabokov adopted the strategy of commenting on his own works. (Cf. "On A Book Entitled *Lolita*" [1956], the 1963 Introduction to *Bend Sinister*, "Notes to *Ada* by Vivian Darkbloom" [1970] as well as forewords to various translations of his Russian works.) Finally, it is quite possible that Nabokov also jotted down this footnote, *pro memoria*, for inclusion in the forewords to *Podvig's* / *Glory's* later editions.

—Gavriel Shapiro, Cornell University

## THE NABOKOV PROSE-ALIKE CENTENNIAL CONTEST

In late January the Nabokov Prose-Alike Centennial Contest was announced over NABOKV-L. Entries were solicited with the following instructions: "a piece of prose imitating VN's style as closely as possible — earnest, not jocular — not an obvious parody or pastiche — prose of any sort, including epistolary. For the sake of plausibility, the submitted piece ought to have the look of an excerpt rather than a finished composition." The entries were received by D. Barton Johnson and then forwarded, without the entrants' names, to a panel of judges.

As per the contest rules, the three winning pieces are being published below along with two never before published pieces of VN's prose (provided and copyrighted by the Nabokov estate). Readers are invited to pick out the imitations from the originals, and inform the Editor of their selections. The results of this reader poll will be reported in next fall's issue, along with the names of the winners and their prizes.

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#1

She read from her sheets, slightly lifting one by the corner three-quarters of the way down, but since she required the use of both hands to make those little horns in the air thus marking off quotations (a silly little gesture fashionable among academic ladies of a certain sort and age), and also because every now and then her third finger would quickly hook a stray strand of hair and fit it behind a lippy ear, she would touch her index with her nimble tongue when nearing the end of a page. It was getting frightfully boring, and I went out, feeling suddenly saddened by the entire affair.

I crossed an arching bridge and lingered at a white-washed gazebo to read notices pasted on the wall and sprawling on the posts. Donna Hogan's water-colors exhibit, Gallimaufry Gallery, through May 1. A gynecology clinic on Tuesday, April 18, at 6 pm in Southridge Hall. Surgery hours. No-nonsense Nancies, alumnae, allumenses, academoiselles. Correct mistakes in the recent issue of Old Gable (Which dormitory is older. Class of '44. Not 1911 but 1900).

A silver-bordered fritillary alighted on the edge of a flower cluster of a pyracantha bush straddling up the trellis, turned twice, and applied its proboscis to the tiny dull-white corolla, and for a moment it looked as if it were smoking a hookah. I moved, but it forestalled me by a split-second and darted off. Driving fast along a dark, glistening stretch of the now strangely uncrowded highway (only one broad-bottomed car very far ahead, as far as one could see), fingering mentally the events of the day, I felt a swell of something I could not name properly, a lump at once limpid and doleful, akin perhaps to what one inimitable traveler felt when he saw "the knolls of Georgia veiled in a twilight haze," or what I always feel in an airplane when, already airborne and surging at a steep glissade, I look out at the expanse miraculously fanning out below, and the rat-grey fringe of the cloud is gently beiged by the groping sun lurking somewhere behind it and ready to burst through any moment, and the horizon soundlessly flickers as it rears aslant in my round porthole, and the droplets on the glass outside stretch to dotted threads, and my pencil rolls off the table, and all this had happened before, in this particular concinnity and order of detail, the wipers were of little help, and the compassionate elderly lady in a shark-shaped Mercury noticed with a pang, through the two streaming windows, hers and his, that separated them, how distorted and tearstained was the face of a hatless gentleman hunching behind the wheel of a brown car overtaking her at a great speed and promptly receding into the rain-stippled vista.

\* \* \*

#2

. . . Her painted eyelids were closed. A tear of no particular meaning gemmed the hard top of her cheek. Nobody could tell what went on in that little head. Waves of desire rippled there, a recent lover fell back in a swoon, hygienic doubts were raised and dismissed, contempt for everyone but herself advertised with a flush of warmth its constant presence, here it is, cried what's-her-name squatting quickly. My darling, *dushka moya* (eyebrows went up, eyes opened and closed again, she didn't meet Russians often, this should be pondered).

Masking her face, coating her sides, pinaforing her stomach with kisses — all very acceptable while they remained dry.

Her frail, docile frame, when turned over by hand, revealed new marvels — the mobile omoplates of a child being tubbed, the incurvation of a ballerina's spine, narrow nates of an ambiguous, irresistible charm (nature's beastliest bluff, said Paul de G. watching a dour old don watching boys bathing).

Only by identifying her with an unwritten, half-written, rewritten difficult book could one hope to render at last what. . . .

\* \* \*

#3

Timofey, elevated far above his bed, was surrounded and almost overcome by the multitude of pillows which the Sheppard brothers had eagerly supplied. True, they were not all bed pillows, and a meretricious observer might have found more than one herniated seam among their plush velvets and satins, but neither Pnin nor his landlords were apt to descend to that level of sordid inspection.

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He had heroically concealed his damaged back from Victor, but when the boy returned to St. Bart's, Pnin had gone directly from the Waindell bus station to the hospital. "I bring you a painful bock consistently," he explained to the far too young intern, who seemed less intent on the agony of the lower vertebrae than on tapping the upper while prowling over Pnin's chest with a puzzled stethoscope. After the succession of knuckle knocks, Timofey felt himself a hollow vessel, and a cracked one at that. With two pills in the hand and one prescription in Busch Pharmacy, he had been ordered complete bed rest for a week.

There was liberation in the fluffy boudoir. Realizing that his semi-sitting position could be fairly equated with his posture in the driver's seat, Timofey began to study his Driver's Manual with an intensity that had failed him in Driving School, and failed him along with it. Now his right hand curled over an imaginary shift with perfectly rounded satisfaction, and his sinistral toes shot out as his leg straightened, pressing an imaginary clutch pedal to the imaginary floor.

"And now we do reverse," he said, but even a listener less deaf than Bill Sheppard might have had trouble understanding the last word, unfortunately accented on the penultimate. Pnin pulled back his arm and then slowly, slowly lifted his left knee while flattening the right. "Well, actually, that there's a pond," said his landlord, scratching his neck. "My late wife painted it when we were still living in Sintron, down by Cremona. In that painting there she told me it represents—"

He stopped, arrested by the jump of Pnin's right foot as it suddenly rose under the blanket, moved left, and then slammed down, releasing a cascade of pillows to the floor, from one of which an Indian maiden in a war bonnet stared upward in somewhat supercilious amazement.

"I haf safed another foolish pedestrian," crowed Timofey, his face kindly and triumphant.

\* \* \*

-35-

#4

"As I walked back, a sparse rain started. The distressed surface of a comma-shaped pond was dappled with drifting willow leaves. Ducks dozed afloat, their beaks neatly tucked under the left wing. A white goose dawdling on the grassy slope ruffled her feathers slightly as I approached. Her grey-and-peabald companion, with a dull white band across his belly, got up on the right and waddled slowly across my path, his neck thrust forward terribly, his head thrown back, squealing like a piglet. His shiftless mate never moved but she, too, began to cackle iambically when he stopped by her side and, never letting up his indignant squeal, kept casting a sidelong gaze at me while searching and sniffing the grass.

How generously wonderful everything suddenly looked! "Ni-pukha, ni-pera! (I wish you neither down nor feather)," Inaia Petrovna had said while seeing me off to Deaton—a Russian stock phrase originally addressed to a departing sportsman with the reverse superstitious charge of "break a leg." I scarcely knew her, and her "Hegelian" name invariably produced in me an equivalent of a mental shrug; now the recollection of her touching voice, combined with the waft of a fragrant composition in which I could identify only the various bitterness of foxes, ophelian hair, and poplar buds (seasonally incompatible) suddenly—for olfactory associations are instantaneous and unerring—brought up the memory of my mother in the waiting room of a hospital (scarlet fever). The next moment I was led down the corridors, farther and farther away from her and from all that was familiar, quite literally, to a five-year old boy, and although even after so many turns and switches and flights of stairs one still could, theoretically, retrace one's steps and find a way to the hall where one's mother might still be waiting, one knew that this must not be done, if only because everybody, mother including, expected that you would go through his horror and this was the reason why you had been taken here, this was how it ought to be, and one must not weep, no matter how perfectly quietly.

But what a delightful, light-blue sensation it was to be released and jaunt through a damp hospital park to our cerise carriage and see the old Dapper, a bay horse twice my height, sapping nape to nate and slightly unrestful in his leather gear!"

\* \* \*

#5

. . . . Mrs. Lind cursed the old housemaid for buying asparagus instead of aspirin and hurried to the pharmacy herself. Mr. Hubert had brought his pet a thoughtful present: a miniature chess set ("she knew the moves") with tickly-looking little holes bored in the squares to admit and grip the red and white pieces; the pin-sized pawns penetrated easily, but the slightly larger noblemen had to be forced in with an enervating joggle. The pharmacy was perhaps closed and she had to go to the one next to the church, or else she had met some friend of hers in the street and would never return. A fourfold smell—tobacco, sweat, rum and bad teeth—emanated from poor old harmless Mr. Hubert, it was all very pathetic. His fat porous nose, with red nostrils full of hair, nearly touched her bare throat as he helped to prop the pillows behind her shoulders, and the muddy road was again, was forever a short cut between here and school, between school and death, with Daisy's bicycle wobbling in the indelible fog. She, too, had "known the moves," and had loved the *en passant* trick as one loves a new toy, but it cropped up so seldom, though he tried to prepare those magic positions where the ghost of a pawn can be captured on the square it has crossed. Fever, however, turns games of skill into the stuff of nightmares. After a few minutes of play, Flora grew tired of it, put a rook in her mouth, ejected it . . . .

\* \* \*

To the Grapefruit  
(1931)

Resplendent fruit, so weighty and so glossy,  
exactly like a full-blown moon you shine;  
hermetic vessel of unsweet ambrosia  
and aromatic coolness of white wine.

The lemon is the pride of Syracuse,  
Mignon yields to the orange's delights,  
but you alone are fit to quench the Muse  
when, thirsty, she has come down from her heights.

Vladimir Nabokov  
Translated by Dmitri Nabokov

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Помплимусу

Прекрасный плод, увесистый и гладкий,  
ты светишься, как полная луна;  
глухой сосуд амброзии несладкой,  
душистый холод белого вина.

Лимонами блистают Сиракузы,  
Миньону соблазняет апельсин,  
но ты один достоин жажды Музы,  
когда она спускается с вершин.