

THE VLADIMIR NABOKOV

RESEARCH NEWSLETTER

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Editor: Stephen Jan Parker

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serves to report and stimulate Nabokov
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abroad.

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NEWS ITEMS AND WORK IN PROGRESS

by Stephen Jan Parker

The Vladimir Nabokov Society will again hold two meetings this year, both in December in New York City. In conjunction with the MLA national convention, a session under the heading "Lovers, Muses, and Nymphets: Women in the Art of Nabokov" will be chaired by Phyllis Roth (Department of English, Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866). In conjunction with the AATSEEL national convention, a special section under the title, "Nabokov and the Russian Emigré Literary Scene" will be chaired by D. Barton Johnson (Department of German and Russian, University of California, Santa Barbara, CA 93106). Inquiries and submissions of papers are invited for both meetings.

*

Mrs. Vera Nabokov has provided the following list of VN works published September 1982 through January 1983:

October 1982 - The Real Life of Sebastian Knight. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin reprint.

November 1982 - La Distruzione dei Tiranni (Tyrants Destroyed), tr. Francesco Paolini. Longanesi, Italy. First volume in the series, "Opere di Vladimir Nabokov."

November 1982 - A Russian Beauty and Other Stories. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin paperback.

December 1982 - Mademoiselle O (Nabokov's Dozen), tr. Maurice and Yvonne Couturier. Paris: Julliard.

January 1983 - A Hero of Our Time. New York: Doubleday, Anchor books, new paperback edition.

January 1983 - The Real Life of Sebastian Knight. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin second edition of 1982 reprint.

January 1983 - L'Exploit (Glory), tr. Maurice Couturier. Paris: Julliard, "Presses Pocket" paperback edition.

*

Dmitri Nabokov informs us that he has completed the translation into Italian of A Russian Beauty and the translations from Russian to English of VN's plays -- The Event, The Grand-Dad, The Pole -- and the previously unpublished (in book form) lecture, "The Tragedy of Tragedy," for a volume of VN's plays to appear in late 1983 or early 1984. He is also engaged in translating into English the many poems in VN's Stikhi which were not previously translated. He also writes that there was a discovery recently of other VN lectures, principally on Russian poets.

*

The Nabokov Festival at Cornell University got underway on January 20 with the opening of an extensive exhibit of letters, articles, limericks, lecture notes, photographs, butterflies, and first editions at Cornell's Olin Library. The exhibit, occupying twenty-seven display cases, was mounted by Marilyn Kann, Slavic studies librarian. During the month of March a series of films adapted from Nabokov's works were shown -- Kubrick's Lolita, Richardson's Laughter in the Dark, and Fassbinder's Despair. On April 15 a program of reminiscences by friends and colleagues of Nabokov was held. One week later several talks on Nabokov's accomplishment were given by John Hago-pian, Vjaceslav Paperno, Stephen Parker, Alfred Appel, Jr., Ephim Fogel, Dmitri Nabokov, and Brian Boyd, and on April 22 Dmitri Nabokov gave a recital of Russian songs connected with the work of his father. Throughout the spring semester various writers spoke on Nabokov -- Edmund White, Nina Berberova, Herbert Gold, William Gass, and Jorge Luis Borges. We hope to be able to present a detailed report of this important first Nabokov commemoration in the fall issue of the VNRN.

*

The abridged version of Simon Karlin-sky's introduction to Lectures on Russian Literature has appeared in Partisan Review, 1 (1983) 94-100. Professor Karlin-sky's other recent Nabokov project is an essay, "Theme and Structure in Vladimir Nabokov's 'Krug'," for the Deming Brown

Festschrift, edited by Kenneth Brostrom, to be published as an issue of Papers in Slavic Philology. In reference to Ronald E. Peterson's piece, "Time in The Gift" (VNRN #9), Professor Karlinsky writes: "The chronology of The Gift by Ronald E. Peterson is ingenious and plausible. But it is exactly one year off in comparison with VN's own chronology, as stated in the introductory note to "The Circle" in The Russian Beauty and Other Stories. Nabokov's own time span is 1926-29 as opposed to Mr. Peterson's 1925-28. The rest of Peterson's timing is, oddly enough, correct."

*

Three recently published books on VN have come to our attention: 1) An English-Russian Dictionary of Nabokov's "Lolita", compiled by A. Nakhimovsky and S. Paperno (Ardis 1982) which offers "the Russian equivalents of words and expressions which are used by Nabokov but do not appear in the standard dictionaries;" 2) Vladimir Nabokov: The Structure of Literary Desire, by David Packman (University of Missouri Press 1982) in which, the author writes, "the tactic is to apply a reflexive critical apparatus to the problem of reading posed by and in a group of reflexive texts", namely Lolita, Pale Fire, and Ada; and 3) Nabokov's Novels in English by Lucy Maddox (University of Georgia Press 1982) in which, opening with discussion of Pale Fire, the author "focuses on the relationship between the eccentric, artificial structures of the novels and their deeply traditional, humanistic themes."

*

D. Barton Johnson's book, Worlds in Regression: Some Novels of Vladimir Nabokov, will be published by Ardis later this year or early in 1984. Articles of his which have recently appeared are: "Spatial Modeling and Deixis: Nabokov's Invitation to a Beheading," Poetics Today (Tel Aviv), III, 1 (Winter 1982): 81-98; "The Scrabble Game in Ada, or Taking Nabokov Clitorally," Journal of Modern Literature, IX, 2 (May 1982): 291-303; "Vladimir Nabokov's Solus Rex and the 'Ultima Thule' Theme," Slavic Review, XXXX, 4 (December 1981): 543-556. Articles to appear include: "The Ambidextrous Universe of Nabokov's Look at the Harlequins" in Critical Essays on Vladimir Nabokov, ed. Phyllis Roth (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1983); "Don't Touch My Circles!: The Two Worlds of Nabokov's Bend Sinister" in the special Nabokov issue of Delta (Université de Montpellier, France), ed. Maurice Couturier; "The Labyrinth of Incest in Nabokov's Ada" in Comparative Literature; "Text and Pre-Text in Nabokov's Defense" in Modern Fiction Studies; and, a 1,500 word entry on Nabokov in the forthcoming Yale Handbook of Russian Literature.

*

Paul R. Jackson (English Department, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA 19122) writes that he has two notes recently published: 1) "Pale Fire and Sherlock Holmes," Studies in American Fiction 10 (Spring 1982): 101-105 discusses the reference to Holmes near the beginning of Shade's poem; and 2) a note in Notes on Contemporary Fiction: 12 (May 1982): 11-12 identifies

Faulkner as the unnamed guest at Shade's birthday party.

*

Leszek Engelking writes from Poland that his book, Wladimir Nabokow, will soon be published by Czytelnik publishing house in Warsaw, and that the Polish translation of Transparent Things appeared in late 1982 (Przejrzystość rzeczy, tr. Ariadna Demkowska-Bohdziewicz, intro. Zbigniew Lewicki. Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1982). He also sends along a number of Yugoslav citations, as follows: Magdalena Medarić-Kovacić, "O ruskim romanima V.V. Nabokova," Knjizevna smotra 11, no. 22 (1979): 21-28; Masa Medarić, "Dar u sotonu ruske avangarde," Dometi 14, no. 6 (1981): 101-118; Masa Medarić-Kovacić, "Avangardni aspekti ruskih romana V. Nabokova," Umjetnost rijeci 25 (1981), izvanredni svezak (special issue): 355-365. The author of all three pieces is the same person; the articles are in Serbo-Croatian. The latter citation derives from a paper delivered by Ms. Medarić-Kovacić in December 1977 at a conference entitled "Vanguard--Literature--Revolution."

*

In response to Leszek Engelking's query (VNRN #9), Jay Edelnant (Theatre, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, 50614) writes: "Although I have no knowledge of specific games called "rumpberry" and "poke," it seems to me that Nabokov might be speaking of adolescent games of

sexual exploration. This interpretation is based on an analogy to Oscar Wilde's game of "Bunburying" in Act I of The Importance of Being Earnest, with rump and bun being synonymous and bury and berry being homophones. Poke speaks for itself (as, I suppose, does leapfrog)."

*

Leona Toker (Institute of Languages, Literatures, & Arts, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Mt. Scopus, Israel) passes along a reference not previously cited in either the VNRN or other Nabokov bibliographies: Shlomith Rimmon, "Problems of Voice in Vladimir Nabokov's The Real Life of Sebastian Knight," PTL: A Journal for Descriptive Poetics and Theory of Literature, 1 (1976) 489-512.

David Rampton (2175 S.W. Marine Drive, Vancouver B.C., Canada V6P 6B9) writes that he has just completed a dissertation on Nabokov at the University of Sussex entitled Vladimir Nabokov: A Critical Study of the Novels.

*

Gene Barabtarlo (2101 Hazelwood Dr. 301, Urbana, IL 61801) is at work on a dissertation at the University of Illinois which will be a thorough annotation of Pnin (which he has also translated into Russian for publication). In reference to Michael Juliar's request for bibliographic information (VNRN #8, p. 21) Mr. Barabtarlo writes:

"Yet another copy of N's first book (1916), namely No. 226, is preserved at the State Pushkin Museum in Moscow, USSR, and is listed under #3447 in the catalog "Biblioteka Russkoy Poezii I.N. Rozanova" (a private collection of Russian poetry of Ivan Rozanov, a Moscow University professor and collector whose widow presented his whole library to the Pushkin Museum in the late 60's), Moscow, Kniga Publishing House, 2975, p. 183."

*

Jenefer P. Shute (Department of English, Univ. of California, Los Angeles 92024) is working on a doctoral dissertation entitled "Nabokov and Freud: The Play of Power." It is, she says, "a study of Nabokov's antagonistic relation to psychoanalytic discourse, and its various manifestations (in parody, polemic, etc) in the novels. I also raise the question of whether Nabokov is finally able to free himself entirely of Freudian modes of thought, and why the stakes are so high for him in this particular discursive competition."

*

A special Nabokov issue of Canadian American Slavic Studies for 1984 is being prepared by D. Barton Johnson. He writes: "It will (probably) be restricted to contributions by non-Anglo-American Nabokovians. I am interested in receiving queries and abstracts of unpublished articles for consideration. I would prefer (but not require) that preliminary submissions be in English or Russian." Write to: Professor D. Barton

Johnson, Department of Germanic and Slavic Languages & Literatures, University of California, Santa Barbara, CA 93106.

*

William N. Rogers II (Department of English and Comparative Literature, San Diego State University, CA 92182) writes that his essay, "Heroic Defense: The Lost Positions of Nabokov's Luzhin and Kawabata's Shusai", will appear in the June 1983 issue of Comparative Literature Studies. He also notes that his colleague, Thomas Allen Nelson, has recently published Kubrick: Inside a Film Artist's Maze (Indiana Univ. Press, 1982) which has a 24-page third chapter on Lolita, "Kubrick in Nabokovland." Professor Rogers mentions that Professor Nelson has taught a Nabokov course on occasion and that Lolita is on the syllabi of a number of courses in modern American literature at San Diego State University. Professor Rogers comments: "Since my 'field' is British literature, the Master's novels don't naturally come into my purview; but there is also the question, perhaps also felt by other academics, that Nabokov's cool ironies and mazy indirections are on different wavelengths from those of our students. For upper-division courses a qualified yes; I have my doubts that lower-division is suitable Nabokovian territory. Opinion from others across the country would be welcome."

*

J. H. Bodenstein writes that readers who are interested in receiving a copy of his doctoral dissertation (Heidelberg 1977) can obtain it from him for \$16.00 (includes postage) at American Embassy, USIS-PA/CA, P.O. Box 380, APO New York, NY 09080. His two-volume dissertation, written entirely in English, is entitled "The Excitement of Verbal Adventure. A Study of Vladimir Nabokov's English Prose." The abstract notes: "The study is a contribution toward a comprehensive assessment of VN's verbal artistry. In thirteen chapters it investigates the quality and range of the author's vocabulary, presents various aspects of word-formation and word-creation, discusses recurrent types of wordplay, and examines the nature and function of aesthetic foregrounding. Finally the study looks at the extent and meaning of sensory perceptions in Nabokov's prose and concludes with a chapter on irony and one on the author's central metaphors. . . . Volume two of the study consists of twelve extensive appendices (c. 300 pp.) representing a near-comprehensive inventory of the main lexical, rhetorical, syntactical, and aesthetic devices and also listing numerous examples of other stylistic features discussed in the text of volume one."

*

At the Odyssey Theatre Ensemble in West Los Angeles, on October 10, Albert Paulsen opened a short run of a one-man show entitled "Nabokov." Mr. Paulsen, according to the playbill, is a graduate of The Actors Studio with numerous credits

from Broadway productions, movies, and television. The show consisted of Mr. Paulsen assuming the persona of Vladimir Nabokov and speaking lines from VN's various writings. "Here is a rare gift from actor Albert Paulsen who shares with us his 'passionate interest' in the extraordinary writer and gentleman who was Vladimir Nabokov," wrote one reviewer. "You could not spend an evening in better company." In the opinion of one of our readers who saw the show, "it was a work in progress that hadn't progressed very far. Albert Paulsen executed his tribute with affection for his subject, but also with a disheartening lack of biographical and literary knowledge. The passages read from Speak, Memory were presented well -- and rather movingly, too. Paulsen was eager for comments and suggestions, and freely mentioned to us after the performance that he was just 'feeling his way along'."

*

The pre-publication attention given VN's Lectures on Don Quixote (released March 15) suggests some difficulties for a bibliographer seeking a precise citation for the volume. The New York Times Book Review (February 13) reprints what is identified as Guy Davenport's "foreword" to the Lectures. The New York Review of Books (March 3) cites Guy Davenport's "introduction" and Reynolds Price's "preface" to the same volume. The Nation (March 5) cites Guy Davenport's "preface" and an "introduction" by V.S. Pritchett. All very confusing. To compound matters, the reviewer for

New York Review of Books is V.S. Pritchett. Unethical conduct? And what indeed did Guy Davenport write -- preface, introduction, or foreword?

Our copy of the volume shows no trace of Reynolds Price or of V.S. Pritchett. The editor (everyone is in agreement on this) is once again Fredson Bowers. The book jacket states "Preface by Guy Davenport"; the title page states "Introduction by Guy Davenport"; and the table of contents states "Foreword by Guy Davenport". Thus, surprisingly, Guy Davenport is indeed the author of all three -- which are of course one and the same piece. Curious.

*

Many thanks to Ms. Paula Oliver for her essential help in the preparation of this issue of the Newsletter.

1982 NABOKOV SOCIETY MEETINGS

by D. Barton Johnson & Sam Schuman

The seventh consecutive annual meeting of the Vladimir Nabokov Society was held on December 30, 1982 as a part of the Modern Language Association Convention in Los Angeles. The theme of the Special Session was "The Role of Games in Nabokov." Papers were presented by Professors Earl Sampson of the University of Colorado (on tennis), Janet Gezari of Connecticut College (on chess problems), and Charles Nicol of Indiana State University (on puzzles of narratorship). Professor Stephen Parker of the University of Kansas spoke briefly on game theory and Nabokov. There was a brief question and discussion period. Attendance hovered around twenty.

The session was followed by a brief business meeting of the Nabokov Society. Professor Schuman, the outgoing President, reported the success of the Society's effort to acquire "allied organization status" with the MLA. The Society will now be assured of two regular meetings at each MLA Convention rather than be forced to reapply each year for "Special Session" status. The Society will also continue its relationship with the American Association of Teachers of Slavic & East European Languages. Professor Parker reported on the status of the Society's finances and the continuing success of The Vladimir Nabokov Research Newsletter. Officers for the 1983-1984 term were elected: President--D. Barton Johnson

(University of California at Santa Barbara); Vice-President-Phyllis Roth (Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs); Secretary-Treasurer--Stephen Parker. Professor Parker continues as editor of the VNRN.

D. Barton Johnson

* * *

The Vladimir Nabokov Society sponsored a session at the 1982 annual meeting of AATSEEL at the American Congress Hotel in Chicago, on December 28th, from 1:15 to 3:15 pm. The meeting was attended by approximately 35 people.

Samuel Schuman, President of the Society, welcomed the group, and introduced the panelists, Professors Priscilla Meyer of Wesleyan University and L. L. Lee of Western Washington University. He apologized for Professor Patricia Brückmann, who was unable to attend, and read a brief precis of her paper (printed elsewhere in this issue of the VNRN, as are abstracts of the remarks of the other two presenters). Next, Professors Lee and Meyer summarized the contents of their papers on the topic of the session, "Vladimir Nabokov: Aesthete and/or Humanist?" A lively discussion followed. Among the topics raised: Nabokov's oeuvre as a humanist document; bad art as moral vice; projective readings; doubles; spirals as spiritualized circles; definitions of "humanist;" the password of pity; and the implicit theology of Nabokov's aesthetics.

The session concluded with enthusiasm and congeniality, warming a particularly blustery Chicago day.

PRESIDENTIAL REPORT

I wish to break all known precedent, and present the membership with a Presidential Report which consists of one, reasonably sized, paragraph: I aim to win no award for inclusiveness, but to take the prize for brevity. Our Society, it seems to me, flourishes. This December, for the first time, we were able to sponsor two meetings, under the wings of AATSEEL and of MLA. Both were well-attended and stimulating sessions. Also, this year saw the successful fruition of our long-standing efforts to secure "affiliated organization" status with the MLA. This assures us of a continued format for annual meetings. It may also mark another important recognition, within the American scholarly community, of Nabokov's major stature as a twentieth-century writer. Under the able leadership of D. Barton Johnson, and with the continuing zealous cooperation of its membership, I am confident that the Society will continue to grow, and to provide an important forum for the discussion of an important author.

Sam Schuman

ABSTRACT

"Vladimir Nabokov: Aesthete and/or Humanist"

by Patricia Brückmann

(Abstract of the paper presented at the Annual National Meeting of AATSEEL, Chicago, December 1982.)

The assumption that humanism must be grounded in aesthetic perception seems to me central to Nabokov's writing and to his theory of literature. His aesthetic failures are also his villains - Hermann, Mr. Goodman and all those who do not realize that 'resemblances are the shadows of differences.' In perhaps too many prefaces, Nabokov complains of writers who bring messages in their teeth, blurring Daedalian plan in Wienerschitzel dream. In every strong opinion, he objects to this blurring, to the vulgarization of human individuality both in the generalizing of analysis or in fictions designed, like analysis, to provide escapes from individuality. Classifying butterflies, inventing chess problems and devising novels with science and game become ways of insisting on individuality.

Escape into Aesthetics is, I think, a thoroughly unfortunate title, especially if it translates as 'flight from humanism.' That word ought to be chased back from its rather damp modern overtones to its Renaissance sense, where the precise arts of speech and composition made a man. Nabokov's

Lectures on Literature make this point again and again, in his analyses of texts and in his observation about the effects of these. He describes creation as:

like a jigsaw puzzle that instantly comes together in your brain with the brain itself unable to observe how and why the pieces fit, and you experience a shuddering sensation of wild magic, of some inner resurrection, as if a dead man were revived by a sparkling drug which has been rapidly mixed in your presence.

The sensation is also the thrill (or shiver) of literary discovery, in, say, the apricot in Mansfield Park, the design of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, the coloured shadows of Bleak House. His lectures on literature, like the novels and the chess problems, go always to particular apprehension of details, actual words and scenes, dates and diagrams and figures, as teaching aids to wild magic, object, as above, the revival of dead men. So . . . aesthete because humanist, humanist because aesthete.

ABSTRACT

"A Statement on Nabokov's Art"

by L. L. Lee

(Abstract of the paper delivered at the Annual National Meeting of AATSEEL, Chicago, December 1982.)

Nabokov's repeated assertions that his fiction, especially, contains no "messages," nothing moral, political, or psychological, have of course given his detractors plenty of petard. But he is a moralist, even a political writer, in the midst of his denials.

And so how to defend him? Perhaps simply by asserting that he is a moralist and that his "morality" is a positive one--and that it is everywhere in his life and in his works, in his fiction as well as his other writings. In his life? We have the stories, e.g., his outrage at the anti-semitism of a particular restaurant; his hatred of nazism. We have the plain statements: "My political creed...is classical...Freedom of speech, freedom of thought, freedom of art." What else? He's against "regimentation of thought, governmental censorship, racial or religious persecution...."

And then the fiction itself, for Nabokov creates an art work that makes its moral assertion by both direct and indirect means. For example, his evil characters are truly evil: Hermann Karlovich may be mad but he is also a killer whom hell will never release;

Paduk is a vicious murderer of innocent and good people; M'sieur Pierre is a sly sadist; even Humbert Humbert gets only one day a year of rest from punishment. And political systems that crush the human spirit must be seen as evil: Paduk's dreadful state does reflect actualities and possibilities of the "real" world.

Art, then, cannot help telling us about our world, about ourselves, and so it makes statements. For Nabokov, the "statements" are in the patterns that art makes, or, rather, art arrives at the mystery of existence by seeking out as well as making patterns. And they are always human patterns. (One must add that Nabokov's art is one of language, and language contains our human pasts and presents--this will mean that the moral artist uses language as exactly as possible.)

And so, too, the central "character" for Nabokov must necessarily be that of the artist. The artist is exemplary for Nabokov because the artist figure allows Nabokov to examine, and praise, creativity, that essential human activity. But art is a proper act when performed on matter but not so when done on human beings. His failed artists, for example Hermann Karlovich, must (like Hitler and Mussolini) manipulate human beings. This is an evil. His true artists produce art, that is, they give us beauty and insight.

Illustrations for Invitation to a Beheading

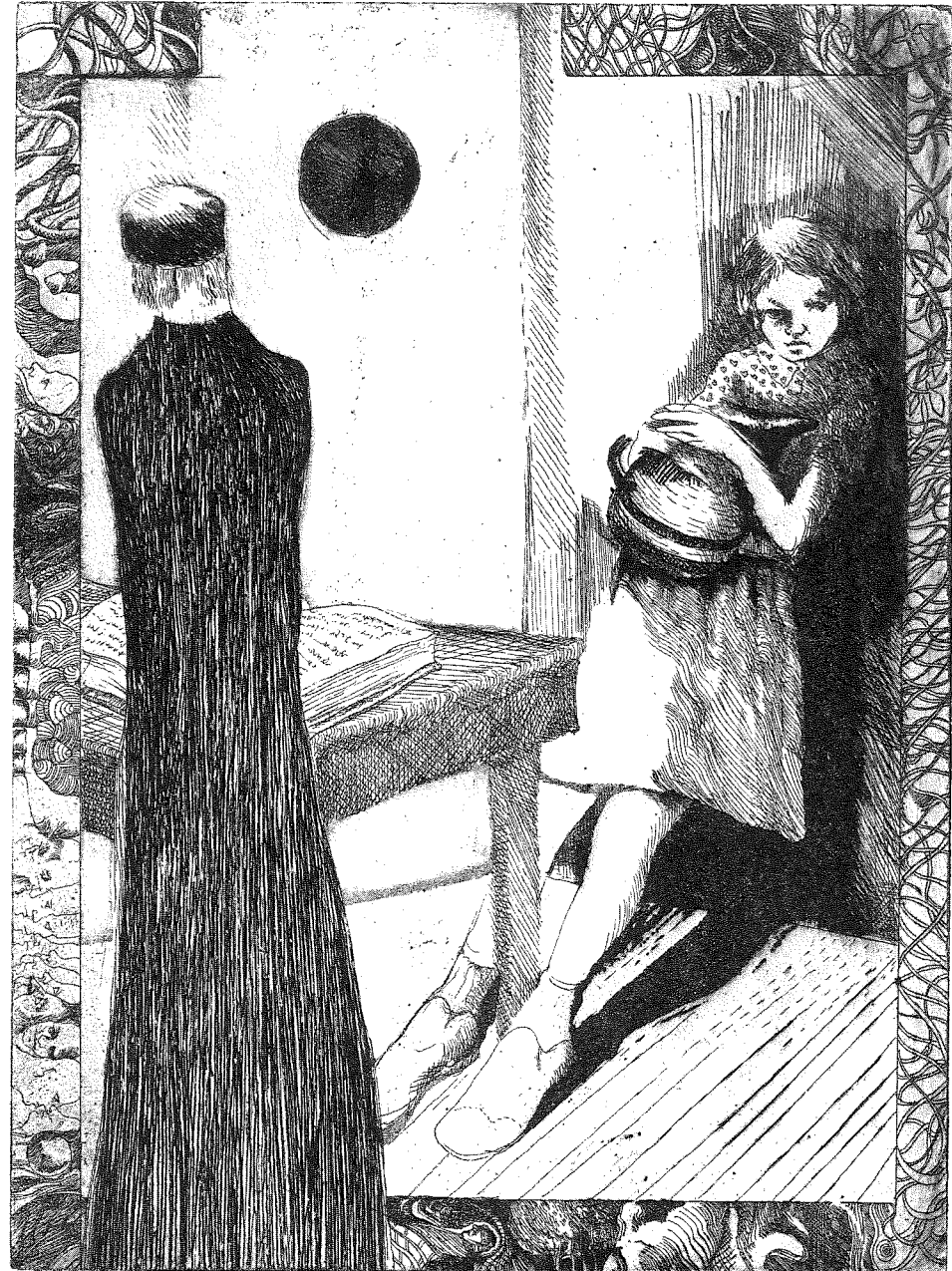
by Kathy Jacobi

Photo-reproduced in this issue are four of the ten copperplate etchings which form a portfolio of illustrations inspired by Invitation to a Beheading as rendered by Kathy Jacobi in a limited edition of forty sets. Etchings, original watercolor drawings, and copper plates were first exhibited at the Fowler-Mills Galleries of Santa Monica, California in 1978.

Ms. Jacobi worked for two years on the Invitation etchings. "I became more and more fascinated with the novel, more and more compelled to deepen my understanding and refine my own responses to Nabokov's statement," she writes. "One of my deep regrets is that I couldn't deliver this tribute to him while he was still alive."

Accompanying each of the etchings is a brief, pertinent quotation from the novel:

EMMIE: . . . now she was leaning against the wall, supporting herself only with her shoulder blades and elbows, sliding forward on her tensed feet in their flat shoes, and straightening up again. She smiled to herself, and then, as she continued slithering, glanced at Cincinnatus with a slight scowl, as one looks at the low sun. All indications were that this was a wild, restless child."



5/11/78

Kathy Jacobi



1211
The woman's story
Kitt's story



1212

1213



THE EXAMINATION: "With his small but muscular hand he was rapidly touching Cincinnatus's neck and examining it carefully, breathing through the nose with a slight wheeze. 'No, nothing. Everything is in order,' he said at last, moving away and slapping the patient on the nape--'Only you do have an awfully thin one . . .'"

CECILIA C: "Cecilia C. got up, making an incredible little gesture, namely, holding her hands apart with index fingers extended, as if indicating size . . . the length, say, of a babe . . ."

THE GAME: "M'sieur Pierre would grow purple, stamp his feet, fume, crawl under the table after the dice and emerge holding them in his palm and swearing that that was exactly the way they had been lying on the floor."

The other etchings in the set are entitled "Dinner with Marthe," "The Interview," "The Acrobat," "The Lover," "Rodion and the Giant Moth," and "The End."

Kathy Jacobi's works have been shown in numerous solo and group exhibitions, and various pieces are held in private and museum collections throughout the USA. She has a long background both in fine arts (printmaking and painting) and book illustration. Among her credits are illustrations for The Half-A-Moon Inn (Harper & Row, 1980), Tomorrow's Wizard (Harper & Row 1982), The Jane Fonda Book of Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Recovery (Simon & Schuster,

1982). She serves as art director for The Wallace Stevens Journal and most recently designed the cover for Dreamworks: An Interdisciplinary Journal. She is currently working on drawings for Nabokov's The Defense.

Ms. Jacobi's address is 17830 Osborne St., Northridge, CA 91325.

ABSTRACT

"Vladimir Nabokov: The Humanism of Aesthetics"

by Priscilla Meyer

(Abstract of the paper delivered at the Annual National Meeting of AATSEEL, Chicago, December 1982.)

My understanding of Nabokov's work is similar in principle to Ellen Pifer's in her recent book. By way of support, I offer the insight I gained by discovering that Nabokov has deeply incorporated Pushkin's Eugene Onegin into Lolita. The "metaliterary" type of Nabokov critic might term this one more of Nabokov's teasing "games," but it's clear that the dialogue between Nabokov's and Pushkin's novels hidden in Lolita is intended as a carefully articulated statement of literary aesthetic belief, as earnest and instructive as any of Chernyshevsky's.

Nabokov gives us a critique of an array of forms of literature, from Lolita's magazines to Western European Romanticism. In so doing he is telling us the difference between literature worth reading or writing and its banal mimics ("Learn to distinguish banality," he repeats to his students at Cornell). The problem with True Love Magazine or Richardson's Grandison, as with pornography, ultimately, is that it depends on simplistic identification, mere projection of self into the role of hero or heroine. This is why he allies Quilty with the German

romantics whose use of the doppelgänger theme underscores the oversimple projection of concepts of good and evil. Lensky and Quilty are identified with Schiller and Goethe, while Humbert, like Onegin, represents a parody of the English Byronic type of Romantic. Humbert is parodied for his use of solipsism, his reduction of everything, especially his Muse, Lolita, to mere self. This is both a moral statement and a literary critical valuation. Like Pushkin, Nabokov believes that vostorg (rapture) is not enough to create art (unlike Quilty and Lensky), one needs the cool critical distance of the natural scientist to achieve vdokhnov-enie (inspiration). This is attained in Onegin and Lolita by the careful interrelation of the various languages of the characters (see Bakhtin), for finally language and the cultural tradition it carries are the center of both authors' concerns. Pushkin carefully juxtaposes high and low elements from different spheres (Western European Romanticism, Russian society conversation, and Russian folk) just as Nabokov deliberately contrasts Humbert's bookish talk with Lolita's slang. In Lolita, Nabokov effects a parallel synthesis of the same Western European Romantics with American culture using E. A. Poe as mediator. This is no game playing, but a passionate commitment to the achievements of human culture, and the value of the word. For ultimately without a deep understanding of the nature of genuine art, a culture is liable to moral and aesthetic erosion. The fairy tale has the potential to provide that aesthetic-moral dimension as popular literature does not, but it has been undermined by the ersatz substitutes of mass culture.

Humbert's misguided Romanticism, despite all its trappings of "high" culture, leads him to debase Lolita just as America's absence of commitment to the ideal realm of the imagination transforms the European Hotel Mirana into the Kumfy Kabins that dot the beautiful American landscape.

Even Nabokov's Commentaries on Onegin represent an attempt to show the pragmatic English-speaking public the place where memory, imagination and the word transcend the conventional boundaries of "fiction" and "real life" in a true aesthetic rather than in misguided projection. In sum Nabokov is a preacher in the Russian tradition, but his ingenious presentation of such sophisticated subtleties seems to have obscured his missionary zeal during the time it has taken his readers to fathom his methods.

Nabokov Bibliography--A Comment

by Brian Boyd

Michael Juliar is to be commended for the pains he is taking to correct Field's bibliography. But it is a little worrying that Mr. Juliar presents evidence only from sources that readily suggest themselves (or were in fact suggested by Field) and happen to be at hand, and also that he seems unaware of some bibliographic commonplaces.

In opening his "Notes from a Descriptive Bibliography (continued)" (VNRN 9) Juliard posits three false assumptions that the "casual peruser" of Field's bibliography might make about the dating of Nabokov's works. But why should he suppose that someone who takes the trouble to consult Field's book will be dim and bibliographically naive? In relation to Juliar's first point, it has for centuries been publishers' common (but of course far from universal) practice to put the following year's date on books published towards the end of a year. In relation to his second point, Field's bibliography makes quite clear that the Russian works were usually first presented in serial form. Moreover, each of Nabokov's forewords to the translations of those Russian novels serialized in Sovremennii zapiski lucidly summarizes the relation between serial and book version. Surely those who bother to search out a bibliography of Nabokov will already have enjoyed at least some of his books and so will be aware of the serializations. As for the third point, Juliar says

"there is no more to be said" on the varying lapses between composition and publication of Nabokov's work. On the contrary, here lie the real romance and adventure of Nabokov bibliography, because to treat this matter properly requires establishing when the works were written (Dar, for instance, was written not between 1935 and 1937 but between 1932 and, it seems, early 1938) and because the story of the delay between completing a manuscript and having it published in full (in the case of Dar, The Real Life of Sebastian Knight, Lolita, Eugene Onegin or Lolita: A Screenplay, for example) can be a splendid saga or a comedy of frustration in its own right.

In the next section of his article, "Publication Dates," Juliar redates Nabokov's early work according to advertisements in Rul'. It is an inauspicious remark when he suggests the newspaper was probably published from 17 November 1920. The standard bibliography of émigré periodicals (L'Emigration Russe en Europe: Catalogue Collectif des Périodiques, Paris: Institut d'Etudes Slaves, 1976) records correctly that Rul' first appeared on November 16 (for the curious: it reached Berlin streets at 4 o'clock that afternoon). And what does Juliar mean when he writes that Rul' is not available for early 1923? It can be consulted for those months in half a dozen libraries.

Obviously Rul' is particularly important for Nabokov bibliography. But it should not be confining. It would be worth checking at least the standard bibliographical monthlies of the emigration, which do in fact exist, for the years 1921-1925 (Russkaya kniga, Nov-

→ & in Rul' (1/1/23 p. 2) ...
aya russkaya kniga, the bibliographical section of Volya Rossii). Novaya russkaya kniga shows that Anya v strane chudes had appeared by January 1923, not May. If on 19 February 1922 Rul' lists Gorniy put' as being printed, Russkaya kniga had announced that the book was in press as early as September 1921.

In his next section "The Russian literary journal" Juliar implies that significant serial publications of literary works are hardly known to anglophone bibliographers, that they are a feature virtually peculiar to Russian literature. But what of Dickens, who dominated a publishing era as no other writer ever has? Each new installment of his novels would be awaited eagerly by lord and lackey alike. Serial structure, too, is far more important in a Dickens or a Thackeray novel for a comprehension of its artistry than in any of Nabokov's Russian work, where serial publication played no shaping role. In fact the only cases where Nabokov did tailor his material with an eye to the length a periodical could gracefully manage were two English books, Conclusive Evidence and Pnin, both designed for The New Yorker--which however did not always accept his chapters.

Juliar asks "Do bibliographers state that in such-and-such an issue of Esquire appeared the first publications [sic]--the true first appearance--of Transparent Things?" Well, no, because no bibliography of Nabokov's works has been published since Field's, which had a cut-off date of January 1972, and it was not until the December 1972 issue of Esquire that Transparent Things

"made the slicks." Esquire had in any case agreed with McGraw-Hill to let the book be published just before the magazine version; as it happened, the book emerged even earlier than agreed upon (November 15), being widely on sale by the last week of October: the McGraw-Hill instar was after all the "true first appearance." But accidents of priority aside, there is also a theoretical principle here that must be understood. The major task of detailed bibliography is to suggest the relationship between what an author wrote and the forms in which his text has been successively handed down. In these terms the Esquire Transparent Things has an interesting but rather insignificant place in the transmission stemma of Nabokov's text, for it was set in type after the McGraw-Hill version (which had Nabokov's final corrections to page proofs before Esquire had even undertaken to print the novel) and was not used as copy text for any subsequent version. That is why a serious bibliographer such as Juliar should give little attention to the Esquire Transparent Things and a great deal say to the Sovremennie zapiski Zashchita Luzhina: because of their vastly different place in their respective stemmata, and not because of supposedly abrupt and all-determining cultural differences.

Juliar's work will relieve us, thank Log, of the need to resort to Field's bibliography. But if he wants things right, he must learn to be more thorough in chasing down evidence and in grasping bibliographic theory and practice.

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A Reply to My Critic

by Michael Juliar

My "note" is part of a "work-in-progress" and all that the phrase implies.

° I do not suppose anywhere that anyone using Field is "dim" or "naive." I do suppose that anyone using Field, though he is aware of Field's shortcomings, does not know for sure if the fact facing him on the page is accurate or not. Even if one is not a "casual peruser", it is easy to make false assumptions about something--anything--in Field. Unfortunately, today there is no one reliable source to turn to.

° Though it may not be uncommon for publishers to postdate their wares, how does the scholar or collector know that the citation he is reading or the book he is examining is postdated? Only when someone has checked sources and found out. I did. And I published my preliminary findings.

° I have read books by Nabokov and I have read books about Nabokov, but I have never read of the role the "thick literary journals" plays in Russian literature. What I was told by those who knew, who had lived and still live the émigre literary life that Nabokov did, was ear-opening news to me. I was very pleasantly surprised; I thought many others would be too. Is a journal like the VNRN only for the scholar who is comfortably seated in his broad knowledge of Nabokov, the emigration and Russian literature?

Though Field lists the serial publications of Nabokov's works and, in his engaging and charming forewords, Nabokov also indicates them, the point still is the significance of their publication in the "thick literary journals" of the emigration.

° There is much of interest in the interstices of Nabokov's compositions and their publication. But I can say no more than I did in my note. I look forward to what Dr. Boyd and others can inform us.

° The ideal source of information on when a book was published is one that tells us when it was first put on sale or distributed to the public. Publishers' records (not often available) are good. Book store incoming shipment receipts (not readily available either) are better. Newspaper ads in daily papers informing the public of wares on sale are very good and very available.

The business world is a timely world. A retail business does not save its goods for the future; and it doesn't promote its goods before it has them to sell. (Creating customer demand and not being able to satisfy it is bad business anywhere.) The book ads in Rul' and Posledniia novosti, for example, were public announcements of the present availability of particular books. Except when they explicitly say so, they are not trade announcements about the future.

° I would appreciate Dr. Boyd letting me know where in the United States I can find a library with the first three months of the 1923 Rul'.

◦ I state that my evidence "is neither complete nor definitive." My "notes" are preliminary.

◦ Dickens' was published, not amid a crowd of other Victorians in popular periodicals, but alone, "in parts", in wrappers (often blue or green) to be bought in installments and bound by the buyer when the work was complete. This mode of publication became quite popular in 1836-37 with Pickwick. Its faddishness continued into the 1870's, with Thackeray and Trollope, among others, joining Dickens.

◦ Transparent Things did appear in Esquire after the book was published. Yet, if it had appeared first (as, for instance, the English translation of Zashchita Luzhina first appeared in successive issues of The New Yorker in 1964), it would still not have had the impact on the literary world that the serial publication of Zashchita Luzhina in Sovremenyia zapiski did in 1929-1930. That is the point.

An Interview with Vladimir Nabokov for the
CBC

by Mati Laansoo

[On March 20, 1973 Mati Laansoo, a correspondent for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, met with Vladimir Nabokov in the Montreux-Palace Hotel to record a radio interview. In accordance with VN's standard practice, the questions had been submitted by Mr. Laansoo in advance, and VN's answers had been prepared in writing. The tape of the interview has been aired twice. This is the first publication of the transcript. We wish to thank Mr. Laansoo and Mrs. Vera Nabokov for their permission to share the interview with VNRN readers.]

* * * * *

Q: How do you regard the Nobel Prize for Literature? The people who have seriously read your works realize that you are indisputably the greatest living author in the world. Given that, how do you explain the lamentable omission of your works by the Nobel Prize Committee? Is it a matter of geographic boundaries and ideological differences?

A: Your first question is so precisely and pleasantly phrased that I feel embarrassed by the display of vagueness with which I must formulate my reply. Now and then, in the course of the last three or four decades,

I have caught myself idly reflecting on the attractive resemblance between the beginning of the name of that famous prize, and the beginning of my own name: N,O,B, N,A,B, what a delightful recurrence of letters! Alliteration, however, is a deceptive relationship. Its magic cannot hope to establish the fortunate link between laurel and brow. On the other hand I do feel that as a writer I am not inferior to, say, Rabin-dranath Tagore (Nineteen Thirteen) or Grazia Deledda (Nineteen Twenty-Six); but then, of course, quite a number of uncrowned authors must exist, at this very moment, nursing the same forlorn feeling. In response to the conjecture at the end of your question, I can only affirm my conviction that honest judges should not be prejudiced by my geopolitical situation - that of a non-progressive American hailing from a nonexistent Russia. The situation may look somewhat bizarre; it would be absurd to call it hopeless. After all, let us not forget that another Russian in much the same position as I, did get that prize. His name is no doubt on your lips. I am referring of course to Ivan Bunin (Nineteen Thirty-Three).

Q: One often hears the word "responsibility". How do you hold yourself responsible to the children as an "elder", in the anthropological sense?

A: I'm afraid that the little I know about anthropology as a science is limited to its taxonomic aspect dealing with the classificat-

ion of various subspecies of homo sapiens and with problems relating to the skulls of ancestral forms of the creature. Otherwise I find the subject of popular or applied "anthropology" tedious and even repulsive. The noun "elder", within that frame of reference, conjures up for me the image of a shaggy hermit all beads and beard with a more or less prehistoric cast of rugged features and a cave of sorts in the background. Tribal generalizations mean nothing to me. I prefer to use the term "responsibility" in its proper sense, linked with moral tradition, with principles of decency and personal honor deliberately passed from father to son. I can speak also of responsibility in the capacity of an educator, of the professor of literature which I taught for some twenty years in America. Here I was on my own, founding my own tradition, following my own taste, creating my own artistic values and trying to impress my own approach to art upon the minds of my students - or at least some of my students. I am responsible for having taught those best children of my time a method of appreciation based on the artistic and scholarly impact of literary fiction but I never was directly concerned with the general ideas that they might derive from this or that great novel or the question how they would apply its more or less obvious ideas to their own life. That was the duty and choice of their actual, not metaphorical, elders.

Q: Having read your brief treatise on "Inspiration" in the Saturday Review of the

Arts, I wonder, outside of your art, what tumbles your grimace from irritation to pain?

A: The list of things, big and small, that I find utterly hateful is a long one. Pet hates are generally more banal than loves. Let me limit myself to a few obvious samples. Cruelty comes at the top, then dirt, drugs, nuisance by noise, coat hangers of wire, modish words (such as "charisma" or "hopefully"), quick quack art, breaking a finger nail with no scissors in sight, mislaying my spectacle case, finding that the current issue of my favourite weekly is suddenly devoted to Children's Books.

Q: At what portals has the burglar of laughter broken and entered into your edifices?

A: Oh, Laughter is not a burglar at all. Good old Laughter is a permanent lodger in every house I construct. He is in fact the built-in-roomer. He has the right to keep a mermaid in the bathtub. He is responsible for consigning Freud and Marx to the garbage can and destroying quite a few dictators. He drives some of my silliest critics mad with helpless rage. To extend your metaphors - which I seem to be doing all the time - my books would be dreary and dingy edifices indeed had that little fellow not been around.

Q: Why do the Swiss make such good mercenaries and watches?

A: I am the last person to be consulted on the subject of watches. I am apprehensive of watches as some people are of a coiled snake - and how abnormal it is to carry a watch around your wrist or keep one in your waistcoat pocket like a spare heart! Despite my terror of them I love expensive watches - I shall always remember a very flat, thin, golden one of Swiss make that I had as a foppish boy sixty years ago, it lay on the palm of my hand like a pool of cold dew; yet watches detest me. I have never had one that was not fast or slow, and it takes at least a fortnight to have a Swiss watch repaired in the place where it was bought; and most terrible of all are the fake clocks of clock-makers' shop signs, which are set at a motionless and meaningless quarter to three to show how appealing they can spread their hands.

Q: The eggheads' endeavour involving the pressure-cooker blasted to the moon has hatched such rewards for mankind as teflon, the five-year flashlight battery and the pocket mini-computer. How might the artist have hoped to improve on these dubious returns?

A: The undescribable excitement and delight of reaching a celestial body, of palpat-ing its pebbles, of sifting its dust, of seeing things and shadows of things never seen

before,-these are emotions of unique importance to a certain uniquely important variety of man. We are speaking of divine thrills, aren't we, not of comic-strip gadgets. Who cares for the practical benefits derived from the exploration of space! I shall not mind if more and more trillions of dollars are spent on visits to the moon or Mars. I would only recommend that our jaunty and fearless space sportsmen be accompanied by a few men of acute imagination, true scientists of Darwin's type, an artistic genius or two - even some gray octopus of a poet who might lose his mind in the process of gaining a new world, but what does it matter, it is the ecstasy that counts.

Q: Why did Fischer beat Spassky?

A: Apart from the fact that Fischer showed himself to be the better player, there are psychological complications to be reckoned with. Fischer when he played that match was the free champion of a free country with no whims barred and no fear of retribution for a fatal blunder. Wretched Spassky, on the other hand, always had a couple of stone-faced agents dogging him on an island with no escape or hiding-place. He felt the presence and pressure of the Soviet police state all the time- and one wonders would Fischer have won had the roles been reversed and the eyes of those grim annotaters followed his every move with the same governmental threat. The farcical little scene of the wife being flown over from Russia was I

thought especially gruesome but also rather hilarious as a desperate hygienic measure revealing the peculiar animal stupidity that is in a way a redeeming feature of the most elaborate dictatorships.

Q: A Canadian artist has intimated that time is the thing that stops everything happening at once, and space is the thing that stops it happening all in the same place. Could you comment on this?

A: That's very neatly put. But it is only an aphorism, only a flourish of wonderful wit. It suggests the way a timepiece and a piece of space work in relation to each other, but it tells us nothing of the texture of time or the substance of space. When composing my chapter about Time in ADA, I concluded-and am still leaning upon the gate of that conclusion - I concluded that Time has nothing to do with Space, and is not a "dimension" in the sense that Space is a dimension. Thought, for example, in order to breed properly, needs the broth of Time, no matter how scanty, but does not require Space. Yet, even when we speak about a "little" time or a "long" time we are not actually referring to size, and what we measure is not Time itself or the distance between two tangible points of Time (as we measure Space), but a stretch of our own existence between two recollections in a medium which our mind cannot really grasp. Everything in the nature of life is impossible to understand but some things are less

possible to understand than others, and Time is among the most slippery ones.

Q: Is there anything that interests you about your audience, or, how would you interview your interviewer?

A: In the first flush of my so-called fame, just before World War Two, around, say, 1938, in Paris, where my last novel written in Russian started to run in an émigré magazine, I used to visualize my audience, with tender irony, as a small group of my Russian émigré fans, each with one of my books held in his hands like a hymnal, all this in the rather subdued light of a back room in a café. Ten years later, in my American transposition, the room of my fancy had grown as large as a comfortable auditorium. Still later, more and more people had to stand for want of seats. Then, in the Sixties, after the appearance of Lolita, several new halls had to be built, both in the New World and in the Old. I have readers now not only in Brazil and Israel, but in the Soviet Union where factually my works are banned and every ghostly smuggler is equal to a hundred legitimate readers elsewhere. What interests me, or better say moves me, in regard to my present audience is that a figment of my fancy, not much more solid than an invented castle or cloud in one of my stories has become an actual event. I am a shy, retiring person. I feel stupidly confused to have my books provoke such attention and ask so much of my read-

ers, whose eyesight in some cases is not too good (as their nice letters, with stamps enclosed, tell me) and whose fathers or children happen to be hospitalized with some terrible terminal illness which a simple autograph from me would certainly cure. "Dear Vladimir Nabokov, some say, excuse me for using a page of my exercise book, but teacher has assigned all your books - and I am only a highschool kid" - all this in the handwriting of an old professional collector of autographs. I am an old collector too, but of butterflies, not autographs, and it is my entomological hunts in Canada that come to my mind as my voice is being projected onto Canadian air. One of my favorite spots remains a ravine smothered in flowers, near Fernie, three miles east of Elko, British Columbia, where on a summer day in 1958 I collected specimens of a very local little blue butterfly (Lycaeides idas ferniensis) which I badly wanted for the Cornell University Museum. Your curiosity about audiences has produced as you see quite a bit of digressive response, so let me now have your tenth and last question.

Q: How does your wife Véra Nabokov puzzle you?

A: I am puzzled by many things about her: by her inability to keep figures and dates in her head, by the disorder on her desk, by her gift of tracking down a needed item that is the more precious the more complicated the search in the maze. I marvel at the way

she can quote by heart old Russian sayings and ditties - sometimes quite new to me after almost half-a-century of shared life. I find fascinating the accuracy with which she picks out the best book in the batch that publishers send me every month or so with their compliments and hopes. I am filled with wonder every time that my random thought or actual sentence is simultaneously voiced by her in those flashes of domestic telepathy whose mystery is only enhanced by their frequency. And I also find enigmatic the stroke of miraculous intuition that makes her find the right words of consolation to give me when something awful such as a misprint somehow left uncorrected by me in a recent novel, causes me to plunge into a torrent of Russian despair.

March 20, 1973
Montreux