THE VLADIMIR NABOKOV

RESEARCH NEWSLETTER

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THE VLADIMIR NABOKOV RESEARCH NEWSLETTER

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NEWS ITEMS AND WORK IN PROGRESS

by Stephen Jan Parker

With this issue we complete our sixth year of publication. From the slim 33 pages of the fall 1978 issue we have expanded to the 64 pages of the fall 1983 issue. From an initial handful of subscribers we have grown into a substantial, international, loyal readership of more than 270. From the relative paucity of contributions which reached the editor at first, we have come to receive a steady, substantial flow of materials from around the world. Our development over six years affirms that the Newsletter appeared at a propitious moment (as we had hoped in 1978) and that interest in Vladimir Nabokov's life and works continues to grow.

We believe that a 64-page, bound publication can no longer masquerade as a "newsletter," a term which conjures up for many a four-page mimeographed throwaway. Following the suggestions of numerous readers, the question of renaming the VNRN was discussed at this year's annual meeting. The general consensus favored a change, and from the various titles suggested we have narrowed the choice to NABOKOV STUDIES or THE NABOKOVIAN. We are inclined to select the latter, a title which states our subject clearly, encourages interest from academics and non-academics, suggests no restrictions on the content, and conveys a simple elegance. This issue will likely be the last to carry the title The Vladimir Nabokov Research Newsletter.

*

We are also announcing a modest increase in rates -- our first in three years -- beginning with 1985 subscriptions. Since this publication is entirely self-supporting, with a stable readership but ever increasing costs, and since we have had an increasing deficit the past three years, we have no alternative. An increase of $1.00 in all subscription categories was agreed upon at the annual meeting (as well as an increase in overseas and airmail postage sufficient to meet actual costs).

*

Two Nabokov Society sessions were held in New York City this year. The Chairpersons have provided the following reports.

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The seventh annual meeting of The Vladimir Nabokov Society -- and its first meeting as an allied organization of the Modern Language Association -- was held at the Hilton Hotel on December 28 as part of the MLA National Convention. The panel, co-chaired by Phyllis Roth and Beverly Lyon Clark, was on "Lovers, Muses, and Nymphets: Women in the Art of Nabokov." Jenefer P. Shute spoke on "'So nakedly dressed': The Text of the Female Body in Nabokov's Novels"; Martin Green, on "Nabokov's Columbine"; Marija Stankus-Saulitis, on "Nabokov's Heroine"; and D. Barton Johnson, on "Nabokov's Incestuous Heroines." About thirty people attended the session, including a reporter from The Chronicle of Higher Education (for a report of D. Barton Johnson's talk, see the January 4 issue of The Chronicle, pp. 5, 9). The Society's business meeting followed the session. Topics under discussion were the renaming of the VNRN and the increase of dues/subscription rates. The meeting concluded with an exchange of news about recent and forthcoming Nabokov scholarship.

Beverly Lyon Clark

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The Vladimir Nabokov Society sponsored a session at the 1983 annual meeting of AATSEEL at the Roosevelt Hotel in New York on December 29 from 7-9 pm. Attendance was approximately fifteen. D. Barton Johnson, Chairperson, introduced the speakers whose papers dealt with aspects of Nabokov's career as an émigré Russian writer. Marina Naumann provided a biographic summary of Nabokov's years in Berlin; Charles Nicol's paper on Mary and Glory was read in his absence by the Chair; Duffield White discussed The Gift as a formulation of Nabokov's aesthetic views, and Priscilla Meyer examined the Onegin subtext in Lolita. The papers were ably critiqued by Sergei Davydov.

D. Barton Johnson

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Nabokov sessions will again be held this year in association with both the MLA and AATSEEL National Conventions. The

MLA session, to be chaired by Beverly Lyon Clark (English Department, Wheaton College, Norton MA 02766), has as its topic, "Nabokov and the 'Passion of Science'." The AATSEEL session, to be chaired by Priscilla Meyer (Department of Russian, Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT 06457), will have as its topic, "Nabokov and Cultural Synthesis." Persons interested in further information should contact the chairpersons directly.

*

A session entitled "Nabokov and Non-fiction," was held at the annual meeting of the Western Slavic Association, Stanford University, March 31. Ronald Peterson served as chairperson and Brett Cooke served as discussant. The papers presented were: "Fictional Elements in Nabokov's Introductory Remarks," Ronald Peterson; "Footnote as Literary Genre: Nabokov's Commentaries on Lermontov and Pushkin," Nicholas Werner; and "Autobiography, Auto-translation, and Nabokov," Judson Rosengrant.

*

Mrs. Vera Nabokov has kindly provided the following listing of VN's works published October 1983 - February 1984.

October 1983 - Lolita, tr. Brenno Silveira. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil: Circulo do livra, bookclub edition.

November 1983 - Mademoiselle O (Nabokov's Dozen). Paris: Julliard; Editions de Club, France Loisirs.

November 1983 - Ada, tr. Gilles Chahine, with collaboration of J. B. Blandenier, "revue par l'auteur". Paris: Fayard; new edition, Livre de Poche.

December 1983 - Pnin, tr. into Russian from English by G. Barabtarlo, with the collaboration of Vera Nabokov. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Ardis, hardcover and paperback.

December 1983 - "The Rain" (poem) in A Green Place, compiled by W. J. Smith. New York: Delacorte Press.

December 1983 - "Colored Hearing" in One Hundred Major Modern Writers. New York: Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing.

December 1983 - Numerous citations, including VN's translation of "Orpheus," in Khodasevich: His Life and Art, by David Bethea. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

January 1984 - Blednyi ogon' (Pale Fire), tr. Vera Nabokov. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Ardis, hardcover and paperback.

February 1984 - Dar (The Gift). Ann Arbor, Michigan: Ardis, new edition.

*

Dieter Zimmer (Erikastrasse 81a, 2000 Hamburg 20, West Germany) writes: "For my translation of the 1966 version of Speak, Memory (to be published by Rowohlt Verlag, Reinbeck, as Sprich, Erinnerung, sprich in

March 1984 and serialized in the fall of 1983 by Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, with a few cuts), I prepared a list of all lepidoptera mentioned in the book, with their Latin and their German names. The purpose was to identify them properly. Vera Nabokov very graciously checked my finds and corrected them in numerous instances. The thing now looks as if there were nothing to it. Behind some of the items, however, there are hours of search on remote shelves of remote and chairless libraries. Future translators and Ph.D. candidates inquiring into 'VN and Entomology' might find it of some use."

Mr. Zimmer also notes: "The grave of Vladimir Dmitrievich Nabokov, VN's father, is mentioned on page 49 of Speak, Memory (1966) as being situated 'in the Greek-Catholic cemetery of Tegel, now in East Berlin.' Actually it is in West Berlin, like all of Tegel, just a mile or two north of the new West Berlin airport and not much farther from the Wall. The cemetery, called 'Russischer Friedhof,' still is there, though crowded in by a new expressway, and so is the grave with its modest white wooden cross of the sort prevailing in this place. I went to see it and took a picture. There was nobody around, and it looked as if there had not been anybody for the last days, or years."

*

Simon Karlinsky (Dept. of Slavic Languages and Literatures, Univ. of California, Berkeley, CA 94720) writes that his latest

Nabokov project is an extensive essay on VN's oeuvre for the four-volume Storia della Letteratura russa, edited by Efim Etkind and Georges Nivat, to be published by Einaudi, in Torino, at some unspecified future date.

*

Maurice Couturier (Faculté des lettres et sciences humaines, Université de Nice, 06036 Nice, France) informs us of the recent publication of a special Nabokov issue of a French journal for which he was the editor. Delta, No. 17 (October 1983) contains nine articles, half in English and half in French, and a bibliography. More than 50 pages of the 135 page issue are devoted to Ada because, as he explains, "this novel is on a national syllabus for the 'agrégation' (the most prestigious competitive exam in France for future academics) this year, as a result of some lobbying on my part." The issue costs 40 francs and can be obtained from Claude Richard, Revue Delta, Université Paul Valéry - BP 5043, 34032 Montpellier, France. Professor Couturier also notes that Delta has published the proceedings of the 1983 Nice Conference on Representation and Performance in Postmodern Fiction in which the writings of Nabokov were considered along with other American authors such as Barth, Barthelme, Coover, Gass, and Pynchon.

*

Peter Evans (158 Tokyo-to, Setagaya-ku, Higashi Tamagawa 1-3-4, Japan) is

working on the compilation -- in English and in Japanese -- of a complete descriptive bibliography of the many Japanese editions of VN's works.

*

The Achievements of Vladimir Nabokov, co-edited by George Gibian and Stephen Parker, will be published in early June of this year by The Center for International Studies, Cornell University (170 Uris Hall, Ithaca, NY 14853). The volume contains essays, studies, reminiscences, stories and photographs from the five-month-long Nabokov Festival held at Cornell in the winter and spring of 1983.

*

Magdelena Medarić-Kovacic of The University of Zagreb has promised to send us a complete bibliography of VN's works and criticism published in Yugoslavia. For the time being she has provided the following citations:

Lolita. Otokar Kersovani, Rijeka, 1968.

Lolita. Otokar Kersovani, Rijeka, 1971.

Poziv na smaknuće (Invitation to a Beheading). Znanje, Zagreb, 1970.

Ada. Otokar Kersovani, Rijeka, 1971.

Smijeh u tami (Laughter in the Dark) and Pnin, Otokar Kersovani, Rijeka, 1971.

Prozirnost stvari (Transparent Things). Graficki zavod Hrvatske, Zagreb, 1980.

"Poseta muzeju" (The Visit to the Museum) in Savremena svetska prica I-II, David Albahari, Prosveta, Beograd, 1982.

Nikolaj Gogolj, zivotopis. Znanje, Zagreb, 1983.

Ms. Medaric-Kovacić also notes that The Defense was published recently in Serbia and "The Visit to the Museum" has appeared in Slovenian.

*

Two citations in the Fall 1983 issue (VNRN #11) should be corrected. In the listing of VN's published works (p. 7) one finds the curious "'Le poème' dit par Chichikov" included in the citation to a photocopy edition of Annales Contemporaines. The citation should actually read: "March 1983 - The photocopy of issue LXX of Annales Contemporaines, which contains the beginning of 'Solus Rex' (25 pages); a poem by 'V. Shishkov'; and an article, 'Literary Parade.' Items 1 and 3 appear over the signature 'V. Sirin.'" And for those who may have wondered, the reference to the German translation of Speak, Memory, II cited on page 13 does not refer to a sequel to Speak, Memory (which VN never wrote), but to the revised edition, Speak, Memory: An Autobiography Revisited.

*

Leszek Engelking replies to Charles Nicol's comment to Mr. Engelking's note in VNRN #11 (Fall 1983), p. 42: "As to Professor Nicol's guess concerning Valeria Zborovski's name: to my knowledge, Leopold Zborowski had his art gallery on the rue de Siene not on the rue Bonaparte. Besides, Zborowski died, poverty striken, in 1932. So he could not be the art-dealer next door to the restaurant at which Humbert and Valeria had had their meals in the years 1935-1939 ['This state of affairs lasted from 1935 to 1939,' Lolita, p. 28]."

*

Mrs. Vera Nabokov writes: "In No. 11 of the Newsletter Julian Connolly mentions Zhukovsky as a possible source of inspiration for the thirteen two-liners in Ada (pp. 138-39 and 141)--'My sister, do you still recall' etc. I happen to be able to supply the true source of those lines. They hark back to Chateaubriand's poem (a great favorite of VN's) beginning:

Combien j'ai douce souvenance
Du joli lieu de ma naissance! ...

A further stanza begins:

Ma soeur, te souvient-il encore
Du château que beignait la Dore ...

and still further:

Oh! qui me rendra mon Hélène,
Et ma montagne, et le grand chêne? ...

As you can see, the river's name as well as the big oak and the mountain come all of them courtesy of Chateaubriand. Lucille, incidentally, was the true name of Chateaubriand's sister, with whom he was in love."

*

Nami Fukunaga (Kanagawa-ken), Kamakura-shi, Ougigayatsu 2-24-11, Japan 248) passes along an item of paraNabokovology. She notes that on p. 7 of Crosstalk: Women, Partners and Children in the Eighties by Ian Marshall and Cecilia Morris (Sydney: Fontana Books, 1983), we read that VN's instructions to progress from the details of a book to generalizations about it--if such generalizations are to be attempted at all--has been elevated to a "Law" (so capitalized). Since this "Nabokov's Law" is then applied to writing rather than reading, and since all of this is in the context of the lives of Australian women of the 1980s, Ms. Fukunaga remarks that she thinks "it might have bemused the distinguished professor who first formulated it for American academia."

*

"What do each of the following have in common -- Saul Bellow's Herzog, J. D. Salinger's Catcher in the Rye and Vladimir Nabokov's Lolita? Answer -- they are the only novels by Americans included in the 'Best Novels of Our Time' list recently published by the British Book Marketing Council." So ran an item in the New York Times Book Review of November 1983. Readers may have kept up with the flap

which followed. Anthony Burgess, for one, denounced the list as "woeful" and "eccentric," but the NY Times concluded that the list succeeded in focusing deserved public attention on these particular authors and books.

*

John DeMoss (Univ. of Maryland, U.S. Naval Station, FPO NY 09540), currently teaching in Spain, sends along another item of paraNabokovology. He writes: "One of the Spanish television channels is broadcasting a commercial these days advertising a subscription series called 'the erotic library' (Biblioteca del Erotismo). In the ad, a voluptuous woman reclines on a couch reading one of the volumes while an announcer's voice describes the series. The woman's eyes occasionally open wide and her eyebrows begin to ascend her forehead. At the same time, a list of authors represented in the series crosses the bottom of the screen: D. H. Lawrence, Boccacio, Oscar Wilde, Henry Miller, Nabokov, Sade.... The volumes sell for about two dollars each (325 pesetas)."

*

"Save those old issues" item. The most recent catalog of first and limited editions of books and journals put out by John T. Zubal, Inc. (Scholarly Periodicals and Books, Cleveland, Ohio) includes, on page 24, under the "Vladimir Nabokov" listings: "1766. The Vladimir Nabokov Research Newsletter. wrappers, nos. 2, 3, 10, per no: $10.00."

*

During the past six years several of our subscribers have generously supported this publication with unsolicited financial contributions, as well as with warm words of encouragement. I would like to thank all of you, and in particular Mr. David Stivender, Mrs. Vera Nabokov, and Mr. Dmitri Nabokov. I would also like to thank those readers who responded to the request for names and addresses of potential subscribers. Such information is always welcome and appreciated.

*

Special thanks to Ms. Paula Oliver for her invaluable and greatly appreciated assistance in the publication of this issue.

Uncle Ruka's _Romance_

In Chapter Three, Section Six of _Speak, Memory: An Autobiography Revisited_ the author remembers returning home from a morning butterfly hunt and catching "the wounded music" of his Uncle Ruka's _romance_. The full passage reads:

> One day, on the terrace of [Uncle Ruka's] Pau castle, with the amber vineyards below and the empurpled mountains in the distance, at a time when he was harassed by asthma, palpitations, shiverings, a Proustian excoriation of the senses, _se débattant_, as it were, under the impact of the autumn colors (described in his own words as the _'Chapelle ardente de feuilles aux tons violents'_), of the distant voices from the valley, of a flight of doves striating the tender sky, he had composed that one-winged _romance_ (and the only person who memorized the music and all the words was my brother Sergey, whom he hardly ever noticed, who also stammered, and who is also now dead).
>
> _'L'air transparent fait monter de la plaine...'_ he would sing in his high tenor voice, seated at the white piano in our country house--and if I were at that moment hurrying through the adjacent groves on my way home for lunch (soon after seeing his jaunty straw hat and the black-velvet-clad bust of his handsome coachman in Assyrian profile, with scarlet-sleeved outstretched arms, skim rapidly along the rim of the hedge separating the park from the drive) the plaintive sounds
>
> _Un vol de tourterelles strie le ciel tendre,_
> _Les chrysanthèmes se parent pour la Toussaint_
>
> reached me and my green butterfly net on the shady, tremulous trail, at the end of which was a vista of reddish sand and the corner of our freshly repainted house, the color of young fir cones, with the open drawing-room window whence the wounded music came. [pp. 74-75]

Sergey wrote out the full lyrics and sent them to his mother. They were found among her papers following her death, but the musical score which Sergey had also promised to provide her was not found. The full text of Uncle Ruka's charming _romance_ is given below, courtesy of Mrs. Hélène Sikorsky-Nabokov and Mrs. Vera Nabokov. The attentive reader will note that VN, who worked from memory and did not have an actual copy of the lyrics, rearranged the first line of the third stanza.

> Octobre est là! Radieux dans sa parure,
> chapelle ardente de feuilles aux tons violents;
> aux pampres secs s'égrénent les

grappes mûres
- dernier repas des oiseaux émigrants.

L'air transparent fait monter de la plaine
des sons de vie et des travaux des champs,
et plus sonore chaque soir la cloche lointaine
chante l'angélus à la nuit qui descend.

Des tourterelles - le vol strie le ciel tendre,
les chrysanthèmes se parent pour la Toussaint;
le soleil pâle fait longtemps attendre
aux roses frileuses sa caresse du matin.

Octobre est là! Chaque jour est une jouissance!
un Te Deum à la nature qui meurt
- Tendres pétales dont la blancheur encense -
les magnolias nous donnent leurs dernières fleurs ...

ABSTRACT

"Nabokov at Cornell"

by Brian Boyd

(Abstract of a paper presented at the Nabokov Festival, Cornell University, April 1983)

Nabokov was a professor of Russian literature at Cornell from 1948 to 1959. During those years he wrote Conclusive Evidence, Lolita, his last short stories and Pnin, and made beginnings on Pale Fire and Ada; he spent years translating and researching Eugene Onegin and the Song of Igor's Campaign; he passed his summers on now-fabled lepping trips in the West. But those parts of Nabokov's life will have to be told another time. I restricted myself to Nabokov's formal relations with Cornell, especially the story of his coming to the college and the changing composition of his teaching load. Even within such institutional limits we can see the uniqueness of Nabokov's mind.

Morris Bishop invited Nabokov to teach Russian literature at Cornell because he respected him as a writer. Nabokov's curriculum vitae listed other qualifications which could justify Bishop's move: his years of tutoring in Germany; the experience and confidence he gained in facing large audiences during reading tours in Europe; his work as a newspaper critic in Berlin and New York and as a teacher at Stanford and Wellesley. But the unwritten credentials,

qualities of Nabokov's mind which Bishop could not know, were even better: the innate passion and patience of his mental curiosity, from the time of his childhood studies in lepidoptera or Russian meter to his scholarly zeal in researching the life of Chernyshevsky or in systematizing nearctic Lycaenids; the fierily critical cast of his mind.

Nabokov's arrival at Cornell was greatly smoothed by the attentiveness of Morris Bishop. One of the aims of the paper in fact was to pay tribute to Bishop's courage and insight in inviting Nabokov to Cornell and his kind solicitude from the moment Nabokov replied.

Though Nabokov had been expected to teach not only Russian literature but also in a freshman Introduction to Literature course, "a sort of Great Books and stimulating blather course, the Bible to T. S. Eliot" (Morris Bishop), he managed to be allowed to teach only Russian. But because there were few students whose Russian language was satisfactory, his class numbers were low. In 1949-50 he had a total of only 21 students in his three classes combined, and he was strongly advised to teach the Masterpieces in European Fiction course. This he undertook with relish: it fitted his own emphasis on literature's heights and its internationalism. Meanwhile fewer and fewer students were being adequately trained in Russian language, so that in his last years Nabokov had reluctantly to cancel altogether his advanced seminars in Russian literature. The curious shape of Nabokov's Cornell career shows that though he began very much as a professor of Russian--with three courses in Russian literature, two of them given in Russian--and that though he even resisted teaching non-Russian literature he ended up, through circumstances not of his own making, teaching only one course in Russian literature, and that in English, usually to about 35-40 students, and one course in European fiction to classes ten times the size.

I closed with a sample of Nabokov's teaching methods--his insistence on the particular--that seemed the best possible justification of his approach. When returning test papers on <u>Anna Karenin</u> in 1957, Nabokov explained why he had chosen to ask such specific questions. He invented a "general" question and two students' hilarious--and embarassingly lifelike--answers; then he set forth his own answers to his real question. His first question and answer managed to evoke a specific scene and all that is original and artistically sensitive in it, all that makes Tolstoy Tolstoy and even all that makes human beings so unfathomably fruitful. Nabokov's teaching ultimately resembles his fiction: both are designed to invite their audiences into adventures of personal discovery and acts of individual attention and imagination that disclose what an Aladdin's cave the world can be.

ABSTRACT

"Nabokov's Lolita and Pushkin's Onegin"

by Priscilla Meyer

(Abstract of a paper presented at the Nabokov Festival, Cornell University, April 1983)

Nabokov wrote Lolita at the same time that he was translating Onegin. His philosophy of translation states that anything short of literalism is at best a poetic paraphrase, and his intention is to give the English-speaking reader Onegin in unadulterated form. Throughout his accompanying commentary, Nabokov excoriates the perversions of Onegin perpetrated by paraphrasts over the years. My paper demonstrates in detail how Lolita may be read as Nabokov's "paraphrastic translation" of Onegin written concomitantly with his literal one, that is, a parody of paraphrastic translation at its most extreme, a translation of Pushkin's Russia of the 1820s into the USA of the 1950s.

The plots of the two novels are surprisingly similar. The heroine-muses Tatyana/Lolita undergo metamorphoses from innocent provincial miss to worldly woman, whereupon the heroes Onegin/Humbert return from several years of travels, offer their love, and are rejected by their beloveds. Lensky/Quilty, betrayers of true art, are killed in duels by the heroes. The plot is a metaphor for the central concern of both works: literary aesthetics and the formation of a genuine national culture free of affectation.

For Nabokov, Onegin is the single greatest monument of Russian culture. He incorporates it into his own novel in order to declare the literary aesthetic he shares with Pushkin. In Onegin Pushkin established a new literary language; overturned conventional definitions of "high" and "low" in subject matter, genre and lexicon; and subjected Western European Romanticism to a detailed critique and parody, in order to affirm the value of language and literature for the individual and for a culture. Nabokov does the same in Lolita, particularly in attacking the solipsism inherent in Romanticism. Both authors suggest that the danger of romantic literature is that the naive reader may confuse it with reality, while the naive author may mistake it for great art.

Tatyana's romantic readings (somewhat like her mother's before her) cause her to mistake the cold and immoral Onegin for Richardson's Grandison, while Onegin has modeled himself on watered-down Byronism. Analogously, Charlotte and Dolores Haze are attracted to Humbert on the model of their popular readings, the mother's book club romances and the daughter's movie magazines. Humbert, though more sophisticated, makes the same mistake. He sees himself as Romantic poet in search of a muse. The enormous discrepancy between his idealized image of Lolita and her reality is evidence that he is not a true poet any more than is Quilty, his nightmare projection of himself as false artist.

Pushkin parodies English, French and German romanticism: Byron (allied to Onegin) is accused of being able to write only about himself; French and English sentimentalism (allied to Tatyana) is only fuel for female adolescent fantasies, and German idealism is verbally murky, responsible for blurring Lensky's perception of reality. Nabokov shares these ideas and extends Pushkin's analysis to popular American culture. The common feature of romanticism and Lolita's magazines that cheapens them and ultimately reduces literature to mere pornography is the dependence on simplistic identification, the projection of self into the role of the character. Humbert's projection, Quilty, is connected by Nabokov with the German romantics by the parody of the Doppelgänger motif. Like Lensky in Onegin, Quilty is associated with Schiller and Goethe. More obviously, Edgar Allan Poe is the intermediary source of German Romanticism associated with Quilty, but the Lenore allusion ("Now hop hop hop Lenore or you'll get soaked") in fact refers to Gottfried August Bürger's poem of the same name. That obscure reference turns out to contain the crux of Nabokov's argument: the poet Zhukovsky translated Bürger's poem three different ways, as "Lyudmila" (1808), "Svetlana" (1808-12), and "Lenore" (1831), and these translations sparked a major polemic between the "archaists" and "innovators" in Russia in the 1820s. Pushkin sided against Zhukovsky, preferring the direct style in the tradition of the fabulist Krylov to the euphemistic ornateness of Zhukovsky. Humbert's euphemisms and indirections manage to disguise his rape of a

child as the agonizing ecstasy of aesthetic bliss, but only end in solipsism. Like Pushkin, Nabokov believes that vostorg (rapture) is insufficient for art; one needs the cool critical distance of the natural scientist to achieve vdokhnovenie (inspiration).

In writing Onegin, Pushkin wandered around villages recording peasant sayings and songs. When "re-inventing America," Nabokov rode buses to capture the idiom of American school children. In Lolita, Humbert's elegant European speech is contrasted with Lo's slang, one of the more universal oral traditions available in the U.S. of the 1950s. Lolita is a synthesis of Nabokov's Russian literary heritage with the culture of his newly adopted country. In Onegin, Pushkin had integrated Western European Romanticism into Russian culture, both "low" (folk) and "high" (Zhukovsky). Nabokov makes the next loop in the Hegelian spiral, incorporating Pushkin himself into Pushkin's own synthesis of English, French and German literature, and adding American "low" (Lo) and American "high" (Poe) culture. For Russian literature to be truly assimilated into the American material, it had to enter the blood and bones of the novel. Without the microscope of Pushkin's Onegin, Nabokov's Russian heritage is invisible to the naked eye. The tragedy of Lolita is not only Nabokov's loss of his beloved Russian language, it is the debasement of the Word and of the world of the imagination. And this is what Nabokov restores to the American tradition by givine us his Onegin in our own terms, a point of departure for a new and fuller synthesis.

Nabokov in Poland (Continued)

by Leszek Engelking

[In VNRN #9 (Fall 1982) Leszek Engelking provided a listing of VN-related items which had appeared in the Polish journal Literature na Świecie. He now sends the following additional information on Nabokov publications in Poland.]

"Torpid Smoke" [Polish title: Snujacy sie dym] and "First Love" [Polish title: Pierwsza miłość] translated from English by Teresa Truszkowska. Pismo, (Cracow) Vol. 2, no. 5/6 (May-June 1983) pp. 7-10 and 11-16.

"Music" [Polish title: Muzyka] translated from Russian by Eugenia Siemaszkiewicz. Przekrój, (Cracow) no. 1997 (1 May 1983) pp. 15-16.

"A Busy Man" [Polish title: Czlowiek zajety] translated from Russian by E. Siemaszkiewicz. Przekrój, no. 1998 (25 September 1983) pp. 15-17.

Excerpts from Speak, Memory (fragments of chapters 3, 13, 14), translated from English by Andrzej Szuba. Tak i Nie, (Katowice) no. 19 (2 September 1983) p. 12.

There was a polemics in the Warsaw weekly, Polityka concerning the Polish translation of Transparent Things. Henry Dasko (a Canadian of Polish origin) vehemently

criticised the translation and the introduction (in many respects he was right); the author of the introduction replied; Mr. Dasko responded; and then Barbara Przybylowska, the deputy manager of the Warsaw publishing house which released the translation, published a letter in defense of the work. The citations are:

Henry Dasko. "Nabokov po polsku. Na marginesie ksiazki 'Przejrzystość rzeczy'." Polityka, Vol. 27, no. 31 (30 July 1983) p. 8.

Zbigniew Lewicki. "Nabokov po polsku." Polityka, Vol. 27, no. 33 (13 August 1983) p. 9.

H. Dasko. Polityka, Vol. 27, no. 37 (10 September 1983) p. 9.

Barbara Przybylowska. Letter. Polityka, Vol. 27, no. 41 (8 October 1983) p. 10.

And part from the polemics: Stanislaw Piskor. "Nabokov - pierwsze rozczarowanie." Tak i Nie, no. 19 (2 September 1983) p. 13 (a review of the Polish translation of Transparent Things).

[To Mr. Engelking's earlier listings, Mrs. Vera Nabokov provides these additional citations:

Fragment from Lolita, tr. H. Raszka. Odra (Wroclaw), no. 4, 1974.

Fragment from "Terra Incognita," tr. Teresa Truszkowska. Odra (Wroclaw), no. 5, 1978.

"The Waltz Invention," tr. Piotr Niklewicz. Dialog (Warsaw), Vol. XXV, no. 7, 1980.]

Zemblan: Nabokov's Phony Scandinavian Language

by Ronald E. Peterson

In this note I want to expand upon and correct information given in John Krueger's 1967 article about the Zemblan language, devised by Nabokov for Pale Fire. [John R. Krueger, "Nabokov's Zemblan: A Constructed Language of Fiction," Linguistics, No. 31 (1967), pp. 44-49]. Krueger has attacked the language with a serious demeanor, though with tongue in cheek, but it can be argued that the proper physical pose ia a bemused expression, one eyebrow skeptically raised. Nabokov's intentions were in fact spelled out in an interview with Alfred Appel in 1966, in which he commented on the nature of Zemblan and an earlier version of this language (in "Solux Rex"): "their languages are of a phony Scandinavian type." [Alfred Appel, "An Interview with Vladimir Nabokov," Nabokov: The Man and His Work, ed. L. S. Dembo (Madison, 1967), p. 43]. Thus we should realize that Nabokov is more interested in deforming familiar words and grammar than in the formative processes of a language. By examining the language families he uses, how he plays with puns using different languages, and then focusing on the most sustained examples of Zemblan, the poetic couplets, we can better understand Nabokov's linguistic creation.

The name Zembla itself points immediately to one of the main problems in any

analysis of Pale Fire (and Nabokov's works in general): what is real and what is false. Krueger mentions references in the novel that help to place Zembla, this "distant northern land" (325), but fails to point out that the land called Zembla is indeed mentioned in Alexander Pope's Essay on Man (Second Epistle, line 224): "At Greenland, Zembla, or the Lord knows where" (Pale Fire, 272). Linguistically, Zembla does resemble Novaya Zemlya, but it also has historical connections with St. Petersburg, and at the same time a punning affinity with the English word resemble. The same holds true for the language of this distant location that in many ways resembles Nabokov's native land.

Krueger has pointed out that the examples of Zemblan are almost always accompanied by English glosses, but he neglects to mention that, in many cases, these explanations in English are spurious, and, quite often, intended more for amusement than for clarification. No attention is paid, for example, to the many puns that are recognizable only if the reader knows the several languages Nabokov draws from. Shootka, for instance, is defined as a "little chute" (221), but a Russian reader realizes that the true meaning is "joke." Moskovett, defined as a "bitter wind from the east" (166), can be broken down into its component parts, Moskva and veter, thus "Moscow wind," but for an English speaking reader, moskovett sounds rather like "Muscovite," a linguistic confusion that Nabokov has deliberately introduced. Nabokov's mention of Hally Vally, and the further reference to Odin's Hall and a Finnish epic (25), also teases and at the same time offer clues, because what he has in mind are Valhalla and the Kalevala. But an astute polyglot can, by staring hard at Nabokov's Zemblan, generally see what he is up to, since he usually does not stray from the languages he knew best and used most often.

One of the languages he uses in Pale Fire is Danish, a fact almost overlooked by Krueger, despite the mentions of Danish locations in the book. One whole sentence, supposedly in Zemblan, in fact is a close approximation of Danish: Yeg ved ik (132) is nearly identical to the Danish Jeg ved ikke, "I don't know." Another example of Danish borrowing is Kongs-, "King's," found in the combination Kongs-skugg-sio (76), rendered by Nabokov as The Royal Mirror. The middle portion of this highly significant combination is Swedish: skugg can be translated as "shade," thus this device allows a king (such as King Charles) to see his shade or reflection (and John Shade). Nitra and Indra (145) are deceptively rendered as "inner" and "outer" and confuse the reader, even one not familiar with Danish ydre (Norwegian ytre), "outer," and indre, "inner." Another Danish word, taks, "yew," is remarkably close to Zemblan tas (222), and the Swedish fäbodar, "upland pastures," is given as vebodar by Nabokov (136).

Zemblan has a much larger component of vocabulary taken directly from German, sometimes with only slight deformations, as

in muderperlwelk (116), cf. German Perlmutter + Wolke, "mother-of-pearl cloud," and spoz (239), which resembles both German spät and Russian pozdno, "late" (Krueger mentions only the Russian root). Krueger also puts forth the Swedish postpositive article -en as the source of the Zemblan plurals -en and -ien, but this ending is much more likely based on the German example, since many German plurals have this -en ending, whereas in Swedish and the other two main Scandinavian languages, the -en article is used in the singular to mark a noun as definite, and the words in Swedish that have an -n plural ending are not the most widespread.

The Russian language, not surprisingly, has made a strong contribution to Zemblan. Nabokov has examples that range from the simple tri, "three" (108), not directly borrowed from Swedish trei of French trois, as Krueger claims, to a complex pun involving zhiletka blades (99), which leads Krueger to the Polish zyletka, which can mean "safety razor," but he should instead go all the way to the source, the American firm Gillette, manufacturer of the blades. Nabokov's use of the Russian spelling (in transliteration), zhiletka, "vest," in this pun, however, sends another misguided signal to Russian readers. There are Russian cognates not recognized by Krueger: fufa (144) is a shortened form of the Russian fufaika, "sweater"; coramen (136), which is rendered as a "rude strap," not a "cow-strap," as Krueger has it, can be traced to the Russian koriavyi + remen', "rough belt"; and the Zemblan if, "willow," is not related to a word that looks similar in French, but to the Russian iva, also "willow."

Contrary to what Krueger has reported, English is indeed a source of many Zemblan words, and not only because the roots of English words are Germanic. More examples of the English language contribution will be given later in the couplets, but here I would like to cite a few: the Zemblan word backdraught (75) could be a combination of backgammon and checkers (draughts), though the game itself is likely not as tame as these two board games; miragarl (108), is clearly combination of mirage and girl; and Blawick (120) is made up of the now obsolete English blae, "blue," and wick, "cove." The English words are sometimes mangled: as in grum (109) for "groom," and On sagaren (108) for "In Saharan," with an additional substition of the g for the h, a normal process when Russians try to approximate the h in their language.

Of the three certifiably Latin words, only one, vespert (90), from Latin vespertinus, "in the evening," is given as a clear example of Zemblan; the other two, situla (125), "pail," and crapula (160), "hangover," are not necessarily Zemblan words, especially the latter. But these last two words, plus the punning shootka, have led Krueger to the conclusion that they are "suggestive of nominal diminutives," when in fact they are the standard forms, and Nabokov has only given playful explanations that seem to make them diminutives [Krueger, p. 47].

One aspect that Krueger has tended to overlook is Zemblan's inconsistency, not only in the variety of languages that contribute to its vocabulary, but also in the area of grammatical endings and words with widely differing double meanings. In addition to the various plurals endings, such as -s, in komizars (119), for instance, and the -en, -ien endings mentioned above, we also find a normal Russian genitive singular ending: tri phantana (108), cf. Russian tri fontana, "three fountains," and a plural ending of -la in verbalala (108), "camels," where in Russian one would expect verbliudov in the genitive plural (the nominative singular form is verbliud, not verblyuda, as Krueger has). [Krueger, p. 46]. Also ignored is the double meaning of ut (108, 239, 242), which is sometimes translated as "and," cf. German und, and at other times as "in" (e.g., velkam ut Semberland, "till we meet in Zembla," 275), though in Swedish and Norwegian this word definitely means "out." Another curious double is ik (132, 239), rendered variously as "not" and "his," though the Danish and Russian origins of the words are clear: Danish ikke, "not," and Russian ikh, "their."

Zemblan is elusive and phony, and Nabokov's point, as seen in the false grammar and puns, is parody of American scholarship and of his own translation of Pushkin's Eugene Onegin. One must realize that neither Nabokov nor his fictionalized editor, Kinbote, can be considered a reliable native informant, despite the fact that Kinbote is the most voluble native of Zembla and Nabokov made up the language. The best place

to look for clues in deciphering this language is in the examples of Zemblan verse, which are translations from Goethe, from Andrew Marvell, and a supposedly original poem, by the Zemblan poet Arnor.

In the couplet by Arnor, we see mostly English and Russian cognates:

> On sagaren werem tremkin tri stana
> "A dream king in the sandy waste of time
> Verbalala wod gev ut tri phantana.(108)
> Would give three hundred camels and three fountains."

In normalized words in real languages:

> In Saharan vremia traum king trista
> (E., E., R., G., E., R.,
> Verbliudov would give und tri fontana.
> R., E., E., G., R., R.)

In the couplet from Goethe, mostly German and Russian:

> Ret woren ok spoz on natt ut vett
> "Who rides so late in the night and the wind?
> Eto est votchez ut mit ik dett. (239)
> Is is the father with his child."

In normalized words:

> Reitet wer tak spät in natt und veter
> (G., G., R., G., G., Sw., G., R.,
> Eto est' otets und mit ikh ditia.
> R., R., R., G., G., R., R.)

In the couplet from Marvell, we again see mostly English, with some Russian:

> Id wodo bin, war id lev lan
> "Had it lived long it would have been
> Indran iz lil ut roz nitran. (242)
> Lilies without, roses within."

In normalized words:

> It would have been, were it lived long
> (All English,
> Indre iz lilii und roz ydre.
> Da., R., R., G., R., Da.)

The overall impression gained from these examples of Zemblan is that they resemble the language from which the words were borrowed; the quotations show that English or German originals heavily influence the Zemblan renderings, yet at the same time Russian abounds. As Krueger says, the verb system seems patterned on the English, but note that there are no definite articles, a feature of Russian, and there are precious few words that can be traced to the Scandinavian languages Zemblan is supposed to resemble. Since Nabokov lived for extended periods of time in countries where Russian, German, and English were spoken, it should not be surprising that he gathered words from these languages, deformed them in most cases, and offered them to the readers for their amusement. Nor should we take at face value his repeated claims (in some of the introductions to the English language editions of his Russian works) that he knew no German; it would be preposterous that an author so accomplished at languages as

Nabokov should not have learned a good deal of the language spoken in the country where he lived during the 1920's and 1930's. His games in Pale Fire provide some scholarly challenge in regard to deciphering, but we must be extremely careful in our analysis of this fanciful and now extinct language.

ABSTRACT

"Nabokov's Columbines"

by Martin Green

(Abstract of a paper presented at the MLA Annual Meeting, New York December 1983)

There is a pattern to Nabokov's characterization of women. He again and again depicts a woman who is attractive sexually but insubstantial morally and intellectually. The best-known example is Lolita, but other cases are Margot in Laughter in the Dark, Nina in "Spring in Fialta", and Louise in Look at the Harlequins. These women are dominant presences, in that the action revolves around them; and because of their specifically sexual attractiveness they seem to represent Woman. But morally speaking, they are recessive presences; since if they act at all it is wantonly to betray men.

I want to call that image of women (or Woman) Columbine. But first I must name the other images Nabokov presents of women--the unattractive girl, the pale wife, and the Muse. These all derive from Columbine. The wife is a contrast, the Muse a transcendance, of the problem the latter embodies--the moral and aesthetic problem of sexuality. Our sex drives are the motors of both love and imagination, and yet they make us cruel and stupid in our relation to the object of our desires.

I call that central figure Columbine because in Commedia dell'Arte performances the Columbine so often embodies that idea of woman and that feeling for her. She is exhibited before the audience as above all things attractive, while the moral and imaginative sympathies of the onlookers are engaged not by her but by the men who desire her, Pierrot and Harlequin; the foolish yearning clumsily betrayed adorer, and the cruel scornful dextrous conqueror. Indeed, if we look at Nabokov's plots, we find Pierrot and Harlequin there too. In Laughter in the Dark, Albinus is Pierrot, Rex is Harlequin; in "Spring in Fialta", the narrator is Pierrot, Ferdinand is Harlequin; in Lolita, Humbert is Pierrot, Quilty is Harlequin at the end, though earlier on the former is himself Harlequin.

There are moreover other Commedia figures in Nabokov's fiction, like the pedant, the bully, the trickster. There is a lot of stage farce; and a lot of stage melodrama; just as in the Commedia. Madness and murder hang over Nabokov's heroes, just as they do over Pierrot.

In other words, I want to suggest that Nabokov's imagination as an artist was importantly shaped by the model of the Commedia, and that that is the reason (rather than mere male chauvinism) why he characterizes women as he does. And there is supporting evidence for this argument to be found in the many other artists, in literature but also in painting, music, ballet, theatre, film, who were similarly influenced by the Commedia in the period 1880 to 1930.

ABSTRACT

"Nabokov's Incestuous Heroines"

by D. Barton Johnson

(Abstract of the paper delivered at the Annual National Meeting of AATSEEL, New York, December 1983.)

The paper is a distillation of portions of an essay entitled "The Labyrinth of Incest in Nabokov's *Ada*." The essay examines the "classic" and later literary sources for Nabokov's late-flowering use of the incest theme, unravels the tangled skein of incest in *Ada*, examines the meaning of incest in various literary periods, and suggests an interpretation of incest in Nabokov's work. It is suggested that *Ada*'s theme of sibling incest may be read as a master metaphor for the creative intercourse of several generations of sibling incest novels in the three great literatures to which Nabokov's novel is heir. Noting Nabokov's own multilingual and multicultural history and following George Steiner's "extraterritorial" hypothesis, it is argued that the incest metaphor aptly exemplifies various aspects of Nabokov's self-reflexive career.

ABSTRACT

"Memory as Muse: Shifting Points of Reference for Nabokov's Autobiographical Impulse"

by John Burt Foster, Jr.

(Abstract of a paper delivered at the MLA Annual Meeting, New York, December 1983)

Vladimir Nabokov's *Speak, Memory* is now accepted as one of his major works and often appears on lists of the best twentieth-century autobiographies. But within his career it is not an isolated achievement, but rather the culmination of an autobiographical impulse that also helped shape some of his novels. And, since Nabokov's awareness of modernism was so resolutely international, the development of his autobiographical impulse gives an exceptionally broad overview of what modernism might mean for autobiography. This paper emphasizes the main line of Nabokov's development, using the methods of intertextual criticism and internal cultural history.

Nabokov started out as an incipient Russian modernist. In his first novel *Mary*, written when European modernism was peaking in the 1920s, he aligned himself with Pushkin as a representative of the Russian literary tradition. He also referred loosely to Nietzsche, who suggests the allure of international modernism. But although *Mary* already shows Nabokov's fascination with memory, the novel focuses on the emotional atmosphere of memory and on its problematic

relation to time. Mary thus neglects what will later become the mainspring of Nabokov's autobiographical impulse, the convergence of memory with that quintessentially modernist preoccupation--the image.

For Nabokov, images have a double importance in understanding memory. In the sense of metaphors, images are essential for defining how memory operates; and in the sense of pictures, images quite simply make up the contents of memory. In taking this approach, Nabokov turns away from Nietzsche and, in Speak, Memory, identifies with the French modernism of Proust and Bergson. But Nabokov's final position must be distinguished even from the French, for he relies on an elaborate artistic-psychological technique for creating images that gives new value to the "voluntary memory" Proust had found inadequate. Still later in his career, however, when Nabokov returns to Pushkin, he reaffirms his basic affinity with French modernism, for he warmly praises a passage in Eugene Onegin which anticipates the double convergence between memory and the image.

The development of Nabokov's autobiographical impulse enlarges our sense of how modernism could affect autobiography. It reminds us of Nietzsche's vague but ubiquitous presence as an instigator of modernism, and it encourages us to include nineteenth-century Russian literature in our genealogies of twentieth-century autobiography. But above all Nabokov's identification with French modernism suggests its centrality as a model for modernist autobiography, and

helps to clarify Nabokov's well-known feuds with psychoanalysis and Anglo-American high modernism. Unlike Freud, in Nabokov's view of him, Bergson properly used images rather than theories to describe memory; and both Proust and Bergson, though they do not emphasize consciousness as much as the author of Speak, Memory, at least avoided the Freudian sexualization of the image. Meanwhile, Proust, unlike Eliot and Pound, placed images within a personal history and made them a function of memory, thereby opening the way for Nabokov's distinctive project as an autobiographer.

Calendar in Pnin

by Gene Barabtarlo

> "What on earth does it matter," cried Varvara. "Who on earth wants to know the exact day?"
> "I can tell you the exact day."
> --Pnin, p. 122

There are at least two types of fiction chronology: the surface one, listing and often rearranging events in their temporal sequence; and the underlying one, when the simple past of the narration sinks to the pluperfect, filling the gaps and swathing the invented world of a novel in chronometric meridians and parallels. What follows is the surface chronology of Pnin.

The book consists of seven chapters, each covering a very limited time, usually just one day of Pnin's life (Chapter 1, 3, 4 [with a long digression into Victor's life at home and at school], 5 ["the last page of Pnin's fading day"--this emblematic phrase closes the chapter and emphasizes the structural device employed throughout the novel], and 6). Chapter 2 spotlights two days with a lapse of several months in between, and Chapter 7 starts at night (I am talking of the "stage," or surface, time, ignoring retrospections) and ends, as does the book, early next morning. Here is this more or less obvious chronology:

Chapter 1. The year is 1950 (p. 9); it is October ("unbelievably summery for October," p. 17); and is Friday afternoon ("inviting him to deliver a Friday-evening lecture at Cremona," p. 8). But what day of the month, we wonder. One has, of course, to choose among the four Fridays, the 6th, the 13th, the 20th, and the 27th. Given the unfortunate (for Pnin) circumstances (the wrong train, the wrong luggage, the wrong typescript, perhaps even the wrong day--see the last sentence of the book), a series of mishaps that sets forth the "misadventure theme," one is tempted to assume that the opening day of the novel is Friday the thirteenth.

Chapter 2. The party of the Clementses' is set probably around Christmas, 1951 ("in a fortnight, after a ruminant pause, the academic year would enter its most wintry phase, the Spring term," p. 30). The year can be established through a subjunction of interlinked evidences. Liza Wind comes to Waindell ("in the middle of the [Spring] term," p. 43) to secure Pnin's financial support of her son who is to enter St. Bart in the Fall. In Chapter 4 Victor is said to have gone to the school at twelve (p. 93), and he was born in June, 1940 (in April, 1940, Liza was seven months pregnant, pp. 46-47). Hence, Liza visits her former husband early in Spring, 1952, probably in March ("Pnin...walked through the snow-patched park," p. 52), which in turn means that Pnin moved into the Clementses' house late in December, 1951. [Cf. the remark on p. 50: "Recently (in December 1951) his friend Chateau had sent him an issue of a journal..."]

Chapter 3. In terms of exact chronoscopy, this chapter poses a very interesting challenge; I shall discuss it later in this note. For now, let me state simply that the year is evidently 1953 (p. 69) and that it is some very special Tuesday in February.

Chapter 4. Victor arrives at Waindell to see his "water father" on Easter vacation (one day late), 1954 ("he was now fourteen," p. 87, a somewhat anticipatory statement), at 8:30 p.m. The 1954 Easter was April 18; theoretically, the day when Pnin bought the absolutely unnecessary soccer-ball and an anachronistic book for Victor, and badly injured his back to boot, might have been again the 13th, but this would be, of course, pure speculation.

Chapter 5. This "dull warm day in the summer of 1954" (p. 112) must actually be Friday or Saturday, because "Olga's admirer...arrived from Boston for the weekend" (p. 119), while "Alexandr Petrovich is away till Monday" (p. 123) when Pnin arrives at The Pines.

Between Chapters 4 and 5 Nabokov meant to place another one, describing Pnin's tussle with car manuals and driving instructors (see Strong Opinions, p. 84); the time of this lapsed chapter would have been, therefore, Spring, 1954.

Chapter 6. The gay-turned-gray party at Pnin's newly rented house takes place in the Fall, 1954 (p. 137). Curious how time intervals get shorter toward the end of the book, an effect exactly opposite to that in Ada.

Chapter 7. V. V. N. (a.k.a. Vivian, or Vladimir Vladimirovich the Narrator) finally enters the stage in person on Monday, February 14, 1955 (p. 187) and watches Pnin speeding past and out of Waindell and the book next morning, Tuesday, February the 15th, on Pnin's birthday.

Now let us take a closer look at Chapter 3. The year is 1953 (p. 69), the month February (p. 75), the day, Tuesday (pp. 67, 72). Query: which Tuesday?

After an especially neat transition from the amusing peculiarities of Pnin's English ("all he could muster when called upon to utter 'noon' was the lax vowel of the German 'nun' ('I have no classes in afternun on Tuesday. Today is Tuesday.')") to the starting point of the chronological puzzle in question ("Tuesday--true; but what day of the month, we wonder," p. 67), the reader is reminded, obliquely but positively, of what he is supposed to have been aware since p. 21, namely, that Pnin's birthday by the Gregorian calendar is February the 15th (he was born on Tuesday, February 3, 1898, Old Style). Later, when Pnin picks up a Russian-language newspaper in the library, the reader cannot but make the seemingly only sensible conclusion that the day must be indeed the 15th ("he...glanced at the news in the latest (Saturday, February 12--and this was Tuesday, O Careless Reader!)," p. 75), the conclusion which seems to be further corroborated by a snatch of Pnin's nightmare ("a birthday party was in progress," p. 82). In short, the "careful" reader would assume that that sad day which

Pnin has failed to disentangle from the "motuweth-frisas basis" of his academic humdrum and which his maker did his best to have Pnin notice the significance of, is Tuesday, February 15, the kind of a birthday that generates melancholgy thoughts about one's death-day (the main theme of the chapter).

Alas, such a conclusion would be too easy for the Nabokov reader. Perhaps it is a thoroughly prepared trap which, as in chess problems, must be tried before proceeding to the right solution. The fact is that February 15 in 1953 was not Tuesday, but Sunday. Given Nabokov's famous predilection for exact timing of his books (and other writers' as well--see his lecture on Tolstoy's chronology in Anna Karenin, prompted, no doubt, by a remark made by Professor Pnin in Chapter 5), one may suspect a deeper level of reader attentiveness the author counted on here.

Let us return to the beginning of that day, to Pnin's class, where he wrote a date on the "grayboard": "The date he wrote had nothing to do with the day this was in Waindell: December 26, 1829" (p. 67). This "nothing" should not be taken for granted. This is the day Pushkin wrote down his poem "Whether I roam along the noisy streets," a famous piece about death which has several strikingly revealing variants in the MS not meant for publication. This was one of the many lyrical attempts on Pushkin's part to foreglimpse, and perhaps render harmless that way, the fatidic day by trying one by one possible circumstances of

his death, or, as he put it in the draft of that poem, "to break the fate by fancy's fuss." "'But,' exclaimed Pnin in triumph, 'he died on a quite, quite different day! He died--'" (p. 68), but the chair Pnin was leaning against cracked and his class never learnt the day Pushkin died. We can finish the phrase: he died on the 29th of January, 1837, Old Style, or, according to the Gregorian rules ("thirteen--no, twelve days late") on February 10.

Now February 10, not 15, was Tuesday in 1953, and what the more or less careless reader may take for Pnin's birthday is in fact Pushkin's doomsday. I propose that Pnin all but told his class about Pushkin's death on its anniversary, without realizing it but getting, as he did so many times in the course of the novel, very close to making an important connection; a little later, his unuttered thought still rolling along the Pushkin tracks, Pnin keeps iambically brooding over his own destiny ("In fight, in travel, or in waves? Or on the Waindell campus?" p. 73).

But on the other hand, if the Chapter 3 day is indeed Tuesday, February 10, then how come February 12 is said to be Saturday (p. 75--actually, it was Thursday in 1953)? A pedant might argue that an author is free to use a calendar of his own, but that would be highly unlikely in Nabokov's case if only because the closing date of the book happens to be February 15, 1955, a Tuesday in the novel as well as in the Gregorian calendar (and one and the same day cannot be, of course, Tuesday in 1953 and again in 1955).

There may be another explanation. Both dates, February 15 and 12 were (in 1953) Tuesday and Saturday, respectively, but by the Old Style (thus being February 3rd and January 31st). Did Nabokov make an intentional mistake, substituting one calendar for the other to camouflage the day for Pnin and for the reader? There seems to be a hint at such a possibility in the text: "[Pnin] never celebrated [his birthday] nowadays, partly because, after his departure from Russia, it sidled by in a Gregorian disguise (thirteen--no, twelve days late)" (p. 67). The slip in parenthesis is significant: the difference between the two Styles was 12 days in the 19th century and 13 days in the 20th (see Nabokov's Calendar in his Eugene Onegin and especially his introduction to Speak, Memory, p. 13). If it is a deliberately implanted mistake, then we can, perhaps, find a hidden vector to it on p. 79: "something that Pnin had half heard in the course of the day, and had been reluctant to follow up, now bothered and oppressed him, as does, in retrospection, a blunder we have made, a piece of rudeness we have allowed ourselves, or a threat we have chosen to ignore." Is this "retrospective blunder" the clue? In any case, the themes of Pnin's birthday and Pushkin's death are thoroughly intermingled in the chapter and one ought to trace them up to appreciate Nabokov's peculiar timing.

(Oddly enough, my own birthday happens to be Tuesday, February 15, though I have reasons to believe that I am not invented--not by Pnin's inventor, anyway.)

ABSTRACT

"Footnote as Literary Genre: Nabokov's Commentaries on Lermontov and Pushkin"

by Nicholas Warner

(Abstract of a paper delivered at the meeting of the Western Slavic Association, Stanford University, March 1984)

The paper centers on Nabokov as critic, with particular attention to his footnotes to Lermontov's A Hero of Our Time and Pushkins' Eugene Onegin. In discussing this aspect of Nabokov's criticism, I address the following question: "What is the relationship of Nabokov's notes to the texts they gloss and to his own aesthetics?" As a study of specific notes shows, despite Nabokov's well-known fulminations against literary schools, theories and "isms" of all kinds, a distinct literary perspective, an ideology even, dominates his own criticism of Lermontov and Pushkin. Thus Nabokov's vision of what good literature is becomes an "ism" of its own -- a set of views no less rigid and programmatic, even "theoretical," than those of the social ideologues, prototypists, dryasdust professors, Marxists and vulgarians that Nabokov so gleefully condemns. A second and even more important feature of Nabokov's notes is their status as literary works in and of themselves. As literature, the notes both complement and compete with the texts they accompany; my discussion examines the significant ramifications of this fact, and concludes with an assessment of

the place of Nabokov's notes in his _oeuvre_ as a whole. Throughout the paper, I supplement my analysis of Nabokov's notes with reference to his other critical work, such as the Gogol biography and the recently published _Lectures on Russian Literature_.

ABSTRACT

"Fictional Elements in Nabokov's Introductory Remarks"

by Ronald E. Peterson

(Abstract of a paper delivered at the meeting of the Western Slavic Association, Stanford University, March 1984)

In this paper, I examine Nabokov's forewords to his fictional works, mainly novels and short stories, point out some of the invented and fanciful aspects of these pieces, and formulate ideas about why Nabokov sometimes misleads his readers. The primary focus is on the introductions of the English translations of his Russian works, which he saw in fact as a separate and significant body in his total _oeuvre_ (as he pointed out in a couple of them), but examples of forewords or prefatory remarks for other works are also included. That Nabokov intentionally deceives his readers in these and other instances is no secret, and the extent of some details' fictiveness has received scholarly attention. But a larger and more difficult problem is trying to comprehend the reasons for this practice.

There is a pattern of fictiveness, with dissimulation at its highest when Nabokov became established as an American writer, and this trend points to the rationale that Nabokov seems to have employed when he relied on (or cleverly fabricated) fictional props in his forewords. His then current

readers appear to be so abysmally ignorant of him and his situation as a twice exiled author composing works in a foreign language and environment: the Anglo-American readers cannot properly understand his writings (and see him as the author of one supposedly dirty book); the critics and reviewers only annoy and mangle; and the ideal readers (Russian intelligenty of the 1920's and 1930's) are mostly dead.

He was truly interested in natural and artificial deception, and his stated wish was to have "little Nabokovs" as readers, but it also appears that he was constantly disturbed by the forced wrench from his native literary milieu. And it may be that he was speaking about himself in Charles Kinbote's note at the end of Pale Fire: "Russian, a writer in exile, sans fame, sans future, sans audience, sans anything but his art." Thus as scholars we must recognize this undeniable primacy of art for Nabokov in order to more fully appreciate (and correctly interpret) this significant aspect of his writings.

ABSTRACT

"Nabokov's Autobiography: Problems of Translation and Style"

by R. Judson Rosengrant

(Abstract of Dissertation for the award of Ph.D., Stanford University, 1983)

This dissertation concerns the relation between the English and Russian versions of Vladimir Nabokov's autobiography, Speak, Memory. It is in six parts, Chapter I, "Autotranslation and Autobiography," looks at the profoundly bilingual character of Nabokov's literary activity, arguing for the central place in it of translation, especially autotranslation, since it is by means of translation that the Russian and English halves of that activity were conjoined. Chapter I also argues for the primacy of the autobiography as providing the most interesting and reliable material for a discussion of translation and style and their place in the projection and modulation of the authorial persona. Chapter II, "Theories of Translation," after a brief excursus on the correlations between translation and style, distinguishes two approaches to translation, the empirically prescriptive and the theoretically descriptive, and analyzes the ideas of several figures, including Nabokov himself, representing the latter approach. Chapter III, "Theories of Style," takes up the issue of style in its own right, making a traditional distinction between rhetorical and expressive definitions, and examining some

typical theories from the point of view of their conceptions of the relation between language and thought. Chapter IV, "Nabokov's Lexis," begins the practical discussion of the autobiographical style and its translation, concentrating on the lexical features of that style--its diction and collocations--and their rendering in the Russian text, and considering their role in the larger structural and thematic connections of the work. Chapter V, "Nabokov Sound Features," continues the practical discussion of style and its translation, this time emphasizing the phonetic characteristics of the autobiographical style, especially its use of alliteration, and extending the discussion of stylistic function beyond the patently structural and thematic to include the ambivalent relation of Speak, Memory to autobiographical discourse itself. Chapter VI, "Style, Translation, and the Epistemic Gesture," pursues these last ideas about the meaning of style in Speak, Memory, taking them as accurate reflections of authorial epistemology, and considering their relation to the phenomenon of auto-translation.