THE NABOKOVIAN

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NEWS

by Stephen Jan Parker

1984 Annual Meeting

The annual meeting of the Vladimir Nabokov Society was held following the MLA Nabokov session on December 27, 1984. The major business was the election of Society officers, each for a two-year term: President -- Phyllis Roth, Skidmore College; Vice President -- Priscilla Meyer, Wesleyan University; Secretary-Treasurer -- Stephen Parker, University of Kansas. Professor Parker gave a short account of the Society's membership and financial status.

D. Barton Johnson

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On December 27 the Vladimir Nabokov Society sponsored a session at the national convention of the Modern Language Association in Washington, DC. The panel, chaired by Beverly Lyon Clark, was on "Nabokov and the 'Passion of Science.'" David Field spoke on the balancing of fact and imagination required in Nabokov's approach to both art and science. Geoffrey Green discussed Nabokov's ambiguous relationship with Freud, including Nabokov's creationof a fictional foil in Freud. Katherine Hayles examined Nabokov's progress beyond positivism to some of the ideas of the New Physics, especially in Ada. And Guy S. Hermann responded to the three papers. Forty people attended the evening session and engag-

ed in a long and lively discussion following the panel presentations.

Beverly Lyon Clark

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The Vladimir Nabokov Society sponsored a session at the 1984 annual meeting of AATSEEL in Washington, DC on December 28. Priscilla Meyer chaired the session which was entitled "Nabokov and Cultural Synthesis." The first paper, by Susan Elizabeth Sweeney, was on the Io myth in Ovid's Metamorphoses as a sub-text in Lolita; the second, by D. Barton Johnson, dealt with incest as a metaphor for cultural synthesis in Ada; the third, by John Burt Foster, Jr., discussed Nabokov's commentary on Eliot and Proust in Canto II of "Pale Fire;" and the fourth, by Jeff Hush, traced the ubiquitous toilet motif in Nabokov's writings. Stephen Parker served as formal respondent to the panelists' presentations. A discussion between the audience of approximately twenty persons and the panelists followed.

Priscilla Meyer

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The Nabokov Society will again have two meetings in 1985. A special session, under the title "Nabokov: Poet, Playwright, Critic, Translator," is being organized for the AATSEEL convention. Persons interested in participating should contact Priscilla Meyer (Dept. of Slavic Languages & Literatures, Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT 06457). Another session, "Lolita at Thirty," will be

chaired by Charles Nicol at the MLA convention. Participants will include Dana Brand, Alina Clej, Ruth Knafo-Setton, and Marilyn Edelstein. AATSEEL and MLA will both meet December 27-30 in Chicago. The exact times and locations of the Nabokov sessions will be announced in our fall issue.

*

Mrs. Vera Nabokov has provided the following list of editions of her husband's writings received October 1984 through February 1985:

October - Lolita, tr. E. H. Kahane. Paris: Gallimard, Folio reprint edition.

October - "The Tragedy of Tragedy." In Harper's Magazine, October issue.

November - L'Extermination des Tyrans (Tyrants Destroyed), tr. Gerard-Henri Durand. Paris: Julliard, paperback reprint.

January - The Man from the USSR and Other Plays, intro. and tr. Dmitri Nabokov. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich/Bruccoli Clark.

January - "The Grand-Dad," tr. Dmitri Nabokov. In Partisan Review, Vol. LI, 50th Anniversary Edition, pp. 552-566.

February - Details d'un Coucher de Soleil (Details of a Sunset), tr. Maurice & Yvonne Couturier and Vladimir Sikorsky. Paris: Julliard.

February - "The Fight," tr. Dmitri Nabo-

kov. In The New Yorker, 18 February, pp. 34-36.

February - Litterature II (Lectures on Russian Literature), tr. Marie-Odile Fortier-Masek. Paris: Fayard.

*

Z. Kuzmanovich (English Department, University of Wisconsin, Madison 53706) provides additional Field updates. He writes:

The accuracy of George Steiner's observation that "the Nabokov bibliography is full of traps and obscurities" has been made quite clear to the readers of The Nabokovian, and those traps and obscurities have generated colorful and informative exchanges among them. I hope that the following findings, all from a single reel of microfilmed Segodnya, will be of use to the present and future bibliographers of Nabokoviana. Since this particular reel has been quite difficult to obtain, I trust I will be forgiven for including with the items some hint of their contents.

0972 This items should really be numbered at 0956A. Field gives Poslednie Novosti (Parisian Latest News) as the most likely journal to have published this story, even though Nabokov tells us that Poslednie Novosti rejected the story as 'improper and brutal.' As Nabokov maintained, "Khvat ("A Dashing Fellow") did indeed appear in Today (Segodnya). Riga. The 'exact date to be settled' turns out to be two dates: 3 October 1932. p. 4 and 5

October 1932. p. 2. At the end of the second installment, the story is annotated with 'Berlin. 21.4--5.5 1932.'

1308 The actual date of "A Meeting with V. Sirin" ("Vstrecha s V. Sirinym"), an interview of Nabokov by Andrey Sedykh [Iakov Tsvibak, Segodnya's Parisian correspondent] is November 5, 1932. p. 8. Included with this interview is a photograph of Nabokov. The topics covered in the interview are 'Foreign Influences,' 'Why are all the heroes madmen?' and 'The Technique of Literary Work.'

1308A "Russian Literary Paris in Dire Straits" ("Nuzhda v Russkom Literaturnom Parizhe"). Today (Segodnya). Riga. 26 November 1932. p. 2. This article gives an account of Nabokov's activities during the program celebrating the Sovremennye Zapiski (Contemporary Annals) jubilee, the publication of its fiftieth issue. That issue contained an installment of Camera Obscura.

1488A Review of Camera Obscura by Pyotr Pilsky in Today (Segodnya). Riga. 26 October 1932. p. 2.

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- Samuel Schuman (Guilford College, Greensboro, NC 27410) delivered a paper, "The Humanities in International Perspective: The Model of Vladimir Nabokov" at the Southern Humanities Conference, in February in Atlanta.

- A volume omitted in the last issue from our listing of books published in 1984 is Alan Levy. Vladimir Nabokov: The Velvet Butterfly. New York: Permanent Press.

- Both John Burt Foster, Jr. (English Department, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA 22030) and Vladimir Alexandrov (Slavic Languages & Literatures, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA 02138) have written to report excellent success with recently conducted, maximally enrolled Nabokov courses at the graduate level.

- Query: Graham Hubbard (21 Austin Court, Village Road, Middlesex, England EW1 2DY) writes that he is doing research on Nabokov's critical method as presented in the published lectures. Mr. Hubbard would be interested in establishing contact with anyone else who might be working in this area. He writes: "I regard [Nabokov's] lectures as providing the most brilliant technical criticism of fiction in our time."

- A recently published article which might not readily be known to Nabokovphiles is Hal H. Rennert, "Literary Revenge: Nabokov's 'Mademoiselle O' and Kleist's 'Die Marquise von O'," Germano-Slavica, Fall 1984, pp. 331-337.

- Bob Grossmith (American Studies, University of Keele, Keele, Staffs ST5 5BG, England) announces a dissertation in progress tentatively entitled "Nabokov's Two-World Metaphysic." He writes: "It will consist of an examination of Nabokov's metaphysic (the themes of time and death in his fiction), conducted principally through a study of his

imagery (the motifs of transparency, reflectivity, and circularity/spirality). I will attempt to trace the influence on Nabokov's work of Platonist, Neoplatonist, Gnostic and Bergsonian thought (and imagery) and to argue that his metaphysic be broadly located within the tradition of the 'philosophia perennis'."

- John Firestone (472 Orange St., New Haven, CT 06511) is looking into ways in which the name "Lolita" has entered the English language, with particular attention to its appearance in legal cases. He brings to our attention the printing, in the summer of 1984, of Edward Albee's "Lolita" by Dramatists Play Service Inc. (440 Park Ave. South, NY, NY 10016).

- Andrew Field (P.O. Box 139, Paddington, QLD. 4064, Australia) supplies several references which we had previously missed. All are reviews/essays which followed publication of the French translation of his Nabokov: His Life in Art. (1) Laurent Dispot, "Vladimir Nabokov: vie d'un papillon male." Le Matin des Livres, 12 (May 1982) 25-26; (2) Jean-Pierre Enard, "Vladimir Nabokov d'Andrew Field." VSD 242 (April 22-28, 1982) 81; (3) Patrick Besson, "Nabokov: comment on devient un grand ecrivain." Le Quotidien de Paris, No. 734 (6 April 1982).

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Our thanks to Mrs. Paula Malone for her continuing, invaluable assistance in the publication of this issue.

A FEW COMMENTS ON THE CORNELL FESTIVAL VOLUME

by Dmitri Nabokov

Among the great deal of accurate, perceptive material contributed to the Cornell Nabokov Festival, beautifully organized under the direction of George Gibian, and to the volume, co-edited by Gibian with Stephen Jan Parker, that was its by-product, there are certain errors and apocrypha that require brief comment.

Gene Barabtarlo has called my attention to my imprecise transcription of the vital quotation, on page 173 of the Achievements volume, of a line from Invitation to a Beheading where accuracy is crucial and in which he had discovered a fascinating bilingual anagram: Cincinnatus's

> mali é trano t'amesti [smert' mila èto taina]

in which I had omitted the accent grave essential to obtaining the transliterated e oborotnoe, and also subconsciously added a tempting but superfluous initial "s" to "trano". A few typos, some of them important, also slipped into my piece:

p. 145: there is a reversal of consonants in "encyclopedic"

p. 148, line 10: "where I studied privately" should be "where I studied singing privately"

p. 157, line 16: "Johnston's" should be "Johnston"

p. 160, line 11: a footnote should be added: I neglected to mention previously that William McGuire deserves credit for having initially envisioned and proposed publication of VN's lectures, on behalf of the original Bollingen series. For various reasons it was not possible to proceed with the project at that time.

p. 167, line 3: "upright's" should be "uprights"

line 4: "came" should be "come"

p. 168, line 4: "busses:" should be "busses'"

p. 170, line 17: "mark" should be "murk" and, most serious of all:

p. 175, lines 17-18: the excerpt from Father's poem "Slava" should read:

That main secret tra-tá-ta tra-tá-ta tra-tá --

and I must not be over explicit....

(as printed the crucial "not" was omitted and the dash at the end of the first line was replaced by a hyphen).

line 24: the superfluous "around his father," should be deleted.

I regret to say that the title of Herbert Gold's piece -- "A Slight Case of Poshlost" -- is more appropriate than he intended, for it is riddled with simplistic approximations,

outright inaccuracies, and inadvertent but sometimes offensive aspersions. I shall not dwell on various quite apocryphal but harmless assertions assembled for the sake of an easy anecdote, such as the details of Gold's visit with the Nabokovs when he came for his Cornell job interview, or on his misquotations of Father, but I think I am entitled to correct the following blunders:

1. My paternal grandfather was a liberal nobleman, but not a count; he was not shot in Father's presence; and the "parallel" to that incident in Bend Sinister is a severe derailment on Gold's part.

2. It is decidedly untrue that Father's "observations about politics were convenient for him, so that he could go and do his own work." Nabokov did not do or say things out of convenience: his unshakable integrity and consistency transpired in everything he said, did, and wrote, and his political and moral standpoints remain clear and unequivocal.

3. Father did not "hate" doctors; the distortion of the names of Gogol's doctors ridiculed those particular doctors, who were all quacks.

4. Nor did Father "hate Pasternak." He esteemed him highly as a poet, and the bit about "sibling rivalry" is, of course, total nonsense.

5. Father did not say Edmund Wilson "never amounted to anything." He admired much

about Wilson: his versatility, the variety of his impassioned interests, his perceptive approach to many aspects of literature, his fine wit.

6. It was not typical for Véra Nabokov to dust the crumbs off her husband's shirt front or tell him when to don galoshes; he managed those things himself quite well when necessary.

7. The book Gold recalls Father was writing, and whose working title was The Texture of Time, certainly was completed, and its "other title" is Ada.

8. It is totally untrue that Nabokov wrote his novels without plan. Every iota of a book was worked out in his head beforehand; he told me once that writing, to him, was like developing an exposed film.

9. Nabokov did write on index cards, but those cards did not grow into "larger cards, or larger pieces of paper" before the material was typed.

10. Véra Nabokov most categorically did not a) whisper furtively about money matters into Father's ears as Gold was about to plunge off the diving board into the Montreux pool, or b) indulge in the practice of placing copies of Lolita in front of Dr. Zhivago in Ithaca bookshops; it is not her style.

The opening of James McConkey's essay obliges me once again to hasten to Mother's

defense. She most definitely did not "prod" her husband with "painful thrusts" of "a sharp elbow" to make him acknowledge passing acquaintances (that is not her style either). As for Father, he would never have "abruptly turned away" upon hearing McConkey say, at a noisy party, that he liked Pnin for its compassion: Nabokov made no secret of the fact that compassion was a prime attribute of his own, and of the novel's. Finally, if, when McConkey says

> One can understand his defense of art against the external world simply by looking at photographs taken at the family estates

he means that Nabokov's aesthetic is rooted in lost posh, that, too, is a slight case of poshlost.

Among the highlights of the book is Priscilla Meyer's imaginative and entertaining Kinbote ride through Lolita, in which she purports to demonstrate that the novel is a "free translation of Onegin", and proceeds to construct an outrageously witty parody of literary criticism that some unwary soul will doubtless take at face value.

ANNOTATIONS & QUERIES

by Charles Nicol

[Material for this section should be sent to Charles Nicol, English Department, Indiana State University, Terre Haute, IN 47809. Deadlines for submission are March 1 for the Spring issue and September 1 for the Fall. Unless specifically stated otherwise, references to Nabokov's works will be to the most recent hardcover U.S. editions.]

"Terra Incognita" and R. L. Stevenson

Julian Connolly rightly points out (in The Nabokovian, 13) that Nabokov's 1931 story "Terra Incognita" opens in a style reminiscent of an H. Rider Haggard adventure. However, the fictitiousness of the narrator's tropical world is also conveyed by several other covert references, in particular to R. L. Stevenson's Treasure Island.

The hermetic, reflexive nature of the story is indicated by the names of the characters. The narrator is called Vallière; this is simply a reflection of Vallieria Mirifica, a botanical term which occurs early in the tale. Another member of the expedition is called "Cook," a name which is automatically associated wtih exotic travel for a European, invoking as it does both the famous travel-agent "Thomas Cook & Sons" and Captain James Cook, explorer of the south seas. There is more about this character which is patently literary.

Vallière says Cook is "reminiscent of a Shakespearean clown"; his speech is more like that of a Jacobean stage-villain: "Black dogs eat too much carrion. Mi, re, fa, sol." It is this reference which links the story to Treasure Island, in which "Black Dog" is as unsavory a character as Cook. In "Terra Incognita," Cook is described as "a mixture of insolence and servility"; Black Dog in Stevenson's book is "half fawning, half sneering." Vallière also wonders if Cook is a "runaway sailor," a possible reference to the original title of Treasure Island, The Sea Cook. These allusions reverberate when Cook remembers his dog at home, and when Vallière recalls Gregson's old cook and his parrots. Even in death, Cook's tongue is a suitably literary "ink-black."

Treasure Island is the classic children's tale: one of the earliest "alternate worlds" of the imagination into which almost everyone will have escaped as a child, just as Vallière does. It is, therefore, an ideally suitable model of a fictional world for Nabokov to have exploited in his tale of shifting realities.

-- Paul Bennett Morgan, National Library of Wales (Clettwr Cottage, Trerddol, Machynlleth, Powys SY208PN, England)

Word Golf and Lewis Carroll's Doublets

Word Golf, John Shade's favorite game, plays an important role in Pale Fire. In a Commentary note attached to line 819 ("Playing a game of Worlds"), Kinbote speaks of the poet's "childish predilection" for word games,

especially Word Golf. Kinbote grudgingly plays to humor Shade, but gives as examples only his own triumphs: hate-love in three, live-dead in five (with "lend" in the middle), and lass-male in four (p. 262). The solution to the last is given in the infamous index where we find "Word Golf, S's predilection for it, 819; see Lass." Under Lass, we are referred to Mass which reads "Mass, Mars, Mare, see Male." Male refers us back to Word Golf, thus completing the daisy chain. The only apparent function of the index example is to point up Kinbote's sexual inversion. Nonetheless, Mary McCarthy and R.H.W. Dillard have both drawn on Word Golf to unlock the secrets of the novel. Their proposed solutions are neatly summarized in Nabokov: His Life in Art, pp. 312-15, by Andrew Field who adds some thoughts of his own.

Word Golf, in principle, if not in name, underlies two far more crucial instances. In his poem Shade recounts his search for evidence of immortality. The poet, who has experienced a momentary death in which he saw "a tall white fountain" (p. 59), later reads an account of a woman brought back from death who reports the identical vision (p. 61). Hope of life eternal soars, but the corroborating evidence proves to be based upon a misprint: mountain, not fountain. It is this experience that leads the poet to his well-known lines: "Yes! It sufficed that I in life should find / Some kind of link and bobolink, some kind / Of correlated pattern in the game, / Plexed artistry..." (p. 63). Note that Shade's revelation derives from a modest Word Golf putt: fountain to mountain in one.

It is in the context of Shade's misprint that Kinbote adduces his "lexical and linguistic miracle," the KORONA-VORONA-KOROVA / CROWN-CROW-COW correlation. It will be observed that the Russian series (albeit with KORONA in the middle) forms a Word Golf chain. In my Worlds in Regression I suggest that just as Botkin's three names (Botkin[e], King Charles the Beloved, & Kinbote) are anagrammatic echoes of each other, the three faces of Botkin are reflected in the Russian Word Golf series. The drab, bovine V. Botkin(e) imagines himself the flamboyant "white crow" (belaia vorona) Kinbote, who believes himself to be the dethroned King Charles the Beloved. Nabokov is indeed "playing a game of wor(l)ds." The clues involve a series of word plays in both Russian and English. Our point is that yet another aspect of Pale Fire rests upon Word Golf, although here again Nabokov does not introduce the name of the game in his discussion of Russian cows, kings, and crows.

What is the origin of Word Golf? Did Nabokov invent it? Perhaps, but perhaps not. Dmitri Borgman in his 1965 Language on Vacation calls the game "Word Ladders" and gives as examples COLD into WARM in four; EVIL into GOOD in thirteen, and WRONG into RIGHT to nineteen. Borgman (who incidentally mentions Nabokov's KORONA/CROWN series in another context) does not use the term Word Golf, nor does he comment on the history of the game. The principle of Word Golf is simple and the game has doubtless been reinvented many times. Nabokov may have done so but a more likely source is mentioned by Professor Nina Berberova in her essay "Nabokov's British Literary

Ancestors" in the special Nabokov issue of Canadian-American Slavic Studies. Lewis Carroll was enormously popular in Russia during the early years of the century. While Berberova focuses her attention on Alice, she mentions, in passing, Carroll's 1879 book Doublets; A Word-Puzzle. Upon inspection Doublets proves to be identical with Nabokov's Word Golf, e.g., HEAD into TAIL in five (heal, teal, tell, tall). Carroll calls the intermediate stages "Links," but this seems to be the sole connection with golf.

Carroll devised the game for two young ladies "smarting under that sorest scourge of feminine humanity, the having 'nothing to do'" (2nd ed., London: MacMillan, 1880, p. 8). After his initial efforts proved successful, he wrote to the London magazine Vanity Fair which had previously run such word puzzles as Acrostics and Double Acrostics as prize competitions. The new game and competition were announced in the issue of March 29, 1879. Vanity Fair ran a series of three competitions over the remainder of 1879 and Carroll collected and published the material in book form. Among the more choice: Evolve MAN from APE (5); Feed OWL with JAM (5); and THANK ALICE (7).

It is impossible to prove that Nabokov took his Word Golf from Carroll's Doublets. The game is a simple one. We have noted Borgman's Word Ladders, and Carroll himself in his initial letter to Vanity Fair wrote that he had been told of an American game based on the same principle but that he had not seen it. For obvious reasons Doublets was not

translated into Russian, and it is not listed in the privately printed catalog and supplements of the Nabokov family library. On the other hand, we should reckon with such Nabokovian statements as "In common with many other English children (I was an English child) I have always been very fond of Carroll" (Strong Opinions, p. 81). Although none of Nabokov's Pale Fire doublets is drawn from Carroll's book, the principle and the rules are identical. Consequently, it seems likely that Carroll's word game underlies Nabokov's Word Golf. If so, it is merely another of the many ties that link the Oxford don and the Cambridge undergraduate, ties that range from Nabokov's 1925 Russian translation of Alice through Lolita to Ada's White Rabbit, Dr. Krolik. Almost all of the English novels at some point invoke Alice and her creator. It is fitting that Nabokov gives a place of honor (albeit unacknowledged) to Carroll's word game in his most intricate game of words, Pale Fire.

-- D. Barton Johnson, University of California at Santa Barbara (Dept. of Germanic & Slavic Languages, CA 93106)

Pasternak's Zhivago and Nabokov's Lolita

One of the curiosities of literary history in the late fifties was the competitive appearance on The New York Times bestseller list of Boris Pasternak's Doctor Zhivago and Vladimir Nabokov's Lolita.

Patricia Blake's moving Introduction to the posthumous collection of the writings of her friend and colleague Max Hayward, Writers in Russia: 1917-1978 (New York, 1983), mentions an interesting incident in the background of this unlikely event. The source is George Katkov, a Russian historian at St. Anthony's, Oxford, who was a close friend of Hayward, the British translator (along with Manya Harari) of Doctor Zhivago. (Katkov is apparently a long-time Nabokov reader, for one of his daughters was nicknamed Chepupakha, Nabokov's rendering of the Mock Turtle in his 1923 translation of Alice in Wonderland.) In 1956 Katkov paid a visit to Pasternak. The writer, fearing that his Italian communist publisher Feltrinelli might be dissuaded from publishing Zhivago, gave a copy of the manuscript to Katkov to take back to England for immediate translation and publication. The two men began to discuss possible translators. Pasternak suggested Isaiah Berlin but Katkov observed that the Zhivago poems presented a particular difficulty. For this he suggested "someone quite special." "There is," he said, "one man, a poet, who is completely bilingual: Vladimir Nabokov." Pasternak replied: "That won't work; he's too jealous of my wretched position in this country to do it properly" (p. 1). Blake thinks Pasternak right, observing that Nabokov was to publicly ridicule Doctor Zhivago and mock Pasternak's suffering at the hands of his Soviet persecutors. The reality of Pasternak's anguish is eloquently expressed in his 1959 poem "The Nobel Prize":

But what wicked thing have I done,
I, the "murderer" and "villain"?
I, who force the whole world to cry
Over my beautiful land.

The basis for Blake's comment about Nabokov's mockery of Pasternak is Nabokov's 1959 poem on the reception of Lolita which she cites in her essay. The first stanza (in Nabokov's own translation) reads:

What is the evil deed I have committed?
Seducer, criminal--is this the word
for me who set the entire world
    a-dreaming
of my poor little girl?

In the third and last stanza Nabokov (echoing Derzhavin's and Pushkin's evocation of Horace) suggests that it is to him that Russia will erect a monument. In a Note, Nabokov says "The first strophe imitates [my emphasis] the beginning of Boris Pasternak's poem in which he points out that his notorious novel 'made the whole world shed tears over the beauty of [his] native land'" (Poems and Problems, pp. 146-47). Nabokov's poem, written December 27, 1959 according to Field's Bibliography, was first published in 1961, the year following Pasternak's death, and republished in his posthumous poetry collection Stixi (Ann Arbor, 1979).

Nabokov's opinion of Doctor Zhivago, "Pasternak's melodramatic and vilely written work," is well known (Strong Opinions, p. 57). Less well known is his response to a question about his high regard for Pasternak as a lyric

poet: "Yes, I applaud his getting the Nobel Prize on the strength of his verse" (p. 206). Although Nabokov did see the politics of Doctor Zhivago as tainted, his judgment of the novel expressed his opinion of its esthetic rather than its political failings. The political martyrdom of the writer was not, in Nabokov's view, sufficient reason to regard the novel as a literary masterpiece, although other art produced under Soviet tyranny did command Nabokov's unreserved admiration. Note, for example, his tribute to Pasternak's martyred coeval: "...when I read Mandelstam's poems composed under the accursed rule of those beasts, I feel a kind of helpless shame, being so free to live and write and speak in the free part of the world" (p. 58). In his interviews Nabokov was responding to what he (and many others) saw as a weak novel by a major poet.

Patricia Blake overlooks the possibility that Nabokov's "parody" may well have been intended as a tribute to Pasternak, the poet. Imitation is not the same as parody. After all, Nabokov's Lolita and Pasternak's Zhivago (with its poems) appeared at much the same time and shared much the same fate. Each was hailed and read by millions for reasons that had little to do with artistic merit: both were banned in the Soviet Union. Given Pasternak's comment to Katkov, and Nabokov's penchant for parody, it is not surprising that Blake saw his "imitation" as parody. Nabokov may well have ridiculed Doctor Zhivago but did not, as Blake suggests, "mock Pasternak's suffering."

-- D. Barton Johnson, University of California at Santa Barbara

Basic Basque, Van Veen

1.

The Basque language is a surprisingly often employed extra in Nabokov's books. In Pnin's Chapter One, "Basic Basque" is the language future "elaborate machines" (computers!) will be experimenting upon under the direction of "modern linguists" (p. 10). In the Russian version of Lolita, which differs in many important ways from the English original, a similar euphonic play occurs: "bask-skim (ks-ks-kiska) / by the Basque (puss-puss-pussy cat) (p. 221). Among non-basic Basque words, Nabokov picked up, on the Biarritz beach of his childhood, one that dwelled deep in his mind for years:

> I learned, and have preserved ever since in a glass cell of my memory, that "butterfly" in the Basque language is misericoletea--or at least it sounded so (among the seven words I have found in dictionaries the closest approach is micheletea). (Speak, Memory, p. 148)

A rather long hunt in various obscure dictionaries preserved in the splendid library of the University of Illinois finally yielded the word Nabokov forgot; it's "Misirikote," according to Antonio Griera's Vocabulario Vasco (1960). The "misery" part is there, but then, of course, Nabokov needed that "coletea" to introduce mimetically, in the very next sentence, the heroine of his novelette, Colette.

2.

Although Van's Dutch namesake has been mentioned by Nabokov scholars, I have not seen the following interesting, though perhaps chance, association. Otto van Veen (1556-1629) was the author of several collections of symbolic engravings on themes from the classics, one of the most popular of which was Amorum Emblemata (4to, 1608, Antwerp), a series of semi-heraldic illustrations based mostly on excerpts from Ovid. It was a polyglot edition (in Latin, English, and Italian), and some of its emblematic cartoons (for example, the ones depicting the Lover's torments) would make nice parodistic vignettes to Ada's chapters. This would not have been worth mentioning, had it not been for a curious intermediate literary link, Andrew Marvell, whose "Garden" is a recurrent theme threading its way through the Ardis part of the novel. The following lines from Marvell's other poem, "The Unfortunate Lover" (stylistically related to "Garden") were connected with van Veen's Amorum Emblemata by M.C. Bradbrook and M. Lloyd Thomas in their Andrew Marvell (Cambridge, 1940, p. 29fn):

> Alas, how pleasant are their dayes
> With whom the Infant Love yet playes!
> Sorted by pairs, they still are seen
> By Fountains cool, and Shadows green,
> etc.

The rhythm and diction of these lines resemble very much those of the "Ardis Poem" ("My sister, do you still recall...") and, of course, of "The Garden" ("...To a green

thought in a green Shade"). For Marvell and erotic heraldry see a thorough work by Mario Praz, Studies in Seventeenth Century Imagery, London, 1939-1947.

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Eighteenth-Century Optimism as Metafiction in Pale Fire

Samuel Johnson probably would have disapproved of Pale Fire as he did of another experimental novel: "Nothing odd will do long. 'Tristram Shandy' did not last." To Nabokov, however, the odd does longest; and Pale Fire is among other things a calculated affront to Johnsonian good sense.

The challenge is persistent, detailed, and often explicit: in the epigram from Boswell's Life, in Kinbote's enjoyment of a footnote from the same work (PF, p. 154), in John Shade's comparison of his own appearance to that of Johnson (p. 267), whose initials mirror Shade's own. Other allusions, though less explicit, are no less clear: the aphoristic "samples of John Shade's conversation" that follow Kinbote's reference to Boswell (pp. 154-56), the conversations on prejudice (pp. 216-18), on sin and the afterlife (pp. 223-27), and on resemblances, including Shade's to Johnson (pp. 265-69), all imitate the form of Boswell's reminiscences, and in the last, Shade even takes on Johnson's characteristic gestures and mode of address

("'Nay, sir' [said Shade, refolding a leg and slightly rolling in his armchair as wont to do when about to deliver a pronouncement]" [p. 265]). Kinbote refers several times to the diary on which he has based part of his commentary (pp. 20; 80-81), as Boswell based his Life of Johnson partly on his own journals.

These allusions serve to ground Kinbote's desperate egotism--and perhaps (with a Nabokovian inversion) his alarming sexual voracity--on Boswell's. They also harmonize with the numerous other Augustan allusions in the novel. Shade writes his poem in heroic couplets, the Augustan form par excellence. He quotes Pope's Essay on Man in his poem (p. 48: l. 419), in connection with his book on Pope (p. 46: l. 384), whose title, Supremely Blest (p. 195), is taken from the same passage:

> Whate'er the Passion, knowledge, fame, or pelf,
> Not one will change his neighbour with himself.
> The learn'd is happy nature to explore,
> The fool is happy that he knows no more;
> The rich is happy in the plenty giv'n,
> The poor contents him with the care of Heav'n.
> See the blind beggar dance, the cripple sing,
> The sot a hero, lunatic a king;
> The starving chemist in his golden views
> Supremely blest, the poet in his Muse.
> (An Essay on Man, ed. Maynard Mack [London: Methuen, 1950], II.261-70)

(The name of Zembla is taken from the Essay a few lines earlier, as Kinbote notes [p. 272].)

Shade and his wife indulged in Popean optimism while their daughter was growing up ugly and unhappy:

> But this is prejudice! You should
> rejoice
> That she is innocent. Why overstress
> The physical? She wants to look a mess.
> Virgins have written some resplendent
> books.
> Lovemaking is not everything. Good looks
> Are not that indispensable!"
> (p. 44: 11. 320-25)

Perhaps because of his daughter's death, Shade is critical of Pope's optimism now. He calls the line he quotes "vulgar," and Pope's age "preposterous" for inspiring it (p. 48: 11. 420-21); in a rejected draft, he calls the age "heartless" (p. 203); another rejected draft contains a parody of Pope whose point seems to be its neat vacuity: "In nature's strife when fortitude prevails / The victim falters and the victor fails" (p. 269).

The criticism of Pope in the final version of Shade's poem echoes Johnson's comment on the Essay on Man: "Never were penury of knowledge and vulgarity of sentiment so happily disguised" ("The Life of Pope," in Samuel Johnson: Rasselas, Poems, and Selected Prose, ed. Bertrand H. Bronson [New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1958], p. 401). The criticism of the "preposterous" or "heartless" age is more difficult to assess. Does Shade

consider the age of Pope (1688-1744) different from the age of Johnson (1709-1784)? Does he consider Pope more representative? His reference is so vague that we cannot say--so vague that his precisian creator may mean us to hold it against him.

Johnson himself considered Pope's optimism naive rather than heartless: " Pope perhaps never saw the miseries which [he imagines] thus easy to be born [sic]" ("Review of A Free Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil," in Bronson, p. 200). However, another philosophical optimist, Soame Jenyns, was under review when Johnson made this statement, one who suggested that higher beings might use humanity for their pleasure and profit as humanity used the lower animals, and who struck Johnson as both heartless and preposterous:

> I cannot resist the temptation of contemplating this analogy, which I think he might have carried further very much to the advantage of his argument. He might have shown that these hunters whose game is man have many sports analogous to our own. As we drown whelps and kittens, they amuse themselves now and then with sinking a ship, and stand round the fields of Blenheim or the walls of Prague, as we encircle a cock-pit. As we shoot a bird flying, they take a man in the midst of his business or pleasure, and knock him down with an apoplexy....We know not how far their sphere of observation may extend. Perhaps now and then a merry being may place himself in such a

> situation as to enjoy at once all the varieties of an epidemical disease, or amuse his leisure with the tossings and contortions of every possible pain exhibited together....The only end of writing is to enable the readers better to enjoy life, or better to endure it: and how will either of those be put more in our power by him who tells us, that we are puppets, of which some creature not much wiser than ourselves manages the wires. That a set of beings unseen and unheard, are hovering about us, trying experiments upon our sensibility . . .
>
> (Bronson, pp. 204-06)

Yet Shade, at the climax of his poem, proposes to find consolation and even enjoyment in just such a speculation (p. 63: ll. 811-29):

> Yes! It sufficed that I in life could find
> Some kind of link-and-bobolink, some kind
> Of correlated pattern in the game,
> Plexed artistry, and something of the same
> Pleasure in it as they who played it found.
>
> It did not matter who they were. No sound,
> No furtive light came from their involute
> Abode, but there they were, aloof and mute,
> Playing a game of worlds, promoting pawns
> To ivory unicorns and ebon fawns;
> Kindling a long life here, extinguishing

> A short one there; killing a Balkan king;
> Causing a chunk of ice formed on a high-
> Flying airplane to plummet from the sky
> And strike a farmer dead; hiding my keys,
> Glasses or pipe. Coordinating these
> Events and objects with remote events
> And vanished objects. Making ornaments
> Of accidents and possibilities.

Shade here is as heartless and preposterous as Jenyns, more so than Pope; he would deserve to bear the full brunt of Johnson's invective--if he were a human being, which, of course, he is not. He is a character in a novel, and as such is subject to precisely the type of manipulation that he and Jenyns describe, for the pleasure and profit of unseen superior beings: the author and the reader. Nabokov has granted Shade--as in Bend Sinister he granted Adam Krug--a vision of what he is.

Kinbote, at the climax of his commentary, has a vision comparable to Shade's (perhaps foreshadowed by King Charles the Beloved's dream that his queen "had become a character in a novel" [p. 212]). Shade has just finished his poem, and handed it over to him:

> Solemnly I weighed in my hand what I was carrying under my left armpit, and for a moment I found myself enriched with an indescribable amazement as if informed that fireflies were making decodable signals on behalf of stranded spirits, or that a bat was writing a legible tale of torture in the bruised and branded sky.

I was holding all Zembla pressed to my heart.

(p. 289)

The passage displays the blend of grotesquerie and pathos so characteristic of the novel. It is probably Kinbote's happiest moment, but it is so happy because he has deceived himself so fully; and he is about to be cruelly undeceived. It is an expansion of Pope's "lunatic a king" (which, when Shade quoted it in his draft, Kinbote applied to himself [p. 303]). But though in human terms Kinbote is as deluded as Jenyns, or Pope, or Shade, in the terms appropriate to him he is correct. It is, after all, just as true that he is the King of Zembla as that he is an "American scholar of Russian descent" (p. 306); and his world is made up not of matter and energy but of decodable signals. When he looks up at his evening sky, what he sees is a page of print, from the inside.

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Nabokov in Italian: Transparent Things

by Charles Stanley Ross
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I would like to expand some remarks made in a recent Modern Fiction Studies review, where I said that Transparent Things was perceptibly improved for me when I read it in conjunction with Dmitri Nabokov's excellent Italian translation (Cose trasparenti [Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1975]). On the eve of the appearance of DN's Italian A Russian Beauty and Other Stories, it seems worth publishing examples of how in numerous small instances DN clarifies locutions that are not only baffling, but seem to indicate that Nabokov lost his grip on the American idiom--when of course what he was desert it for the international koiné of Switzerland, represented by a German author's imperfect grasp of English.

In a parenthesis added to his English translation of his Italian foreword (see The Achievements of Vladimir Nabokov [Cornell, 1984]), DN says that making stylistic embellishments is "a tempting sin in Italian." Nonetheless, his "Ehi, persona" ("Hullo" is later translated as "salve" [chapter 10]), "bastoncino," and the phrase "Proprio quel pino" are only embellishments insofar as they are normal Italian. The English equivalents--Mr. R's awkward "Hullo, person!" (1); "rodlet," which is not in The American Heritage Dictionary and sounds suspiciously like "nymphet"; and "This particular pine" (3) have a rough edge that is intentional, but nonetheless irritating.

Sometimes DN's Italian clarifies the text, clearly with VN's approval: "i suoi indumenti" (his garments) is a shade more precise that "his things" (4); "camera da letto che fungeva anche da soggiorno" (a bedroom that doubled as a sitting room) is a useful expansion of "bed-sitting room" (7); "tondo" makes clear that the enigmatic "rom" is a typesetter's abbreviation (15); "sedia elettrica" glosses the slang phrase "you might burn" (16); and "Lewis Carroll" should help explain "Lutwidgeon" (12).

Nabokovians are used to inspecting the tiniest details for meaning, but DN left some things untranslated: "tralatitiously speaking" (24); "black" in the phrase "semitransparent black fabric" (9); and the nursery rhyme tag "that Jack built" (3). On the other hand, great care has been taken to translate "Pussy" as "Monte Venere" (19) and as DN has pointed out, "Ghe focose" (loosely, fiery jigs; more accurately, passionate dances) is a rare find for "Cunning Stunts." The Italian, which requires transposing two sets of consonants, not just one, produces "Fiche giocose," which I will render only as jolly figs.

I can't say why DN felt the need to translate Savoy as Bologna (19). Armande does not define "Savoie" in the English, but in Italian she adds that "la bolognia potrebbe essere una specie di mortadella" (baloney is a kind of inexpensive luncheon meat).

To conclude--on a slightly negative note--one would not suppose that much is lost when, in rendering Hugh's poem in chapter eight, DN

turns a sunset into a sunrise ("alba d'oro") and drops "heavenly example," allowing the ending of the third line to mirror the last five letters of the first ("Di sospensione adoro/i puntini . . . Il lago si scopriva/ capace d'imitare l'alba d'oro"). But if I read TT correctly, the whole point of Mr. R.'s disquisitions on the transparency of objects, such as the pencil of chapter three, is that on Hugh's fourth trip to Switzerland, after his death, Mr. R. approaches in order to instruct him in the arts of the afterlife. No one has yet remarked that with fatherly affection, Mr. R. attempts to set a "heavenly example" for a new ghost. His hesitancy, his "hullo"'s and his intrusions, reflect his tender solicitude.

Giobbole, Italy

Reply:

I have been asked to comment on Professor Ross's interesting remarks about my Italian translation of Transparent Things.

I am touched and gratified that my struggles with style and detail have been appreciated by Ross, who is that rara avis all translators and critics of translation should be -- an expert in both the "from" and the "into" languages.

To proceed in order, A Russian Beauty and Other Stories, commissioned, submitted, accepted, and paid for, is, after all, not being issued by Mondadori, because of an intervening

change of editorial personnel and policy in a country whose once glorious literary tradition is vanishing into the ooze of the most commercial common denominator. Together with a second -- still untranslated -- orphan, Look at the Harlequins!, Russian Beauty may yet find another home.

As I pointed out in "Translating with Nabokov," the euphonic exigencies and structural strictures of literary Italian greatly complicate the literal rendering of Nabokov's original and varied style. And, to convey English colloquialisms, it was impossible to employ the colorful jargon of my brilliant Brianzolo race-car mechanic, or the charming Tuscan dialect of an operatic girlfriend (in which ceci are not chick-peas but caresses), or the splendid Neapolitan expressions of my boating buddies in Capri, Ischia and Sorrento, or even the locutions, perhaps geographically more germane, of my friends in Venice or Trieste. Nor was it always possible, without lapsing further than I did into nonidiomatic and hopelessly jarring Italian, to reproduce what Ross calls the "intentional rough edge." As he notes, it is sometimes there, although I fail to perceive it in the examples he cites. Perhaps "Hullo, person!" may have an unorthodox inflection to the American ear; it is, nevertheless, a perfectly legitimate and smooth form of hailing in the Queen's English. In any case, if one reverse-translates (always a merciless test), "Ehi!" yields the even rougher -- in a nonlinguistic sense, at least -- "Hey!" or "Hey, you!" I find "rodlet" musical and liquid. This family of diminutives did not begin with the nymphet, and, if

Ross had not contented himself with the American Heritage but checked the OED, he would have found it, in the exact sense intended by Father, on page 749 of Volume VIII (although I admit thirteen fat tomes are a lot to lug from Purdue to Giobbole). That, however, does not seem to me an indispensable criterion. In fact, various lexica, including the venerable Webster's International, now list neologisms and usages originated by Nabokov (and he left a little unpublished list of "coinages" as well). "This particular pine" sounds no rougher to me than any other pine.

I confess I do not quite follow the overall reasoning here either: am I being a) praised or b) chided for a) embellishing or b) not really embellishing?

With sincere thanks to Ross for the warm praise that follows, I proceed to the next exceptions taken.

"Tralatitiously speaking": omitted in the Italian in deliberate, authorized avoidance of what would have been a cumbersome and incomprehensible Italian phrase.

The semitransparent fabric, which should have been black: I am not Homer -- or Chapman -- but I nodded anyway.

"That Jack built": I found a more-or-less equivalent Italian ditty and toyed with the idea of dragging it in (for verbatim translation would have been meaningless). Upon careful consideration and consultation with the author, however, I decided not to overbur-

den a sentence whose meaning was already pretty clear.

Ah, "Gighe focose": I was even luckier than Ross suggests, for "fighe," in certain figgy regions, is just as legitimate as "fiche," and makes for a perfect spoonerism.

"Savoie" became "Bologna," with VN's permission, because Monte Venere, which was badly needed for the word play, is in the Province of BO. Since "Savoy" acquires a second meaning in Armande's next speech, "Bologna" had to have one too, hence "una specie di mortadella."

Regarding the "slightly negative note" of the sunset:

1) The solution was directly based, with VN's approval, on his handling of the lines in the French version. In the "author's copy" of the U.S. edition, the French translation of the lines is penciled in, with the note "to preserve the punning enjambment," i.e.,

... The sun was setting

a heavenly example to the lake ...

which became, in French,

... Le lac se découvrait

le pouvoir d'imiter les teintes de l'aurore.

and, in Italian,

... Il lago si scopriva

capace d'imitare l'alba d'oro.

It was decided, in both translations, to rhyme the third line with the first.

2) Alba has also occurred in Italian in the phrase "alba di tramonto," "evening aurora," hence I have not necessarily turned Father's original sunset into a dawn.

In any case, the literality of translation was more in the poetic structure, more in the word play than in the word, although I might still have hesitated without authorial approval and precedent.

The connection between the opening of Hugh's college poem and the "disquisitions on the transparency of objects" that Ross attributes to Mr. R. is tenuous at best, and might have come as a big surprise to Father. He might nonetheless have awarded the most attentive Ross a jolly "A" for his last paragraph.

Dmitri Nabokov
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ABSTRACT

"Eliot, Proust, and Hazel Shade: Nabokov's Revisionary Modernism and Canto II of John Shade's 'Pale Fire'"

by John Burt Foster, Jr.

(Abstract of a paper delivered at the Annual Meeting of AATSEEL, Washington, DC, December 1984)

Nabokov's unique position in literary history makes him an important witness to international modernism. As a Russian émigré who lived in three Western European countries, he could observe, evaluate, and synthesize the new tendencies in several different literatures. And, because he started out as a writer of fiction in the mid-1920s, he had the advantage of hindsight on the great outpouring of modernist masterpieces from 1910 to 1930.

Nabokov began to emphasize his special outlook in the 1950s. Both in lectures, prefaces, and interviews and in references in his fiction, he tried to broaden conceptions of modernism by revising the list of great names that in the United States had come to define the movement. Among Western European literary figures, he sought to dislodge T.S. Eliot from his position of authority and, despite the claims of Joyce and Kafka, to replace him with Proust.

An especially revealing expression of Nabokov's outlook appears during the Hazel Shade story, told in Canto II of John Shade's poem "Pale Fire" and in notes from Kinbote's commentary. The polemic with Eliot centers on some allusions to the Four Quartets. Shuttling between basic metaphysical questions and specific issues in literary technique, Nabokov contrasts Eliot's depersonalized mythico-symbolic religious art with his own aestheticism. In the Hazel Shade story, this aestheticism obviously means elaborate literary form, but it also suggests an intricately patterned cosmos, a scepticism regarding metaphysical absolutes, and a zeal for individuality and for concrete particulars.

In contrast, the Hazel Shade story affirms the centrality of Proust for Nabokov's aestheticism. Through an intricate network of allusions and adaptations, Nabokov links her fate to a "human interest" reading of Proust, one that portrays a demonic social world ruled by instinctive cruelty, the pursuit of prestige, and racial prejudice. Ultimately these themes explain the intense commitment of both authors to the aesthetic, which in their view opposes social cruelty by nourishing an absolute respect for individuality. For Nabokov, accordingly, tenderness and kindness figure prominently in his credo of aesthetic bliss. Thus, though the Hazel Shade story freely adapts the French novels to mid-century America, Nabokov's version of modernism counters Eliot by emphasizing Proust's aesthetic individualism.

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ABSTRACT

"Nabokovian Incest and Cultural Synthesis"

by D. Barton Johnson

(Abstract of a paper delivered at the Annual National Meeting of AATSEEL, Washington, DC, December 1984)

Vladimir Nabokov, tri-lingual and tri-cultural from childhood, was perhaps the most cosmopolitan writer of the twentieth century. Nabokov was a synthesizer of cultural traditions, a synthesizer at once playful and profound. Soon after the appearance of Lolita, Lionel Trilling and John Hollander pointed out that the novel was in part Nabokov's resurrection of the European Romantic tradition in a modern American setting. A second generation of critics (Thomas Frosch and Edmund White), building on this foundation, suggested that Lolita in part deliberately echoes Pushkin's Eugene Onegin. This line of thought has been articulated much more specifically by Priscilla Meyer who points out many striking parallels between Onegin and Lolita. Put crudely, the latter critics assert that the "real" plot of both works derives from the conflict between different varieties of Romanticism embodied by the uncomprehending characters. Both novels are conscious examples of cultural synthesis.

My paper argues that Ada, even more than Lolita, is best seen in this same context. Incest, a central facet of Ada, is one of the defining themes of high Romanticism. The founding fathers of European Romanticism, the

English Byron, the French Chateaubriand, and the Russian Pushkin, all lurk in the wild gardens of Ardis Manor. The former were obsessed with sibling incest in both their lives and their art, and Nabokov has hinted that Pushkin alludes to it in a passage in Eugene Onegin. What then is the meaning of the incest theme in Ada? Various critics have offered psychological, social, moral and philosophical interpretations of the theme, although Nabokov himself denied them. I propose that the proper context for consideration of the matter is a literary one. It is not by chance that Ada's only explicit, extended discussion of incest takes place in the Ardis Hall family library only hours before the siblings' initial intercourse. It is also to be remarked that the multi-generational incest of the Zemski-Veen clan mimics and models the literary evolution of the incest theme starting from the Romantics. Incest in Ada is a complex Nabokovian metaphor for the literary process on both a historical and personal level.

Ada is a parodic reworking of the Romantic incest tradition, just as Lolita is a reworking of other Romantic traditions. Ada's Romantic incest theme is a master metaphor for the creative intercourse of several generations of "incest" novels in the three great literatures to which Nabokov's novel is heir: cultural synthesis par excellence.

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The paper is partly based upon material in my forthcoming book Worlds in Regression: Some Novels of Vladimir Nabokov. (Ardis, 1985)

ABSTRACT

"Io's Metamorphosis: A Classical Subtext for Lolita"

by S. E. Sweeney

(Abstract of a paper delivered at the Annual National Meeting of AATSEEL, Washington, DC, December 1984)

Everything in Lolita undergoes metamorphosis. The characters are described by animal imagery; the plot is shaped by temporal and physical changes; the text gradually evolves from confession to work of art. Such transformations in imagery, plot, and structure, thematically linked by the "enchanted hunters" motif, echo the dramatic action of Lolita's and Humbert's interrelated metamorphoses. They also suggest the possible influence of Ovid's Metamorphoses, which, like Lolita, describes a magical, timeless realm where conflict, exile, and unsatisfied desire are resolved by stylized transformation.

An even more convincing argument for the Metamorphoses' influence is the myth of Io and Argus, to which Nabokov often alludes, and which significantly resembles Lolita in plot, character, and theme. In both narratives a young girl, seduced by an older man, undergoes a metamorphosis directly linked to male sexuality and female objectification; moreover, the myth's male characters parallel Humbert's multiple roles as Lolita's surrogate father (Io's father), her powerful lover (Jupiter), and the self-described monster who imprisons her (Argus), while Mercury, who attempts to steal Io from Argus, suggests Quilty, Humbert's double. The two narratives share such common themes as love and metamorphosis; vision, recognition, and abnormal perception; hypnotism and enchanted sleep; and self-conscious art. Most significant, however, is that Ovid's myth, like Nabokov's novel, organizes these themes around the interrelated metamorphoses of the main characters

Both heroines are identified as nymphs (or "little nymphs"). The nymphet's distinguishing characteristic, of course, is her undefined, incomplete metamorphosis, which Lolita (like classical myths and fairy tales) represents as an enchanted state of arrested development. Accordingly, both Io and Lolita are defined by specific metamorphoses as well as by a tendency towards transformation. Yet why are they, unlike other heroines, victimized instead of protected by these changes? The recurrence in both narratives of mistaken recognition, disguise, and voyeurism, all as a function of male perceptions, suggest an answer: Io's and Lolita's metamorphoses, having no organic cause, signify instead their rape and sexual objectification. Lolita's involuntary metamorphosis into a nymphet, for example, is caused solely by Humbert's solipsistic perception of her, "as if she were a photographic image rippling upon a screen and I a humble hunchback abusing myself in the dark."

Perhaps because the heroines resemble each other not in specifics, but as fellow victims of rape, sexual objectification, and involuntary metamorphosis, several possible allusions to Io in Lolita are more suggestive than conclusive. Similarities between Argus and Humbert, on the other hand, are not only more convincing, but are supported by unmistakeable references to the myth.

Unlike Nabokov's other allusions to Argus, those in Lolita emphasize not only Humbert's perversion and voyeurism (and the self-absorption such traits suggest), but also foreshadow his eventual apotheosis as an artist. Moreover, although these allusions appropriately modify their immediate context, they also reinforce the overall theme of solipsism: for example, peacock imagery (Argus is immortalized as the peacock's tail) eloquently describes the visual effects of light and shade even while underscoring Humbert's and Quilty's voyeurism.

Even more significant than these allusions to Argus's metamorphosis is the fact that it parallels Humbert's own. By gradually correcting his memories of Lolita, seeing her as an adult, and killing his double, Humbert finally transcends his solipsism, discovering that he loves Lolita not as he perceived her but as she truly is. Other allusions, which link peacock imagery to artistic and spiritual transcendence, foreshadow this change in his perceptions.

Probably neither the myth of Io and Argus nor the Metamorphoses served as a precursor of

Lolita: instead, Ovid's myth is one of several texts parodied and refelcted in Nabokov's novel. Moreover, unlike the misleading allusions to such romantic parallels as Carmen or "Annabel Lee," this classical subtext clarifies rather than obscures the dramatic action. In order to truly understand Lolita, and resolve the delicate moral balance between Lolita's seductiveness and Humbert's seduction, the reader must perceive the connection between her metamorphoses in Humbert's perceptions, and his own apotheosis as an artist. The allusions to the myth of Io and Argus guide the reader towards this crucial recognition.

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ABSTRACT

"Pale Fire: Vladimir Vladimirovich and William Wordsworth"

by Priscilla Meyer

(Abstract of a paper delivered at the Annual National Meeting of AATSEEL, Washington, DC, December 1984)

Nabokov was at least two children in his kingdom by the sea, an English child and a Russian one. That is why his two great American novels, Lolita and Pale Fire, incorporate the Russian and English literary traditions: Lolita incorporates Onegin in modern dress, and Pale Fire makes analogous use of Wordsworth's Prelude. The two novels mirror each other. Lolita's synthesis of Russian and American culture mirrors Pale Fire's synthesis of British and American culture, and these syntheses are effected through Nabokov's life and art which function as "translator" in the broadest sense. In each case Nabokov provides us with a bi-lingual dictionary: for Lolita it is the Commentary to Onegin, in Pale Fire it is Speak, Memory. As Nabokov's creative autobiography, Speak, Memory functions as a point of calibration for Wordsworth's creative autobiography in the Prelude. This suggests that Nabokov did indeed "foresee his future novels," and created out of them a hall of mirrors setting up complex refractions, but far from being hermetically sealed, the whole structure may be verified in reference libraries of world literature and natural science. Nabokov's work provides the reader with a complete system of relationships, coordinates and principles that may be used to measure the latitude and longitude of his universe.

A central concept linking the artistic and scientific hemispheres of Nabokov's work is that of translation in its many senses:

1. Literal (one language into another)

2. Cultural (one literary work and its universe into another)

3. Natural scientific (one species into another through migration and mimicry)

4. Mathematical (from one locus in space-time to another)

In Pale Fire, Nabokov establishes patterns of translation in literature, in nature, in imagination, and in space-time, giving each an axis in the conventional X-Y-Z system. Through French translations, Pushkin is connected to the English tradition of Johnson, Pope, Coleridge and Wordsworth in the Commentary, and this is in turn connected to New Wye, Appalachia in Pale Fire, suggesting that literary migrations follow an East-West axis (the X-axis). The red admiral (Vanessa) in the Eastern hemisphere migrates from Africa to Northern Russia, the white admiral in the Western hemisphere migrates from Nova Scotia to South America. The red and white admirals are linked through their common ancestors in Africa as well as through their mimics in

North America. Natural translation then, in keeping with migratory routes, follows a North-South axis (the Y-axis). Z in mathematics combines real and imaginary numbers. In Pale Fire it extends from Kinbote's Zembla to Mrs. Z's mountain glimpsed beyond the living state, so that the Z-axis is the axis of imagination which bridges life and death, the real and the imaginary. The fourth axis is time, hinted at by the alphabet games in Pale Fire such as judge Goldsworth's children, A,B,C, and D named in inverse order to their age. Alphabets and numerical systems may be recombined infinitely to contain the alpha and omega of existence within the infinite fourth dimension. The point of intersection of axes is called zero. In Pale Fire the lakes between New Wye and Exton are called Zero, Ozero, and Omega. This may be translated as "the point zero at which the axes intersect is Ozero ("lake" in Russian), and that lake is the final letter of the Greek alphabet, Omega." Thus Nabokov supplies the co-ordinates of space-time in Pale Fire.

ABSTRACT

"Nabokov as Scientist and Artist: Toward A Sense of Balance"

by David Field

(Abstract of a paper delivered at the Annual MLA Convention, Washington, DC, December 1984)

Darwin and other great scientists pay careful attention to minute details of the natural world, but they also interpret those details, putting them in a larger theoretical framework in order to make sense of them. According to Stephen Jay Gould, Darwin follows a middle road between the collection of facts and the creation of theories about those facts.

Artists must strike a similar balance between the world and their art--they must take elements of the world and use those elements to create a coherent world of their own. If they do not observe the world carefully, they face the danger of writing only for themselves, of creating a solipsistic universe; on the other hand, if they do not interpret that world in an aesthetically consistent manner, their work will become fragmentary, incoherent, and equally meaningless.

Vladimir Nabokov spent much of his life exploring the ways that science and art mediate between reality and imagination and praising the value of highly individual imag-

ination while recognizing the importance of careful attention to the natural world. One of the few modern novelists who can claim his place as a scientist as well, Nabokov understands the way that imagination brings science and art together. Instead of falling prey to either extreme, solipsistic unity or fragmentary realism, his mature work seeks a point of balance between imagination and reality. By using his sense of balance, he is able to ground his art on factual knowledge and yet find values in the external world.

These values take Nabokov beyond Darwin and science, however. In a key passage from Speak, Memory, Nabokov rejects Darwinian evolution saying that "'natural selection,' in the Darwinian sense, could not explain the miraculous coincidence of imitative aspect and imitative behavior, nor could one appeal to the theory of 'the struggle for life' when a protective device was carried to a point of mimetic subtlety, exuberance, and luxury far in excess of a predator's power of appreciation." Nabokov's version of evolution, therefore, is more aesthetic than scientific because it shows the natural world as a work of art which holds vast forces in aesthetic balance.

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ABSTRACT

"You Say Imagination, I Say Memory; You Say Memory, I Say Dream: Nabokov's Psychology and the Fiction of Freud"

by Geoffrey Green

(Abstract of a paper delivered at the Annual MLA Convention, Washington, DC, December 1984)

To Vladimir Nabokov, he was the "Viennese quack." Nabokov maintained that all of his novels ought to bear the stamp, "Freudians, Keep Out." Nearly every public statement Nabokov ever issued touches upon his lifelong aversion to Freud. But how often do we need to be told the same thing? And this from an author we appropriately celebrate as the master of subtlety, discernment, and pristine clarity of expression.

The temptation would be to ask whether Nabokov protests too much. But the underlying psychoanalytic reasons behind Nabokov's campaign against Freud are less significant for us as Nabokovians than the fact that he chose to wage such a battle.

We are faced with two Nabokovian creations: the fiction that is Nabokov's body of work and our understanding of that work which was influenced by Nabokov (through detailed introductions to his novels and numerous interviews). It is our challenge to rise to the realization that the way in which we view Nabokov has been as much a fiction created by

Nabokov as are Nabokov's own fictional masterpieces. It is with this awareness in mind that I propose we consider Freud and Nabokov's creation of him.

It is my contention that there is more common ground between Nabokov and Freud than is apparent initially. Nabokov's belief in the process of memory as a creative endeavor by which recalled life is transformed into art is not inherently dissimilar in concept from the mental process described by Freud in which remembered experience is transformed creatively by the imagination into dreams. Creative memory (for Nabokov) or imaginative dreaming (for Freud) compensate for the disappointments of an inadequate reality.

What I mean to suggest is that there is a fertile region in common between Nabokov's belief in a creative compensatory memory process and Freud's theory of imaginative dreams preserving the events of the remembered past. This is not to suggest that Nabokov's sensibility was not profoundly disturbed by Freud's concept of infantile sexuality or the Oedipus complex. But just as Nabokov was able to distinguish and particularize about his political beliefs, avoiding a blanket embrace or repudiation of American policy--"In home politics I am strongly anti-segregationist. In foreign policy, I am definitely on the government's side" (Strong Opinions, p. 98)--so it is appropriate to wonder about his inability to do this with Freud.

The answer may be contained in these words of Freud that might have been written by

Nabokov: "My emotional life has always insisted that I should have an intimate friend and a hated enemy. I have always been able to provide myself afresh with both, and it has not infrequently happened that the ideal situation of childhood has been so completely reproduced that friend and enemy have come together in a single individual--" (Standard Edition, V, p. 483).

If it is true that Nabokov created two bodies of creative art, his extraordinary novels and the fictitious public authorial image by which he meant for us to respond to them, so it may be true that he thus creatd Freud, a fictitious Freud who became for Nabokov a manufactured foil or double to his authorial persona analogous to those doubles so prevalent in his fiction.

If, by touching upon Strong Opinions, "The Return of Chorb," "Ultima Thule," Pale Fire, and especially, Speak, Memory and Bend Sinister in relation to The Interpretation of Dreams and Five Lectures on Psycho-Analysis, this discussion has been persuasive, then it is time for us to appreciate but also to transcend the legacy of that fictitious persona. In Freud it is conceivable that Nabokov had not a mere "hated enemy" but a "friend and enemy come together in a single individual." We ought to remember (from The Real Life of Sebastian Knight, p. 52) "that what you are told is really threefold: shaped by the teller, reshaped by the listener, concealed from both by the dead man of the tale."

We have much to learn, to discover, to remember.

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ABSTRACT

"Phantom of Fact. Vladimir Nabokov's PNIN Annotated"

by Gene Barabtarlo

(Abstract of Dissertation submitted for the award of Ph.D., University of Illinois, October 1984)

The work is a comprehensive analysis of Nabokov's Pnin; in format and structure, it is midway between Alfred Appel's Annotated Lolita and Nabokov's commentary to Eugene Onegin. It consists of three parts. The introductory section provides information on the history of the text and discusses various artistic aspects of the novel, such as chronology, cast, compositional devices, thematic interaction, transitions, etc. The second, and largest, part comprises the page by page commentary and textual exegesis. Special care has been taken to supply, wherever possible, illustrative parallel texts from other works by Nabokov, particularly the chronologically adjacent ones (Bend Sinister, Lolita, Pale Fire, and notes to Eugene Onegin). Similar techniques, tropes, and recurring situations are collated and discussed at great length. On the other hand, biographical correlations have been used sparingly and treated with caution, to protect the ambience of the fiction scholia from extraneous light of the superficial human element. The discussion of the problem of the first person narrator figures prominently in

the notes, as does the analysis of recurrent themes and patterns and their interassociation within the limited space of a chapter or the larger structure of the novel. An attempt has been made to bring up all literary clues and vectors that could be detected. All variants and discrepancies found in the New Yorker version are supplied at appropriate places. The last part includes a series of appendices (a complete list of the book's 305 characters, chronology chart, Pnin's flora and fauna, etc.), and a detailed bibliography.

ABSTRACT

"Vladimir Nabokov: The Loving Imagination"

by Diane Gail Winston

(Abstract of a Dissertation submitted for the award of Ph.D., Brown University, May 1984)

In consecutive chapters, and with careful analysis of Nabokov's language, this thesis considers the following works: Lolita, Pnin, Pale Fire, Ada, and Speak, Memory. It is an attempt to move beyond the prevalent critical consensus of Nabokov as a formalist, a fabulist, a contemporary artist escaping from the mediocrity of life into the magic of his art, and show him also as lover, whose aesthetic investment in both fiction and life becomes a source of his humane vision, whose parodic forms and fantastic patternings give but modern voice to his passion and his pity.

Nabokov brings a loving imagination to his themes of nature, time, childhood and beauty. Its range is revealed in his often outlandish treatment of sex, romance, and marriage, but also in his assertion of the forms love should take in every approach to experience, of kindness, gentleness, and generosity. Love is essential to Nabokov's aesthetic vision as the consummate Nabokovian artist and lover both reveal the imagination seeing the world with intelligence, interest, excitement and empathy.

Seeing Nabokov as a lover permits him the perspective so often denied him: a happy art, which does not escape life but instead extols its value. With Elizabethan exuberance, Nabokov turns the ordinary of life everywhere into images of poetry. Thus, Nabokov's humor is not only the humanist's effort to ease life's burden, but also the lover's delight in its beauty. His fantasies are not a matter of evasion but emphasis, on the smallest sign of beauty over the most pervasive horror, on the importance of genius and love over one's own anguish and loss.

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