THE NABOKOVIAN

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by the Vladimir Nabokov Society

Editor: Stephen Jan Parker

The Nabokovian serves to report and stimulate Nabokov scholarship and to create a link between Nabokov scholars, both in the USA and abroad.

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From the Editor

The Nabokovian has new clothes, which is only fitting for the issue which completes our tenth year. The publication has evolved from modest beginnings in 1978 - through five years of growth - a title change in 1984 - and today, via the marvels of desk-top publishing and laser printing, to a leaner and more professional appearance. As we mark our ten-year jubilee, I take the occasion to reflect for a moment on our past, present, and future.

After its inception in 1978, the *VNRN* quickly attracted a solid core of subscribers who subsequently proved to be active and loyal. Because the substance of each issue has remained dependent upon the interests and activities of others, the success we have had has been directly attributable to our readers' regular participation in these pages. At certain times we have had slim issues, but more often we have had an abundance of materials. Indeed, we changed our title when it became apparent that the *Newsletter* had become much more than a newsletter.

Today *The Nabokovian* is well-known. It is on the shelves of almost all major American university libraries, and its issues are searched annually for all major literary bibliographies. It is unlikely that persons engaged in serious Nabokov scholarship can remain unaware of its existence, nor ignore the information conveyed in its pages.

For me, personally, it has been a fascinating decade, as thousands of letters, forming an elaborate and ever-expanding matrix of Nabokov studies, have passed through my hands and into the pages of the journal. It has brought contacts with a worldwide host of devoted Nabokovphiles -- general readers, enthusiastic collectors, and erudite scholars. My list of acknowledgments is enormous. Mrs. Véra Nabokov encouraged the endeavor from the outset and has steadfastly supported it in every conceivable way, never once questioning editorial policy or content. The special inclusiveness and immediacy of *The Nabokovian* would have been impossible without her singular support and participation. Dmitri Nabokov has proven to be our finest friend, providing materials and current information, seconding his mother's efforts, offering his

own work to our pages -- remaining cognizant, grateful, and supportive of the ever widening realm of Nabokov studies.

For ten years Charles Nicol has served selflessly as editor of Annotations & Queries; ten years of meticulous editing and fixed deadlines. There have been many contributors, too numerous to mention, but several stand out by the importance and number of their contributions: Brian Boyd, D. Barton Johnson, Michael Juliar, Gene Barabtarlo. Others, such as Phyllis Roth, Samuel Schuman, Peter Evans, Leszek Engelking, Paul Morgan, Pekka Tammi, Simon Karlinsky, Leona Toker, Priscilla Meyer have remained steadfast correspondents, regularly conveying news from around the world and offering encouragement and assistance. And in a separate category, which I shall call benefactors, are the several readers without necessarily a professional interest in VN matters who never fail to send a much appreciated good word and frequently a monetary donation -- among them David Stivender, William Whittaker, John Burt Foster, Jr., Meredith Ann Spector. To these persons, and all who have aided and encouraged our efforts, my thanks and sincere appreciation.

Looking into the future is always chancy. It would be nice to publish and distribute an index of the first ten years. It would be nice to expand the size of our issues, or to consider the separate publication of special projects. But our costs continue to exceed our annual revenues. In 1987 our total income was $1,795, while our total expenses were $2,325. Despite our best efforts, over the past five years the overall number of subscribers has varied little. In fall 1982 we had 181 subscribers in the USA and 52 abroad; in fall 1987 we had 200 in the USA and 71 abroad. During these years there has been an internal shift towards an increase in institutional subscribers and a decrease in the number of individual subscribers.

In my opinion, we have now raised subscription rates to the highest acceptable level. Actually there are indications that we are already losing subscribers because of the new rates, particularly from abroad. And despite the higher rates, the inexorable spiral of expenses -- supplies, printing, and especially postage -- will most likely continue to keep us in the red. But I hasten to add that *The Nabokovian* will appear this year, and every effort will be made to secure its long term future.

A publication's ten-year jubilee is a special occasion. Careful readers of this issue will note some dextrous sleight of hand with tongue fully in cheek. The following curious letter recently received sets the tone, at least partially, for what will follow:

To: Stephen Jan Parker, editor: *Nabokovian*
From: Fanny Emery, Editor: *Scholars: A Wake!* (the James Joyce Bulletin of Annotations and Lamentations)

The attached critique has been submitted to us for publication. It appears to be better suited to your audience than to ours. The methodology is not without a certain resonance with the acrostic contortions not uncommon to Nabokov's critics. Given your journal's evident penchant for arcane indigestibilia, you may perhaps be inclined to print this crustacean explication.

TOWARDS AN INTERPRETATION OF *ULYSSES*
Metonymy and Gastronomy: a Bloom with a Stew

The astute reader of *Ulysses* will find that the key to the work lies in gastronomy. The initials S.H. of Stephen Hero are the last two letters of the word *fish*, symbol of Christ. When postjoined to the first two letters of *Finnegan*, the equation is complete.

Having adopted the proper perspective, one can see from the text that seafood is indeed the crux of the matter. Leopold Bloom is named for King Leopold of Belgium (long renowned for its carrots), who introduced lobster to the western world, which we know as "Leopold's Langoustine." Indeed, even a method of preparation is spelled out for us in the name of the character Blazes Boylan. The title *Ulysses* suggests a sea voyage, and the wine of Homer's famous "wine-dark" sea (it will later turn out to be sherry) is only one of the many symbolic ingredients we encounter on the way.

Bearing this in mind, one may readily progress to the point to which Joyce wishes to bring his reader. Tindall points out that of all the characters only Ulysses is a Jew; as he quotes Lynch, "Jew-Greek is Greek-Jew." Joyce's constant intimate juxtaposition of shell fish and Jew led early critics to think he intended to lower the price of fish. However, it is clear to the perspicacious reader that

Joyce's overriding concern was to abolish the dietary laws of the tribes of Israel.

But it is in the very first sentence that Joyce slyly presages the ubiquitous motif which leads us to the shattering revelation--may we call it an epiphany?--of this monumental work: the introduction of "stately plump Buck Mulligan" in the very first sentence renders inescapable the conclusion that the book is in fact a stew!

But, we ask, what kind of a stew? The constant allusion to crustaceans, the recurrent images, as Tindall remarks, of "water, potatoes and Plumtree's Potted Prawns" finally reveal the purpose of the entire work: *Ulysses* is a recipe for bouillabaise.

Års Longa (Emeritus)
Dept. of Angels and Pins
Dumbarton Oaks

Vita Brevis
Faculté de Cordon Bleu XII
Marseille

NEWS

by Stephen Jan Parker

Once again the Nabokov Society sessions at MLA and AATSEEL were well attended (approximately 40 persons at each session) and well received. Papers presented at the first MLA session -- "Nabokov, Philosophy, and the Arts," chaired by Leona Toker -- were Zoran Kuzmanovich, "'Where Art . . . is the Norm': Nabokov Between Plato and Kant"; Leona Toker, "Philosophers as Poets: Reading Nabokov with Schopenhauer and Bergson"; Ellen Pifer, "Shades of Love: The Landscape of Eternity in Nabokov's Fiction." At the second session - "The Posthumous Nabokov," chaired by Samuel Schuman -- the papers read were Samuel Schuman. "The First Posthumous Decade"; D. Barton Johnson, "The Soviet Reception of Vladimir Nabokov"; Kim McMullen, "Recent Trends in Nabokov Criticism." Papers presented at the AATSEEL session -- "Authorship and Authority: Nabokov's Artistic Control," chaired by Susan Elizabeth Sweeney -- were Charles Nicol, "Necessary Instruction or Fatal Fatuity: The Polemic Introduction to *Bend Sinister*"; Martha Carpenter, "The Fictive Haze: Nabokov's Control of the *Lolita* Text"; Galya Diment, "'Nabokov' Doesn't Rhyme with 'Love'"; Brenda Marshall, "Nabokov: A Quest(ion)ing of Narrative Authority"; discussant, Phyllis Roth.

At the Nabokov Society business meeting which was held between the two MLA sessions, Julian Connolly was elected to a two-year term as President and Susan Elizabeth Sweeney was elected to a two-year term as Vice President. During general discussion it was suggested that the Society engage in a campaign for a Vladimir Nabokov commemorative Federal stamp, perhaps as part of the already existing U.S. Authors series. If any reader is familiar with the procedure(s) involved in such an effort, please contact a Society officer.

*

Due to the decision of its Board of Directors (strongly contested), the 1988 AATSEEL National Convention will be held December 28-30 in Washington DC, while the MLA National Convention will be

held December 27-30 in New Orleans. This forced separation of Slavists and Americanists is particularly unfortunate for members of the Nabokov Society.

Nonetheless, meetings have been scheduled at each convention. At MLA there will be a session entitled, "Nabokov and Contemporary Critical Theories," chaired by Geoffrey Green (English Department, San Francisco State University, San Francisco, CA 94132) and another session entitled, "Nabokov and Others: Intertextuality, Influences, Relationships Between Nabokov and Other Writers," chaired by Ellen Pifer (English Department, University of Delaware, Newark, DE 19716). At AATSEEL, the session, "Nabokov and Poetry," will be chaired by John Kopper (Russian Department, Dartmouth College, Hanover NH 03755). Queries are welcomed by the program chairs.

*

Just published: Vladimir Nabokov. *Carrousel*. Introductory Note by Dmitri Nabokov. Aartswoud, The Netherlands: Spectatorpers. 1987. This attractive booklet, published in a numbered, limited edition, contains three items by Nabokov: "Laughter and Dreams," Painted Wood," "The Russian Song." According to Stella de Does, who provides a note on the text, "the three texts printed in this booklet form part of Nabokov's--often pseudonymous--contributions to Russian émigré cabaret theatres during his stay in Berlin from 1922 to 1937. I found them in the second issue of a trilingual brochure of 16 pages, *Karussel - Carousal - Carrousel*, a prospectus for a European tour of a Russian variety theatre of the same name, which gave its performances in a small new theatre on Kurfürstendamm in the early 1920s. They have now been reprinted for the first time since their publication in 1923." Dmitri Nabokov's introductory note provides the biographical setting for the pieces and elucidates hints found in them of his father's future work.

*

A regular feature of *The Nabokovian*, the listing of VN works-received presents researchers and collectors with important, up-to-date information. Twice a year, for the past ten years, Mrs. Véra Nabokov has supplied these comprehensive materials. The initial

compilation and transmittal has been ably and graciously done by Mrs. Jacqueline Callier, secretary to Mrs. Nabokov. As we offer the latest information concerning publications received October 1987 - March 1988, we offer our thanks for ten years of support and assistance.

October - *Lolita*, tr. Nils Holmberg. Stockholm: Prisma Pocket.

October - *Förföraren* (The Enchanter), tr. Annika Preis. Stockholm: Prisma Bokforlaget.

October - excerpt from *Lolita* in *Die Klassische Sau*. Zurich: Haffmans Verlag.

October - *Laughter in the Dark*. New York: New Directions, paperback.

November - *Ada o El Ardor*, tr. David Molinet. Barcelona: Anagrama, second printing.

November - *De Tovenaar* [The Enchanter], tr. Marja Wiebes and Rene Kupershoek of Dmitri Nabokov's "On a Book Entitled *The Enchanter*." Amsterdam: Uit. Bert Bakker.

November - *El Hechiecero* [The Enchanter], tr. Enrique Murillo. Barcelona: Anagrama.

November - *Parla, Memoria* [Speak Memory], tr. Oriol Carbonell i Curell. Barcelona: Edicions 62, Catalan edition.

November - *Trollmannen* [The Enchanter], tr. Steinar Gil. Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag.

November - *L'Encantador* [The Enchanter], tr. Jordi Arbones. Barcelona: Edhasa, Catalan edition.

November - *Look at the Harlequins!*. Harmondsowrth, England: Penguin reprint.

December - *Carrousel*, including "Laughter and Dreams," "Painted Wood," "The Russian Song"; introductory note by Dmitri

Nabokov, and note on the text by Stella de Does. Aartswoud, The Netherlands: Spectatorpers, edition limited to 150 copies.

December - *Feu Pale* [Pale Fire], tr. Raymond Girard and Maurice-Edgard Coindreau. Paris: Gallimard "L'Imaginaire," first reprint.

December - *The Enchanter*, tr. Dmitri Nabokov. London: Pan Books, Picador paperback.

December - *Transparent Things*. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, third reprint.

December - *Rey, Dama, Valet* [King, Queen, Knave], tr. Jesus Pardo. Barcelona: Anagrama.

January - *La Meprise* [Despair], tr. Marcel Stora. Paris: Gallimard, Folio reprint.

January - *Lolita*. Gutersloh, West Germany: Rowohlt Bertelsmann Club.

January - *Cursa de Literatura Europea* [Lectures on Literature], tr. Francisco Torres Oliver. Barcelona: Ediciones B.

February - "Cloud, Castle, Lake" in *The Story: Readers and Writers of Fiction* by David Bergman. New York: Macmillan.

February - "Foreword to *The Song of Igor's Campaign*" in *Classical and Medieval Literature Criticism*. Detroit, MI: Gale Research Co.

February - "First Love" in *Contemporary American Literature*. New York: Random House.

February - *L'Enchanteur*, tr. Gilles Barbedette. Paris: Rivages, Collection "Points" paperback.

February - *Lolita*, tr. Fernanda Pinto Rodrigues. Lisbon: Circulo de Leitores.

March - *Nicolas Gogol*, tr. Bernard Genies. Paris: Rivages.

March - *Vladimir Nabokov/Edmund Wilson. Correspondance 1940/1971*, tr. Christine Raguet-Bouvart. Paris: Rivages.

*

Odds and Ends

- There are two recent VN publications in *The New York Review of Books*: "Tolstoy" [poem], translated by Dmitri Nabokov, 3 March 1988, page 6; "Pushkin, or the Real and the Plausible," translation and introduction by Dmitri Nabokov, 31 March 1988, pp. 38-42.

- The first of several volumes of VN correspondence is scheduled for publication in early 1989. Edited and with an introduction by Dmitri Nabokov, its working title is *The Private Nabokov. Selected Letters. Volume I.*

- "Nabokov's Butterflies," an exhibition of the butterflies which VN collected and labeled at Harvard, was held throughout February and March on the third floor of Harvard's Museum of Comparative Zoology.

- The story "Khvat" ["A Dashing Fellow"] has been published in the Latvian journal, *Daugava* (December 1987), with an afterword by Roman Timechik.

- Recently published: Geoffrey Green. *Freud and Nabokov*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press. 1988. Quoting from the author's introduction: "I arrive at Freud and Nabokov not from an intrinsic irreverence, but from a desire to illuminate the manner in which they have come to be associated . . . . At the same time that I affirm Freud, I assert the unique importance of Vladimir Nabokov . . . . The meeting place for Freud and Nabokov is their shared enterprise of writing. In exploring two writers I hope to suggest the way in which psychoanalysis, as exemplified by Freud, has become more subjective and literary, subject to critical interpretation, while fiction, as examplified by Nabokov, has become more theoretical."

- Announced: *Find What the Sailor Has Hidden*, Priscilla Meyer's study of *Pale Fire*, will be published by Wesleyan University Press later this year.

- A Nabokov session is on the program of the AAASS Annual National Convention to be held in Hawaii, November 1988. "New Readings of Vladimir Nabokov" will be chaired by Katherine T. O'Connor (Boston University). Papers to be read include "Themes and Gleams in Nabokov's Poetry," D. Barton Johnson (University of California, Santa Barbara); "Nabokov and Gogol: Evidence in *The Defense*," Julian Connolly (University of Virginia); "'The Revenge': An Uncollected Story as a Warehouse of Themes," Gennadi Barabtarlo (University of Missouri).

- Perhaps not generally known: Peter Evans points out that the "Biographical Documents" section of *The Dictionary of Literary Biography Yearbook 1985* (Bruccoli Clark, pages 28-30) carries a photocopy of the "Bobbs-Merrill General Questionnaire" filled out in English by author, Vladimir Nabokov, in 1937. In one of the categories, "Superstitions," VN's response reads: "Once, in London, I dreamt of a green wall and the very next day I was introduced to a person whose name turned out to be Greenwall. I never met him again, nor did that meeting in any way effect the course of my existence; but several years later I picked up a book from a stall and its title was: Dreams and their Meaning by A. Greenwall."

*

- *Russian Literature Triquarterly* is looking for contributions for a special Nabokov issue. Send queries and manuscripts to the editor, D. Barton Johnson (Dept of Germanic, Oriental and Slavic Languages, Phelps Hall, University of California, Santa Barbara, CA 93106; phone (805) 682-4618).

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The photograph was provided by Mrs. Véra Nabokov. Credit is to Colin Sherborne, London, 1959.

*

For ten years the last item in the "News" section has been a brief acknowledgment of the person(s) who have aided in the production of an issue. Over nine of those years, Ms. Paula Malone has been solely responsible for the setting of text and subscriber lists. As a

virtuoso at word-processing, her aid has been truly indispensable. As she encodes these words into the text of this issue, I would like her to know that she has played an integral part in our success and has earned our fullest respect and gratitude.

SHAKESPEARE

Vladimir Nabokov
(1924)

translation by Dmitri Nabokov

Amid grandees of times Elizabethan
you shimmered too, you followed sumptuous customs;
the circle of ruff, the silv'ry satin that
encased your thigh, the wedgelike beard -- in all of this
you were like other men.... Thus was enfolded
your godlike thunder in a succinct cape.

Haughty, aloof from theatre's alarums,
you easily, regretlessly relinquished
the laurels twining into a dry wreath,
concealing for all time your monstrous genius
beneath a mask; and yet, your phantasms' echoes
still vibrate for us: your Venetian Moor,
his anguish; Falstaff's visage, like an udder
with pasted-on mustache; the raging Lear....
You are among us, you're alive; your name, though,
your image, too -- deceiving, thus, the world --
you have submerged in your beloved Lethe.
It's true, of course, a usurer had grown
accustomed, for a sum, to sign your work
(that Shakespeare -- will -- who played the Ghost in *Hamlet*,
who lived in pubs, and died before he could
digest in full his portion of a boar's head)....

The frigate breathed, your country you were leaving.
To Italy you went. A female voice
called singsong through the iron's pattern,
called to her balcony the tall *inglese*,
grown languid from the lemon-tinted moon
amid Verona's streets. My inclination
is to imagine, possibly, the droll
and kind creator of *Don Quixote*
exchanging with you a few casual words
while waiting for fresh horses -- and the evening

was surely blue. The well behind the tavern
contained a pail's pure tinkling sound.... Reply --
whom did you love? Reveal yourself -- whose memoirs
refer to you in passing? Look what numbers
of lowly, worthless souls have left there trace,
what countless names Brantome has for the asking!
Reveal yourself, god of iambic thunder,
you hundred-mouthed, unthinkably great bard!

No! At the destined hour, when you felt banished
by God from your existence, you recalled
those secret manuscripts, fully aware
that your supremacy would rest unblemished
by public rumor's unashamed brand,
that ever, midst the shifting dust of ages,
faceless you'd stay, like immortality
itself -- then vanished in the distance, smiling.

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.]

LAUGHTER IN THE DARK AND *OTHELLO*

> "Please, shoot me, do," she said. "It will be just like that play we saw, with the nigger and the pillow, and I'm just as innocent as she was." (*Laughter in the Dark* 124)

Margot's scornful reference to *Othello* comes at a crucial point in *Laughter in the Dark*, just after Albinus has discovered for the first time that she has been deceiving him with Axel Rex. It would be over-reading to suggest that the novel consistently parodies *Othello*, but it would be equally naive to ignore Nabokov's awareness of the ways in which his work is a grotesque reflection of Shakespeare's play. Margot's comparison of herself to Desdemona and of Albinus to Othello is ironically inapt, to say the least.

Where Shakespeare's hero is conspicuous for his blackness, Nabokov's protagonist, Albinus, has a name which denominates him as "white." (Axel Rex, too, is exceptionally pallid, "dull white as if coated with a tin layer of powder.")

The plot of *Laughter*, like that of *Othello*, focuses upon two men and one woman, ensnared together in a web of sexual misunderstanding and jealousy. But where Shakespeare's play involves the false suspicion of sexual deception, Nabokov's novel is based upon an exactly opposite twist: Albinus believes Margot is true to him (even after his initial doubts) and is blind to her relationship with Rex. Where Iago torments Othello with untrue accusations of infidelity, Rex torments Albinus with equally false assurances of sexual faithfulness.

A final ironic contrast between these two works involves their conclusions. Shakespeare ends *Othello* with the Moor's murder of his wife, followed by his own suicide. Albinus tries to imitate Shakespeare's conclusion ("the nigger and the pillow") but can't pull it off. Blinded, he attempts to shoot the unfaithful Margot, but she shoots him instead.

Laughter in the Dark is, as its title suggests, one of Nabokov's more sardonic works. The hint of a parodic literary relationship with Shakespeare's tragedy of misguided nobility adds another layer of ironic self-consciousness to the novel.

--Sam Schuman, Guilford College

HERACLITUS, PARMENIDES AND PYTHAGORAS

At the beginning of chapter 14 of *Bend Sinister*, we learn that Krug "had never indulged in the search for the True Substance, the One, the Absolute, the Diamond suspended from the Christmas Tree of the Cosmos." The attempts of philosophers to find "the answer" are ridiculed thus:

> How many of us have begun building anew--or thought they were building anew! Then they surveyed their construction. And lo: Heraclitus the Weeping Willow was shimmering by the door and Parmenides the Smoke was coming out of the chimney and Pythagoras (already inside) was drawing the shadows of the window frames on the bright polished floor where the flies played . . .

The obvious point is that any philosophical system, however new it seems, is bound to include elements drawn from the systems of earlier thinkers. Heraclitus, Parmenides and Pythagoras, all born in the 6th century B.C., are three of the most important Presocratics, whose lucubrations traditionally represent the beginnings of Western philosophical thought. These lines, however, are richly allusive: why is Heraclitus called the "Weeping Willow"? His pessimistic view that the soul ended its existence at death earned him the nickname of "the weeping philosopher" in later times. This becomes a fixed tradition with the famous pair of paintings by Rubens, "The Weeping Heraclitus"

and "The Laughing Democritus," completed in 1603 and now in the Prado. Nabokov calls Parmenides "the Smoke" perhaps because of the important role of Fire in his particular cosmology. Pythagoras is said to draw "the shadows of the window frames" in reference to his concern with numbers and geometry (cf. his Theorem), the basis of his explanation of the universe.

The mention of these philosophers is appropriate, however, not only because elements of their thought appear in all future systems, but also because, as a trio, they are themselves strongly interconnected. Heraclitus makes Fire the basic principle of the cosmos: Fire also plays a major role in the Parmenidean and Pythagorean cosmologies. Heraclitus posits the existence of, and an underlying connection between, opposites. Parmenides sees everything as an appearance of a single, eternal One or Being: it became customary, therefore, to think of the Heraclitean and Parmenidean systems as diametrically opposed, but, in fact, Parmenides' idea that opposites are essentially just different aspects of the same thing brings him very close to Heraclitus. Pythagoras is related to both of the others: he combines the notion of an ultimate One with a system of contrasting principles. Thus, even though these three philosophers stress their difference from each other (Parmenides criticizes Heraclitus and Heraclitus attacks Pythagoras), none can claim true originality.

-- David H. J. Larmour, Texas Tech University

THE BIRTH OF ART

Although Nabokov commented that "Tolstoy's publicistic forays are unreadable" (*Strong Opinions* 147-148), he apparently read at least one of them. In an interview, Nabokov wrote:

> Do you know how poetry started? I always think that it started when a cave boy came running back to the cave, through the tall grass, shouting as he ran, "Wolf, wolf," and there was no wolf. (*Strong Opinions* 11)

In *Lectures on Literature*, this event is called the birth of "literature" (5).

A very similar idea and image occur in Tolstoy's *What is Art?*, first published in 1896:

> Art begins when one person, with the object of joining another or others to himself in one and the same feeling, expresses that feeling by certain external indications. To take the simplest example: a boy, having experienced, let us say, fear on encountering a wolf, relates that encounter; and, in order to evoke in others the feeling he has experienced, describes himself, his condition before the encounter, the surroundings, the wood, his own lightheartedness, and then the wolf's appearance, its movements, the distance between himself and the wolf, etc. All this, if only the boy, when telling the story, again experiences the feelings he had lived through and infects the hearers and compels them to feel what the narrator had experienced, is art. If even the boy had not seen a wolf but had frequently been afraid of one, and if, wishing to evoke in others the fear he had felt, he invented an encounter with a wolf and recounted it so as to make his hearers share the feelings he experienced when he feared the wolf, that also would be art. (trans. A. Maude [NY: Liberal Arts, 1960] 50)

Nabokov's point is that art is deception; Tolstoy's, that art is the communication of emotion. But it seems to be the same museum exhibit described by two different editorial writers.

-- Seth Roberts, University of California at Berkeley

GODUNOV-CHERDYNTSEY ON THE MOON

In *The Gift*, Chapter 2, Godunov-Cherdyntsev recites his verse at an émigré literary evening. Among the poems his mother liked most was one on Berlin that begins

> Things here are in a sorry state;
> Even the moon is much too rough
> Though it is rumored to come straight
> From Hamburg where they make the stuff.

Some time ago I came across an article in the Soviet *Literary Gazette* of February 17, 1933, entitled "The Moon is Made in Hamburg" [Lunu delayut v Gamburge], by a G. Korabelnikov. This huge feuilleton has radically nothing to do with Nabokov. Rather, it is a self-confident, class-minded, and quite emetic quartering of an essay by Victor Shklovski on the Odessa flock of Soviet writers, published in the same *Gazette* six weeks earlier under the title "South-West." Shklovski (who until that episode had not been quite humbled) indulges there in his favorite roughshod paradoxes and trespasses into the literatures of the West where he angles for his parallels. Either practice was no longer tolerated. It was the eve of the first congress of Soviet writers, and Shklovski's reckless disregard for the "only scientific method" of approaching a cultural phenomenon afforded his critic the almost gastronomical pleasure of taking apart not only that article but also several of Shklovski's earlier works. Moreover, in doing so Korabelnikov wielded such mortifying political accusations that Shklovski decided to retract his article publicly (in the April 29 issue of LG) in extremely self-immolating terms.

Could Nabokov, who started seriously working on *The Gift* about that time or a little later, have caught sight of the article in Berlin--perhaps in the public library where he was sifting material for the Chernyshevski chapter? (Incidentally, there is nothing on Chernyshevski in that issue of *Literaturnaya Gazetta*.) Might he, perchance, have stumbled upon a reference to it in an émigré publication? The article's title is a quotation whose source, oddly enough, is never revealed within it. One would be naturally drawn to assume that it was from Shklovski's "South-West," but a careful reading of that article and of other Shklovski works stomped out by Korabelnikov ("The Plot and the Image" in the LG in 1932; the famous book *The Hamburg Rating* and the earlier *Knight's Move*) has yielded nothing. It may be lurking elsewhere, of course, or it may be a mere "dummy," a journalese sidekick. And if the whole thing is but a coincidence, it is an odd coincidence indeed.

To add to the coincidence, Nikolai Gogol's "Notes of a Madman" contains, under the "February 13th" entry, the following:

"The moon, after all, is usually made in Hamburg--and what a wretched job they do!" Could this entry be the source for

Korabelnikov's title? Probably not, for then the train of coincidences would be truly astounding.

-- Alexander Papapulo, Padd Edward Institute for Intercoastal Liaisons (Mt. Parnassus, OK)

A FALSE MISPRINT IN *PALE FIRE*

While puzzling over the meaning of "black-winged fate" (*Pale Fire*, 1982), I recalled a recent paper on the secret name of Lolita--and of course my own essay on Nabokovian fauna, "Timofey's Nuts." And I realized that just as Shade is a "waxwing slain," Kinbote is a black bat--a monstrous parody of a butterfly. The evidence is clear in his choice of escape routes and dwellings. When he leaves the palace through a damp cave, we see his emblem: "The pool of opalescent ditch water had grown in length; along its edge walked a sick bat like a cripple with a broken umbrella" (133). He eventually reaches a safe haven: the Rippleson Caves. "I live like Timon in his cave," says Kinbote in the crucial passage where he almost reveals the source of the novel's title (79). In short, this secretive scholar of names knows that his real name is Batkin, but in his delusion believes he is Kingbat. The crown jewels are surely hidden in a cave (*cavebat* is, I believe, Latin for "he warns"). In one revealing passage, Kinbote first says that he is a "true artist" because he can "pounce upon the forgotten butterfly of revelation" (bats eat butterflies), and then he pounces on that revelation: "for a moment I found myself enriched with an indescribable amazement as if informed that . . . a bat was writing a legible tale of torture in the bruised and branded sky" (289).

Probably the bat referred to in the passage above is not Kinbote himself but Gradus the torturer, who, being partly Kinbote's invention, is also a bat. This is revealed at one of his early appearances: "not since July 11, when he had visited a Finnish bathouse [sic!] in Switzerland, had he seen his bare feet" (273). Doubtless some of Nabokov's less skilled readers have assumed this to be a misprint for *bathhouse*, but there are no unintentional misprints in *Pale Fire*, where the theme is "Life Everlasting--based on a misprint!" (62). Significantly, *batyushka* in Russian is not a small bat-house but an obsolete word for father.

This insight explains the novel's otherwise obscure epigraph from Boswell, who quotes Sam Johnson as saying, "Sir, when I heard from him last, he was running about town shooting cats." Obviously, just as *fountain* was carefully misprinted for *mountain*, we must play word golf and read cat-bat-*Bot*kin-Na*bok*ov.

-- Colin Larches, Larrybird University

ON NABOKOV'S ACHROMATIC NOMENCLATURE

Among Nabokov's many English onomastic games the clash of black and white is, perhaps, the favorite. It is naturally recurrent in *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*, where clear chess segregation of color is thematic, and the abundance of names such as Capt. Belov [White, Russian], Albinos Black, Roquebrune [Black Castling, French], Cousin Black (who becomes Chessplayer Schwarz in Knight's last novel), Clare Bishop (i.e., White Square Bishop) is expected by the professional reader. In *Lolita, t*he oxymoronic psychotherapette Blanche Schwarzman [White Blackman] has a negative-image double, Melanie Weiss. Alfred Appel affixes an unambitious, but in an odd sense, a faintly Freudian note to this, saying that "to Nabokov, Freudians figuratively see no colors other than black and white" (*Annotated Lolita* 326). On the other hand, Fidel Warden suggests that Nabokov "despite vehement claims to the contrary, often found it germane to inject symbolic material in his fiction, especially in the form of meaningful coloration or discoloration. His 'bleached' female characters in *Lolita* . . . relate to Freudian symbolism of the dreamlike, more or less punning, treatment of things: Blanche Weiss [sic], otherwise not recognized, is a close friend, Miss White" ("VN in Vienna," in *The Intellectual Curfew* 9 [1978]: 96).

A different linguistic combination, this time Latin cum German, produces the same effect in *Pnin*, where another psychoanalytic woman, Dr. Albina Dunkelberg, along with Pnin's former wife and the latter's current husband, evolves a "Group Psychotherapy Applied to Marriage Counseling" (50). There are two more black and white collisions in *Pnin*: the imaginary King, Victor's "father," is clad in a "black sweater and white trousers" (122--he is Solus Rex, the solitary black king confined in the

chessboard corner); and Desdemona, "the old colored charwoman" (40), an obvious literary jest.

Transparent Things houses a Clarissa Dark, yet another psychoexpert, who monitors nightly erections of two hundred jailbirds. And we all remember the bland Ivor Black of *Look at the Harlequins!*.

There are more examples scattered about Nabokov's oeuvre, but those mentioned should suffice, I think, to suggest a pattern, if not a strategy, which I explore in a forthcoming article, "Nabokov's Spectral Spectrum," which is a chapter in the book I am currently writing, *A Soupçon of Nabokov*.

-- Daniel Brag-a-Barton, Falcon College (Halifax, Nova Scotia)

"AN OCCULT RESEMBLANCE": THE RIPPLES OF CHEKHOV IN *THE REAL LIFE OF SEBASTIAN KNIGHT*

Nabokov insisted that a true artist ought to study and recreate the oeuvre of his rivals, including his own maker. Among his Russian precursors Chekhov occupies a very special, somewhat mysterious, yet until now not well illuminated niche. The seminal article by Hermann Chaplitski, "Nabokov and Chekhov," [*SEER* 4 (Winter 1969): 57-69] only identifies the problem, but his reading stays outside the text.

Nabokov twice admitted publicly that, although he could not rationalize this, Chekhov would definitely be the writer whose books he would take with him on a trip to the moon or a desert island (see *Anniversary Notes* and *Strong Opinions*). Indeed, in his Russian and particularly English fiction, Nabokov establishes multiple reflections of Chekhov's stories ("Podlets," which reformats "The Duel," is the most famous case in point) and especially plays. Thus *Ada* harbors many explicitly Chekhovian allusions projected to every play in the celebrated quartet: *Seagull* (via Krylov's mistranslation of La Fontaine's *la cigale* as *dragonfly*); *Uncle Vanya* (Uncle Dan *and Uncle Van*); *Three Sisters* (the duel and Tusenbach's words of farewell; Marina's Hollywoodoo

dabblings in a soapera called *Four Sisters*); and *Cherry Orchard* (the Old Manor theme; the butler-chambermaid motif, etc.).

But already Nabokov's first English novel, *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*, contains a sufficiently complete paradigm of a Chekhov play. In fact, careful scrutiny of the novel reveals an intricate recapitulation of *Seagull* so complete, and the subtle transmogrification of the play's various lines so insistent as to remove all possible doubts about Nabokov's intentions. (For other examples of Nabokov's use of literary annals through cultural and temporal cross-fertilization see my forthcoming book, *"One Eye Is Crossed, The Other Puckered Up": Nabokov Among Peers*).

Let us consider the evidence. The most difficult part of V.'s frenetic two-month search, whose object is to reconstruct his late half-brother's past, concerns Knight's *femme fatale*, Madame Lecerf (whose name readily hints at the well-known French saw, "On connaît le cerf à ses abattures"). He tries to track her down, first at the German resort where Knight had met her, then, with the help of an angelic sleuth who sprang from the pages of one of Knight's novels, in Berlin and Paris. V. follows several seemingly false leads (she has at least three aliases) before they all commingle to impart Madame Lecerf's real identity: she is indeed Madame de Rechnoy, formerly Nina Toorovets (from *toora*, Russian amateurish term for the chess rook [thanks, Gene!]). Of course, the focal point of Chekhov's *Seagull*, its hidden thematic nerve is its Seagull, the actress Nina Zarechnaya--or to use Nabokov's persistent way of rendering Russian feminine surnames, Nina Zarechnoy.

But the striking resemblance between the two heroines only starts here. Not only are they both professional actresses (Mme Lecerf's superb deceptive performance is nothing short of genius, and she was probably given a part in the movie *Enchanted Garden*), they are also most dangerous enchantresses whose spell has to do with water (Rechnoy means, in Russian, "of the river"). Chekhov's Nina entraps almost all eligible (or, as Chaplitski aptly puts it, *seagullible*) male characters in the play: Treplev (who first kills a seagull for her, then attempts to kill himself, succeeding only in the last act); Trigorin (who in the end forgets that he had asked to stuff the dead seagull for himself--a complex image interpreted in my forthcoming "The Seagull and the Squirrel:

Nabokov and Chekhov as Taxidermists"; see also Leo A. Tabanid-Barring's interesting essay "*Pnin* as a Belkin Tale," in *Miscellanea Nabokoviana*, Southridge UP, Omega, GA, 1982: 127-47); and even the poor old Sorin, who admits that he was once in love with Nina.

The powers of Nina de Rechnoy are even more formidable. She destroys insensate things: her husband's mansion, which "looked brand new" when she first saw it, "faded and crumbled" in one year (166). She makes all flowers wither upon touch (except daffodils--of which shortly). And, of course, men whom she had squeezed dry and discarded comprise a club of half a dozen known to V. (and scores of unknown): Mr. Rechnoy, his cousin, Mr. Lecerf, the blonde Russian, and, not least, Sebastian Knight and almost V. himself, who must summon all his will (and, perhaps, the will of his dead brother) to break the spell of the siren and escape unscathed. And although Knight, unlike Treplev, does not shoot himself, Mme Lecerf is visibly disappointed upon learning the cause of his death: "'How did he die? Suicide?' 'Oh, no,' I said, 'he suffered from heart-disease.' 'I thought you said he had shot himself. That would have been so much more romantic'" (169-70).

Both women wade in the long stream of literary tradition dealing with mermaids and undinas, which Nabokov transcends in his own way. (For detailed discussion of this aspect of Nabokov's art, see my article "Water Nymphs, Nymphettes, and Nymphomaniacs: Nabokov's Cultural Sextant," *The Glasnost Purveyer*, Summer 1990.) Aside from their more than suggestive names, both women are more perilous near water. Chekhov's Nina lives on the other shore of the lake, and the play slowly unfolds against the inescapable background of that lake, of which Dr. Dorn (whose name suggests, among other things, "tarn," mountainous lake in Scotland) says, at the end of Act One, "O, koldovskoe ozero!" [O, what a bewitching lake!]. The crucial, pathetically and wildly Maeterlinckish, play by Treplev, with Mlle Zarechnoy cast as a Sybil of sorts, is staged with a view on the lake, and later Treplev shoots down a seagull while brooding along the lake's shores. Nabokov's Nina ensnares Knight at the spa ("Ah, good place," says Mr Silbermann when V. mentions Blauberg to him, "very good. . . . Good water. . . ." (128). Mme Lecerf admits that she can thrive only in summer (165). One of the words in Mr Silberman's three-word Russian vocabulary is "reebah" (fish). The

other two, no doubt pregnant with far-stretching semantics, are "cookolka," larva (and not "little doll," as the sly little man suggests [thank you, Will!], and "braht, millee braht," brother, dear brother (a slightly twisted quotation from Baudelaire's "Mon semblable, mon frere").

But the most amazing water image of Knight and his fateful mistress is painted by Roy Carswell (the white "roi" [king] of the novel?) at the end of Chapter Twelve. (On the artist Leroy, see S. Karperjan's seminal article "The Queen of Spades as a Muse: Ghostly Visitations in Pushkin and Nabokov," in *The Prussian Preview* 218: 48: 1023-24.) As V. admires the portrait of his half-brother, he suddenly realizes that "the eyes and the face itself are painted in such a manner as to convey the impression that they are *mirrored Narcissus-like in clear water--with a very slight ripple on the hollow cheek, owing to the presence of a water-spider which has just stopped and is floating backward*" (119, italics mine). Knight "peers intently" into the dark deep pool which, he knows, will engulf him. This is, then, the meaning of Mme Lecerf's bizarre remark that her touch kills all flowers instantly, except the daffodils: she has been crushing and mangling Knight the narcissus for more than six years! (For a more thorough explication of the Narcissus theme see Malcolm Fiendleward's *Nabokov's Myth: Case Revisited*, Addis-Ababa: Vaters & Sons, 1987.) That Roy Carswell (who, incidentally, "bets this picture" that V. will never find Nina [120], should have painted the spider into the portrait is by no means ornamental, because it ultimately connects the beginning of V.'s quest with its end: when V. says (in Russian) to one of Mme Lecerf's pale, listless, sluggish victims "Look, she has got a spider on her neck," Nina betrays her identity by an instinctive gesture, thus allowing V. to tear a hole in her fragrant cobweb and flee.

There are other striking correlations between the play and the novel. The names of the main characters, Konstantin Treplev and Sebastian Knight, are secretly linked. While the latter uses his mother's surname for his *nom de plume*, it is highly improbable that he was christened Sebastian in Russia, given his social and cultural origin. The closest Russian name, both in length and in sound, appears to be Konstantin (I am grateful to Miss Ninel Rakhlina, my babysitter and student, for this insight). Both names derive from Greek (*sebastos* means "reverend"). St. Sebastian, who

died young in 288 A.D., could be older than Constantine the Great (b. 274 A.D.) by about as many years as Treplev (1872-1895) is Knight's (1899-1936) senior. Moreover, the two cities bearing the respective names face each other from the opposite shores of the Black Sea, and in terms of both personal and literary itinerary, Nabokov, in 1919, left Sebastopol for Constaninople, embarking on a secret passage from his Russian adolescence to his apprenticeship years at Cambridge, and, ultimately, to *his* cloudless Thule, with its ivory castle and an enchanted lake. "Sebastian," then, is a reflection of Konstantin "in a pool of rippling water" (183), the black water of the Pontus Euxinus, "the hospitable sea."

The name Treplev is most interesting in itself. In proper Russian it is pronounced "tripl-ef," with the stress on the ultima, and for someone with Nabokov's keen eye for word-game possibilities it readily yields the tell-tale English "Triple-F," which, as I submit in another work (*All Happy Families: Patricide in Nabokov's Zoorland*, April 1989 from Freemason UP), is a treasure-trove containing a set of three emblems that essentially cover all three of Nabokov's major concerns in life: artistic (Fyodor of *The Gift*; epistemological (Falter of *Ultima Thule*--an issue I discuss at length in "Of Foreign Flowers in Verse: Nabokov's Last Russian Probe," SEER 5 [Winter 1984]: 7-141); and personal (Father, whose violent death Nabokov was trying to avenge by literary means all his life--see *All Happy Families* above).

On another plane, these "three Fs" represent three main elements of Nabokov's fiction: flora, fauna, and fancy. In the works under discussion they are manifested in the Violets (Fialki in Russian) of Knight's youth, the Narcissi or Daffodils of his adulthood, and the Asphodels of his death (flora); in the Seagull and the Spider (animal world); and in the Spell of the Lake (magic). Thus, precise knowledge dovetails with poetry, damp myth with dry science. As Quilty quibbles, "the Bard said, with that lisp on his lips,

> Old tales end well, yet Myth is but a myth--
> The rest is science."

Another trial is projected to *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* from *Seagull* via the name of Nina Zarechnoy's other suitor, writer Trigorin. "Trigorin" means "three mountans" in Russian, and indeed all three have specific identities in Nabokov's novel, looming as they all do over Nina Rechnoy's theme. Knight meets her in the German townlet of Blauberg ("Blue Mountain"), at the Beaumont Hotel ("Pretty Mountain"), and writes a novella about his deadly infatuation titled "Funny Mountain" (obviously poking fun at Thomas Mann's *Der Zauberberg*, The Magic Mountain [1924], with its hermetic sanatorium, moribund romances, and splenetic sterile air).

And Dr. Eugene Dorn, whose duties in *Seagull* resemble those of Mr. Silbermann in Nabokov's book (to help and to console), has more affinity with the little man than meets the unarmed eye. "Dorn" is derived from the old Germanic word "dornick," boulder, which in the Upper-Middle Prussian specifically meant, in the form of "dairn," a boulder of *silver ore*.

Finally, knowing Nabokov's penchant for interweaving various literary and personal strands across the geocultural space of his life's tetralogy (Russia-Europe-America-Ultima Thule), it would hardly be stretching things to point out that he must have attached special importance to the fact that *Seagull* had flopped flat in St. Petersburg's Alexandrine Theatre just before his parents were engaged to be married; that its rehearsals at the Moscow Art Theatre began when he was conceived (August 1898); and that the play's unprecedented success on the Moscow stage all but coincided with his birth.

In *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*, then, Nabokov creates and sustains an elaborate parody of a celebrated Russian drama, blending European space and Russian time, training his special mirrors on an old-fashioned romantic cul-dec-sac, catching whatever rays may come from that deep magic lake of Chekhov's wistful play, and deflecting its gleams, however weakened in the process, to the "shores of young America."

-- Emily Emery, Mansfield College

NABOKOV IN POLAND: 1986-1987

by Leszek Engelking

[The material in this section was provided in two letters from Mr. Engelking. The text has been edited by the Editor.]

TRANSLATIONS

I. Books

Pnin, tr. from English by Anna Kolyszko, afterword by Leszek Engelking. Warsaw: Panstwowy Instytut Wydawniczy 1987, series "Wspólczesna Prozo Swiatowa" [Contemporary World Prose].

Rosyjska literatura, cenzorzy, czytelnicy [Russian Writers, Censors, and Readers], tr. from English and intro., H.H.H. Cracow: Biblioteka Promienistych 1987. Underground edition.

Tamte brzegi [Other Shores, Drugie berega], tr. from Russian by Eugenia Siemaszkiewicz, tr. of English fragments [from *Speak, Memory: an Autobiography Revisited*] by Anna Kolyszko. Cracow: Oficyna Literacka 1986. Underground edition.

II. Periodicals

"Don Kichot" [excerpts from *Lectures on Don Quixote*], tr. from English by Michal Klobukowski. *Pismo Literacko-Artystyczne* [Cracow], Vol. 5, No. 2 (February 1986), pp. 114-125.

"Jubileusz" [Jubilee, Iubilei], tr. from Russian by Andrzej Mietkowski. *Zeszyty Literackie* (Paris), Vol. 3, No. 11 [1985].

"Kartoflany elf" [The Potato Elf, Kartofel'nyi el'f], tr. from English by Teresa Truszkowska. *Panorama* (Katowice), No. 21 (May

24, 1987), pp. 20-21, and No. 22 (May 31, 1987), pp. 20-21. Abridged.

"Komentarz do rozdzialu dziesiatego Eugeniusza Oniegina Aleksandra Puszkina "[fragmenty] [Excerpts from Commentary to "Chapter Ten" of Alexandr Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*], tr. from English by Leszek Engelking. *Literatura na Swiecie* (Warsaw), Vol. 17, No. 3 (March 1987), pp. 207-230. The whole commentary to "Chapter Ten" except notes to stanzas IX, XI-XII, XVI-XVII, and except "Addendum to Notes on 'Chapter Ten'".

Lolita excerpts, tr. from English, by Robert Stiller. *Tygodnik Kulturalny* (Warsaw), Vol. 31, No. 7 (February 15, 1987), p. 14: "Foreword" [by John Ray, Jr.] and chapters 1, 2, and 3 of the first part; No. 8 (February 22 1987), p. 14: chapters 4 and 5 of the first part; No. 9 (March 1, 1987), p. 14: chapters 6 and 7 of the first part; No. 10 (March 8, 1987), p. 14: chapters 8 of the first part; No. 11 (March 15, 1987), p. 14: chapters 9 and 10 of the first part; No. 12 (March 22, 1987), p. 14: the beginning of chapter 11 of the first part; No. 13 (March 29, 1987), p. 14: the continuation of chapter 11 of the first part; No. 14 (April 5, 1987), p. 14; chapters 12 and 13 of the first part; No. 15 (April 12, 1987), p. 14: chapters 14 and 15 of the first part and the translator's errata; No. 16 (April 19, 1987), p. 14: chapters 16 and 17 of the first part.

"Przemiana" [Franz Kafka "The Metamorphosis"] from *Lectures on Literature* , tr. from English by Mariusz Arno Jaworski. *Literatura na Swiecie* (Warsaw), Vol. 17, No. 2 (February 1987), pp. 182-213.

"Puszkin albo prawdziew i prawdopodobne" [Pouchkine ou le vrai et le vraisemblable], tr. from French by Jerzy Lisowski. *Twórczosc* Warsaw), Vol. 43, No. 3 (March 1987), pp. 7-18.

"Tamte brzegi" [exerpts from *Other Shores, Drugie berega]*, tr. from Russian by Eugenia Siemaszkiewicz. *Zeszyty Literackie* (Paris), Vol. 4, No. 13 (Winter 1986), pp. 87-109; Nabokov's Foreword and chapters 5 and 15. A note about the author on p. 166; a note about the translator on the same page.

"Zaproszenie na egzekucje" [excerpts from *Invitation to a Beheading, Priglashenie na kazn'*], tr. from Russian by Leszek Engelking. *Literatura na Swiecie* (Warsaw), Vol. 16, No. 3 (March 1986), pp. 299-316: chapters 10 and 11.

"Zaproszenie na egzekucje" [an excerpt], tr. from Russian by Leszek Engelking. *Tak i nie* (Katowice), No. 14 (April 4, 1986), p. 12: chapter 16. With a note about the author by Leszek Engelking.

Zaproszenie na egzekucje [an excerpt], tr. from Russian by Leszek Engelking. *Nurt* (Pozna´n), No. 9 (September 1986), pp. 20-22: chapter 12.

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Zaproszenie na egzekucje [excerpts], tr. from Russian by Leszek Engelking. *Odra* (Wroclaw), Vol. 26, No. 12 (December 1986), pp. 50-56; excerpts from chapters 5 and 6.

Zaproszenie na egzekucje [an excerpt], tr. from Russian by Leszek Engelking. *Tygodnik Kulturalny* (Warsaw), Vol. 31, No. 25 (June 21, 1987), pp. 8-9: chapter 14.

III. Broadcasts

Zaproszenie na egzekucje [*Invitation to a Beheading, Priglashenie na kazn'*], tr. from Russian by Leszek Engelking. Read by Zbigniew Zapasiewicz. Polish Radio, program III, January 28, 1987-March 8, 1987, 34 10-minute installments broadcast every day (except Saturdays) from 23:50 till 24:00: large excerpts from *Invitation to a Beheading*.

CRITICISM

I. Articles, essays

Maurice Couturier. "Seks kontra tekst. Od Millera do Nabokova" [Sex vs. Text: From Miller to Nabokov], tr. from English by

Piotr Siemion. *Literatura na Swiecie* (Warsaw), Vol. 17, Nos. 5-6 (May-June 1987), pp. 235-254.

Leszek Engelking. "Nabokov - sztukmistrz i czarownik literatury" [Nabokov - Magician and Enchanter of Literature]. *Tygodnik Kulturalny* [Warsaw]:

1. "Sztukmistrz i czarownik" [Magician and Enchanter]. Vol. 31, No. 24 (June 14, 1987), pp. 8-9;

2. "Skazani na okrutna gre" [Condemned to Play a Cruel Game]. Vol. 31, No. 25 (June 21, 1987), pp. 8-9;

3. "Odmiany losu" [Ups and Downs]. Vol. 31, No. 26 (June 28, 1987), pp. 8-9.

Leszek Engelking. "Prawdziwe zycie Cyncynata C. O *Zaproszeniu na egzekucje* Vladimira Nabokova" [The Real Life of Cincinnatus C. On Vladimir Nabokov's *Invitation fo a Beheading*]. *Akcent* (Lublin), Vol. 7, No. 3 (1986), pp. 37-43.

Leszek Engelking. "Vladimira Nabokova *Zaproszenie na egzekucje*" [Vladimir Nabokov's *Invitation to a Beheading*]. *Nurt* (Poznan), No. 9 (September 1986), p. 19.

Wojciech Karpinski. "Herb wygnania" [The Blazon of Exile]. *Zeszyty Literackie* (Paris), Vol. 3, No. 12 (Fall 1986), pp. 63-73.

Michal Klobuwski. "Surnia ulula". *Pismo Literacko-Artystyczne* (Cracow), Vol. 5, No. 2 (February 1986), pp. 102-113.

Krzysztof Metrak. "Lolita na tapecie" [Lolita on the Carpet]. *Express Wieczorny* (Warsaw), Vol. 41, No. 46 (March 6, 7, 8, 1987), p. 5.

Wlodzimierz Pazniewski. "Lolita w krainie moteli" [Lolita in Motel-land]. *Literatura na Swiecie* (Warsaw), Vol. 17, Nos. 5-6 (May-June 1987), pp. 544-546.

Waclaw Sadkowski. "Kim jest ten dziwny nieznajomy [Vladimor Nabokov]" [Who Is this Queer Stranger, (Vladimir Nabokov)]. *Argumenty* (Warsaw), No. 23 (June 7, 1987), p. 8; No. 24 June 14, 1987, p. 9.

II. Reviews

Andrzej Drawicz. "Nabokov o sobie: przejrzystosc zycia" [Nabokov about Himself: a Transparence of Life]. *Kultura Niezalezna* (Warsaw), No. 27 (January 1987), pp. 71-74: a review of *Tamte brzegi* in the underground journal.

Bogdan Klukowski. [A review of *Pnin*]. *Zycie Warszawy* (Warsaw), Vol. 45, No. 171 (July 25-26, 1987), p. 5.

Krzysztof Metrak. "Poznawanie Nabokova" [Getting to Know Nabokov]. *Express Wieczorny* (Warsaw), Vol. 41, No. 151 (August 7, 8, 9, 1987), p. 5. A review of *Pnin.*

Jacek Strzemzalski. "Emigranci" [Exiles]. *Kultura* (Warsaw), Vol. 3, No. 43 (October 28, 1987), p. 11. A review of *Pnin.*

III. Notes

jz[Jan Zieli´nski]. A note about Edmund White's review of *The Enchanter* published in *The New York Times Book Review* of October 19. *T*wórczosc Vol. 43, No. 4, (April 1987), p. 135.

MIM. "Sargent, cesarz Pu Yi oraz Lolita" (Sargent, the Emperor Pu Yi and Lolita). *Kultura* (Warsaw), Vol. 2, No. 48 (November 28, 1986), p. 4. A note on, among other things, the appearance of Nabokov's *The Enchanter.*

IV. Interviews

Enrica Basrui. An interview with Dmitri Nabokov. *Forum* (Warsaw), Vol. 22, No. 45 (November 6, 1986), p. 20. With a note about the *The Enchanter* and a short excerpt from a foreword to the book. The original of the interview was published in *Panorama.*

Broadcasts:

Bozena Helbrecht. "Zycie i twórczosc Vladimira Nabokova" [Vladimir Nabokov's Life and Works]. Polish Radio, program III, April 1, 1986, 15:40-16:00. Bozena Helbrecht's conversation with Leszek Engelking.

BEAUTIFUL SOUP.
Psychiatric Testing in *Pnin.*

by Gennadii Barabtarlo

In one of *Pnin*'s Chapter Four's flashbacks, Victor Wind suffers a series of psychometric evaluations because his parents, psychotherapists by profession, were "morbidly concerned with heredity, and instead of delighting in Victor's artistic genius, they used to worry gloomily about its genetic cause" (p. 89, first hardbound edition, Doubleday, 1957). Nabokov's ensuing description of various analytic techniques comprises probably the most detailed and sardonic treatment of the Freudian theme in his novels. It demonstrates that Nabokov had sufficient knowledge of rather ingenious and special tests and case reports. He put this information to use in every novel he wrote after *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*. For example, the soothing fact that Victor as a child did not pick his nose (p. 90) receives proper interpretation in Nabokov's next novel, where Kinbote quotes (verbatim) from Dr. Erich Fromm's *The Forgotten Language* (New York, 1951) this solemnly rollicking passage:

> By picking the nose in spite of all commands to the contrary, or when a youth is all the time sticking his finger through his buttonhole... the analytic teacher knows that the appetite of the lustful one knows no limit in his phantasies [sic]. (*Pale Fire*, p. 271).

As for the mental heredity, the veteran psychoanalyst, Aaron Joshua Rosanoff (b.1878), whose classical Test is mentioned elsewhere in Chapter Four (see below), actually did write a book relevant to this subject, *A Study of Heredity of Insanity in the Light of the Mendelian Theory* (1911) - but then one surely can find a Freudian treatise to any subject imaginable. In fact, while searching for possible sources for this note, I came upon a specific advice, based on analytic interpretation, on the course of action one should take upon seeing the Duchess of Angoulême in one's dream - it is in the other work Kinbote quotes with gusto, Dr. Oscar Pfister's *Psychoanalytic Method* (New York, 1917), p. 369.

My cursory examination of several specialised works quickly revealed that in his descriptions of psychiatric tests Nabokov thoroughly blended the actually practised ones (the Kent-Rosanoff, the Rorschach) with slightly modified (the Godunov), and sprinkled it all with an international troika of sheer impostors (Fairview, Angst, Bièvre) -- although in cases such as this one can never be quite certain. More serious research may, perhaps, unearth true sources for *all* the tests mentioned in the book, but after winning through the dense krummholz of various psychoanalytic books and referentia for my *Guide to PNIN*, I decided that I had earned a right not to trouble my head over "sources" any further: my finds seemed enough for my purposes.

Here are a few of them.

1. "The So-Called Godunov Drawing-of-an-Animal Test" (p. 90).

My primary lode for this and several other notes was the three--volume *Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry*, ed. by Dr. Benjamin Sadock et al., 3rd ed., Baltimore-London, 1980. In the first volume of that monumental work, one finds a meticulous description of the Drawing-a-Person Test, introduced in 1926 and "first used as a measure of intelligence with children" (p. 954). Actually, Victor, while doing the tests, "avoided the human form altogether" (90), something that should have alarmed his parents-researchers, since the Draw-a-Person test counts among the chief tools in psychoanalysis. And now for the uncontestably Nabokovian touch: the inventor's name is not Godunov (pronounced in Russian "Gud-oon-off", stress on the ultima), but, oddly enough, W. H. Goodenough.

Boris Godunov (1552-1605) was, of course, the Russian Tsar allegedly implicated in the murder (1591) of the young son of Ivan IV, Prince Dimitri, who was heir to the throne. The story (as Karamzin presents it in his celebrated *History*) provided a basis for Pushkin's famous drama (1825, published in 1830), and inspired such Russian Freudian interpreters of Pushkin as Dr. Ivan Ablomikov, Prof. Ivan Ermakov, and Olga Krasilshchikov.

2. "Kent-Rosanoff Absolutely Free Association Test" (p. 91)

I have had no luck tracking down "a Fairview Adult Test" (p. 90) (It may be worth noting, however, that the word is a calque of Beauvoir, and Nabokov dropped several biting remarks about the "existentialist" couple, one of which can be found on p. 138 of *Pnin*, just above the "versatile Starr couple" - and, of course, a simple transposition of two consonants will make the latter name look almost, and sound exactly, like the name of Simone de Beauvoir's Nobelized husband and collaborator).

The Textbook of Psychiatry thus describes the Word-Association Technique in testing children:

> The technique consists of presenting stimulus words to the patient and having him respond with the first word that comes to his mind. Frequently used lists have been presented by Jung (1918) and Kent and Rosanoff (1910) (p. 952).

Victor was led through the following battery of "stimulus words": "table, duck, music, sickness, thickness, low, deep, long, happiness, fruit, mother, mushroom." (91).

My source offers a slightly different series:

> Rapaport et al. used a list particularly suitable for psychiatric patients; it included such stimulus words as "hospital", "gun", "suicide", and "doctor", as well as words with oral, anal, and sexual connotation (*idem*).

But see the next note.

3. "The Charming Bièvre Interest-Attitude Game" (p. 91)

Yet another example of Nabokov's subtle and caustic game. François Georges Maréchal, Marquis de Bièvre (1747-1789), was, as one contemporary (Charles Ecouchard Colin) put it, "un homme à réparties comique... fameux dans les fastes de la plaisanterie du calembour, du jeu de mots... résolut alors d'en profiter et d'écrire." Bièvre is mentioned four times in Nabokov's notes to *Eugene*

Onegin, especially in connection with *Bievriana, ou Jeux de mots de M. de Biévre*, a collection of anecdotes frequently consulted by Pushkin who called them *ploshchadnye*, "of the market place, ignoble" (see *EO*, ii, 217-218, and Index).

One ought to remember that Nabokov's work on the commentaries to *Evgenii Onegin* ran parallel to that on *Pnin*, and so some of his scholarly notes and findings might well have been relegated to the novel. The choice of a famous French punster and wit for the fictitious author of an absurd "word-play" test cannot be random and makes a riotous contribution to *Bievriana*.

But there is even more to the matter: by a singular coincidence the name of a very similar, but quite recent (1976), psychoanalytic test for children, *Benton Visual Retention* (called so after Arthur L. Benton, who wrote the chapter "Psychological Testing of Children" in the op. cit., vol. 3, pp. 2473-2483) folds nicely into the BE-VI-RE (or BVR, or Beaver) which is an easy anagram of our Bièvre.

The *Pnin* variety of the test, as described by Benton, is part of an array of psychometric experiments invented for children (p. 2474); it is listed under the "Perceptual and Perceptuomotor" category, along with the BVR and Draw-a-Person tests.

By the way, in the *New Yorker*, where the chapter was first published in 1955, this test bore the name of a "Pressey."

Here is the list of items in the Bièvre Game, about which "Sam or Ruby" should feel "sort of fearful" (91): dying, falling, dreaming, cyclones, funerals, father, night, operation, bedroom, bathroom, converge.

A Freudian reader of *Pnin* should have no trouble whatever applying the "symbolic words," suggested by the insidious "Bièvre," to the final passages of Chapter Four. In fact, the list seems to be composed in such a way as to provoke such exhilirating interpretations. For example, all the inhabitants of the Sheppard house *dream* at *night* in their respective *bedrooms*; Sheppard, before falling asleep, thinks of *dying* ("green damp churchyard" - and here *funerals* come handy), and of his relative killed by lightning (*cyclones*); and then he visits the *bathroom* and

"brings down the house"; and Pnin is, of course, Victor's "water *father*", and he did *fall* down the stairs, and now his back is sore, and he may need an *operation* (after all, Tolstoy's Ivan Ilyich developed cancer of the kidney as a result of a fall from a stepladder -- see p. 108). And all of the themes, including this one, do *converge* as the chapter tapers out, as they do in every other chapter of the novel -- although this last point the Freudian will ignore. I notice that in the *New Yorker* version the last word in the series was "cacuminous" (instead of "converge"), said mainly of the pointed top of a tree (what a feast for the analyst), and one could point out that the cottonwood that had crushed Sheppard's cousin did indeed have a pyramidal top.

Surely, such an interpretation would be neither here nor there, but Nabokov might have installed a yawning trap, to which such an enticing possibility manoeuvres the blindfolded.

4. "The Augusta Angst Abstract Test" (p. 91).

"Angst", the German for "fear", is one of the pivotal concepts in Freudism. According to Dr. Ilma von Biakov, Freud "unterschied *Realangst* vor Gefahren de Aussenwelt, *Gewissensangst* vor dem Über-Ich und *Triebangst* vor der Stärke der Leidenschaften (im Es)" (*Die Zeichentafel*, Leipzig, 1943, p. 67). But the most renowned woman psychoanalyst of the time was Dr. Melanie Klein (1882-1960), and it is entirely possible that the name is embedded in the description of the Augusta Angst test: "...the little one (*das Kleine*) is made to express a list of terms ("groaning", "pleasure", "darkness") by means of unlifted lines" (91). "Melanie" comes from the French (and Greek) for "dark", and the German version of "the little one" (das Kleine) could be more than merely translation. (There is a psychotherapist with the oxymoronic name of Melanie Weiss in *Lolita*).

Dr. Klein's contribution to the theory and application of psychoanalysis includes works on such problems (here arranged alphabetically) as Anxiety ("Angst"), Death Instinct, Depression, Ego, Mourning, Oedipal Conflict, and Superego. She is the author of *The Psychoanalysis of Children* (1932) in which she postulates, among other things, that

> projective and introjective mechanisms based on the internalization by the child of parts of the mother (breast, face, hands)... are essential for the building of the child's... embryonic superego. (Sadock, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 87).

Another noted woman psychoanalyst, Lauretta Bender (b. 1897), invented the "visual-motor" Bender-Gestalt Test (1938), designed mainly for children. Her name, incidentally, conveniently aligns with that of Dr. Rosetta Stone of Chapter Two, "one of the most destructive psychoanalysts of the day" (p. 44).

5. "The Doll Play" (p. 91)

> "...in which Patrick or Patricia is given two identical rubber dolls and a cute little bit of clay which Pat must fix on one of them before he or she starts playing, and oh the lovely doll house, with so many rooms and lots of quaint miniature objects, including a chamber pot no bigger than a cupule, and a medicine chest, and a poker, and a double bed, and even a pair of teeny-weeny rubber gloves in the kitchen, and you may be as mean as you like and do anything you want to Papa doll if you think he is beating Mama doll when they put out the lights in the bedroom". (91)

In *Drugie berega* (published 30 November 1954, less than one year before *Pnin*'s Chapter Four), there is a passage absent in either of the English versions: "...the cretinous and vicious Freudian tests -- the doll houses with little dolls inside (Now tell me, Georgie, what do your parents do in their bedroom?)" (p. 258).

> Oddly, there did exist a test for children invented by a Dr. Doll:
>
> Although primarily intended for application to mental retardates, Doll's (1935b) Vineland Social Maturity Scale proved to be useful in the evaluation of nonretarded children with diverse disorders. (Sadock, vol. 3, p. 2473).

But the closest to our text and the most spectacular source my random plunges into psychotherapeutic literature have managed to retrieve is the work by J. R. Slavson, published in *The Psychoanalytic Review* (vol. 38, No. 1, 1951), an earlier issue of which Nabokov had once had a need to look up for his lectures on

Dostoevski at Cornell. Here are excerpts from Slavson's article appertaining to the test in question:

> In ortder to stimulate activity catharsis children should be supplied with appropriate materials and situations... Clay, water, fire, paints, brushes, dolls, mannikins, guns, soldiers, rubber darts, doll-houses and furniture that includes beds and toilet fittings, are among the equipment suitable for young children... Doll-houses that have a number of rooms with bedroom and bathroom furnishings are particularly valuable for children below school age. In his play each child reconstructs and refurnishes the "house" in a manner that reflects his particular preoccupations. One may place the child and the mother together, with the father in another room or bed. The latter [father, not bed. G.B.] is often left out altogether. Still another child places the father outside the house trying hard, but unable, to get in. Some children cause the father and the child-dolls to fall out of windows... The bathroom receives similar diversity of treatment, with the toilet bowl being the center of attention... (44).

Later in the article all kinds of "free-association" and "verbalization" tests are detailed, but we had better move the center of our attention elsewhere.

6. "Beautiful Rorschach Ink Blots" (p. 91).

Hermann Rorschach, Swiss psychoanalyst (1884-1922) and author of *Psychodiagnostik* (1921), devised a test (1921) measuring the "nonintellectual" traits of personality, based on the subject's interpretation of ten ink blots of "varying designs and colors". The test is included in Benton's smattering of "tests for children" (see above) under the category "Personality" (op. cit., vol. 3, p. 2473).

The eight words Nabokov subjoins make a nonsensical set of rhymes,

> Seascapes, escapes, capes,
> worms of embicility, neurotic
> tree trunks, erotic
> galoshes, umbrellas
> and dumbbells,

which compounds the absurdity of the thing. The first three incrementally shrinking words, however, form a meaningful series designed, perhaps, to lure a Freudian once again into "analyzing" Pnin's dream at the end of the chapter ("one of those dreams that still haunt Russian fugitives. . . their *escape* from the Bolsheviks. . . fleeing through great *pools of ink* . . . beyond the hopeless *sea*", p. 109, my emphasis). Nabokov certainly believed that crude Viennese psychotechnology was utterly and grotesquely futile particularly when applied to the vaporous material of dreams. At the chapter's close, Victor falls asleep "as soon as put[s] his head under his pillow - a recently evolved method about which Dr. Eric Wind. . . would never learn" (110). In Freudian lore, putting one's head under the pillow is an "unmistakable symptom of residual retro-matric tendency" (Kolmi Bonvivaard, *De twaalf duivels Bÿdragen over de Sexuele Theorie*". Amsterdam, 1948, p. 216, here given in my translation).

Nabokov's own method entails the careful fitting of parts and bits of Victor's predormant visions to Pnin's dream -- which, in turn, is but a rough draft of an episode in a totally different book (*Pale Fire*).

The Geography Theme which shows its tailfin here is one of the persistent themes in that chapter, at the end of which Pnin sees in his dream "great pools of ink..." pacing the empty beach and waiting for "his worried friend [who] had gone home for a map", p. 110). I chanced upon the following rich description of the Rorschach Test:

> A schizophrenic patient gave the response "terrestrial sex" to one of the Rorschach ink blots in which he had perceived one part of the blot as a penis and the rest as a geographical map. (Sadock, vol. 2, p. 1184).

I have spotted, in a recent bookseller's catalogue (Barnes & Noble), this advertisement:

> *Rorschach's Test*, Vol. ii. By S. J. Beck, A. G. Beck. Central thesis is the function of time in psychological change. Describes growth variants and clarifies most test data.

Presents samples of Rorschach test personalities. Includes the repeated protocols of the Orthogenic children. 399 pp.

Pub. at $28.50 Now only $7.95

Nabokov would have appreciated the depreciation.

All these tests were administered by "a couple of outsiders, young Dr. Stern and his smiling wife (I am Louis and this is Christina)" (90).

This ubiquitous couple, here in German habits, appears in Chapter Three and Six as the Americans Christopher and Louise Starr, "keenly interested in Dostoevski and Shostakovich" (see pp. 63, 80, and 138), and as the British Lew and Chris in Chapter Seven (p. 182). Later in Chapter Four, they go by "Lou and Tina" (91), in keeping with the sticky cloying way these psychometrists have with children. The names of the tests' designers also make a hot-pot of extractions: Godunov and Rosanoff (Russian); Bièvre (French); Kent (English); Angst (German); Rorschach (Swiss). *Poshlost'* truly transcends ethnic boundaries.

ABSTRACTS

"NABOKOV" DOESN'T RHYME WITH "LOVE"?: ON LOVE AND CONTROL IN *SPEAK, MEMORY*

by Galya Diment

(Abstract of a paper delivered at the Annual AATSEEL Convention, San Francisco, December 1987)

There is a well-known tradition of viewing Nabokov as a cold and calculating craftsman devoid of human compassion. This attitude is often based on critics' failure to see that the writer's craving for absolute authorial control points not to the lack of human emotions but to their abundance. In Nabokov's desire to play a detached observer, a sensitive reader should be able to discern not only a purely artistic striving for a perfect literary work, but also a very human attempt to master anxieties and to protect the richness and individuality of personal feelings from the unfeeling curiosity of outsiders.

The last chapter of Nabokov's *Speak, Memory*, which deals with his son's infancy, is undoubtedly the strongest declaration of Nabokov's love for another human being that the writer ever allowed himself. Nabokov, who abhorred the habitual trivialization (or, as he might have said, "oposhlivanie" or "'poshlust'ization'") which love undergoes in our culture, appears to have relied very heavily on his artistic control in order to "detrivialize" his paternal love and save it from cheap melodrama and sentimentality.

Two major techniques of Nabokov's control and detrivialization of "love" in *Speak, Memory* are rooted in two actions for which Russian has almost identical words. One is, of course, "ostranenie" (defamiliarization), the Russian Formalist term which many Nabokov critics legitimately apply to Nabokov's style of writing in general. The other is "otstranenie," which means, among other things, moving something or somebody away. What I call "otstranenie" is Nabokov's attempt to give his loved ones the status of the immortals by literally elevating them towards the

skies (as in the famous episode of his father being tossed up in the air by the enthusiastic peasants) where they can be removed from the banality of every-day existence.

Nabokov employs this technique, often in succession with "ostranenie," in several places where he deals with the most poignant instances of his love, like his love for his father whom he lost when still a young man or his love for his cousin and best friend Yuri, killed in the civil war. Yet it is the last chapter of his autobiography, devoted to his son, where Nabokov not only features "otstranenie" most frequently but also lays the device bare. Unlike "ostranenie," "otstranenie" is less of an artifice than a genuine and very human desire to protect the loved ones from the arrows of earthly "poshlust." This heart-felt simplicity alone should, it seems to me, dissuade people from seeing Nabokov merely in terms of a skillful and unhuman puppeteer.

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NABOKOV: A QUEST(ION)ING OF NARRATIVE AUTHORITY

by Brenda K. Marshall

(Abstract of a paper delivered at the Annual AATSEEL Convention, San Francisco, December 1987)

Vladimir Nabokov's claims of authorial power are well known. I suggest, however, that his overt insistence on control is covertly undermined by his own narrative strategies. Just as we are familiar with Nabokov's claims of authority, we are also aware that he never strays far from the theme of how memory is our own creation of what we call the past. Rather than a nostalgia for lost origins, I read Nabokov's fascination with how we attempt to retrieve the past as, first, an opportunity for constant creation of alternatives, and second, as a reflection on our need to fill in the space between past and memory.

Narrative strategies which point to that space, or gap, between what is past, and what is presented about that past through language, in other words, to the separation between signified and signifier, are postmodern textual strategies. We may study some postmodern impulses of Nabokov in *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* to show how these narrative strategies must undermine Nabokov's own insistence on absolute control, but more importantly to suggest that this awareness about the impossibility of recapturing the past is less a cause for despair, than the opportunity for options. A postmodernist reading of *RLSK* points to textual strategies that highlight Nabokov's concerns about the limitations and determinations of language. Critical textual strategies used include the use of mirror metaphors, not to affirm representation, but rather to suggest endlessly receding and multiplying images, and the transformation of the epiphany, from a moment of insight, to an example of truth-as-construct.

Traditional readings of *RLSK* often center around V as narrator, resulting in an emphasis on the uncertainty between what is illusion and what is reality. Postmodern strategies, however, go beyond this oppositional paradigm of illusion vs. reality, to an acknowledgement of unknowable realities, which we name according to particular constructs. The importance I stress is that in a postmodern perspective one level of reality is not privileged over another. Nabokov's is a comic optimism about the never-exhausted and never-completely-expected possibilities of change, creation, and otherness. In my postmodern reading of *RLSK*, with Sebastian as narrator, Nabokov uses the character Sebastian as a means by which to acknowledge and play with the games of linguistic self-representation: Nabokov creates a Sebastian who creates a V--and the upshot is that V's resulting biography of Sebastian is Sebastian's fictional autobiography. And that makes Nabokov's point exactly: any reconstruction of the past *must* be fictional. But the point goes beyond that of Nabokov's control. The very pattern set in motion of each narrative authority being undermined or superceded by something or someone beyond his control insists that we need to follow these receding layers of remove beyond Nabokov. The very structure of inconclusive narrative authority recedes to a sense of the indeterminacy, and ever-displacing mechanisms, of language itself.

On the other hand, although Sebastian-as-author criticizes any belief in stabilized self-knowledge, he also acknowledges the drives motivating that particular quest. As a result, we cannot call the space between V's fiction and Sebastian's fictionalizing, between Sebastian's fiction and Nabokov's fictionalizing, between Nabokov's fiction and language's fictionalizing, and utlimately, between signified and signifier, an empty space, a void, a vacuum. This space, these gaps, are filled with information--but not the representative information about the world that we may expect. Rather, what we find in the void is the information that we fill in; what we create in the void is language, and what we create through that language is a world. Thus, the "someone" referred to in the last words of *RLSK*--"I am Sebastian, or Sebastian is I, or perhaps we both are someone whom neither of us knows"--is the someone who fills in the contours of the gaps of *RLSK*. It is the someone in the position to interpret and thus construct a Sebastian/V--in which case, that someone is *you*, reader.

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NABOKOV'S *PALE FIRE AS* MEMOIR

by Priscilla Meyer

(Abstract of a paper delivered at the Annual ATSEEL Convention, San Francisco, December 1987)

Nabokov embeds real historical material in *Pale Fire*. The mad scholar Charles Kinbote imagines a mythical kingdom, Zembla, from which he thinks he is the deposed King Charles II. Kinbote models the tale of his excape from captivity after the Zemblan revolution on the English revolution. This may be verified by a few telling names, such as Boscobel, Beauchamp, Campbell, the Gulf of/the brig "Surprise", Puritan, as well as references to the poetry of Andrew Marvell, John Donne, and John Milton.

King Charles II of England escaped England after attempting to regain his crown by hiding in a hollow oak tree on an estate called Boscobel and then made his way, disguised as a servant, to the sea

where he debarked in the brig "Surprise." His father, Charles I, had been beheaded by the Puritans. In *Pale Fire* the name of the college president "Billy Reading" is a disguised reference to the Reverend William Reading who read a sermon against regicide at Westminster Abbey on the anniversary of the beheading of Charles I.

The historical material is relevant not only for Kinbote but for Nabokov himself. Nabokov's father was killed by a political assassin who was aiming for Paul Miliukov; this is mirrored in Kinbote's view that the assassin mistakenly shoots John Shade while aiming at Kinbote. The true etymology of Kinbote's name confirms a reading of *Pale Fire* as Nabokov's recompense for the loss of his father: *bot* in Anglo-Saxon means a recompense for a murdered relative, *weregeld*. In distinction to Kinbote, however, Nabokov has not lost his kingdom which is an artistic realm, witness the parallel search for two sets of Crown Jewels conducted in the index of *Pale Fire* and in Nabokov's memoir *Speak, Memory*. The use of verifiable, documented historical sources distinguishes Kinbote's mad involution from Nabokov's creative transformation of reality in ever-widening spirals.

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PHILOSOPHERS AS POETS: READING NABOKOV WITH SCHOPENHAUER AND BERGSON

by Leona Toker

(Abstract of a paper delivered at the Annual MLA Convention, San Francisco, December 1987)

A juxtaposition of literary works and philosophical texts can help define the author's "eschatological niche," provide concepts for narrative analysis, and perhaps even shed a light on the process of creative transformation.

The relationship between writers and philosophers, like the relationship between successor and precursor poets, is often one of subversion rather than of apprenticeship: a writer tends to read philosophers of his preference not as masters of thought but as rival poets.

Nabokov's position of "an indivisible monist" and his interest in memory bear an affinity with the views of Bergson who sought to reconcile matter and mind through memory. Bergson's work should, however, be treated not as Nabokov's "source" but as indirect commentary on Nabokov's narrative details. Thus Bergson's doctrine of the interpenetration of successive states of consciousness may account for the mobility and magical transformations of Nabokov's prose style. Bergson's less central insights can enhance our understanding of Nabokov's individual novels.

For example, Bergson's distinction between deliberate remembering (a bodily habit interpreted by memory) and unsolicited, genuine memory provides a paradigm for the analysis of recurrent motifs in *The Gift*. The motifs in question pertain to ways of disproving the "triple formula of human existence: irrevocability, unrealizability, inevitability." Crude mechanical attempts at recovering what is gone, realizing the impossible, or preventing the inevitable (the end) are opposed to the genuine memory, mystical experience, and artistic inspiration that achieve a contact with "another dimension."

This contact is also achieved at moments of "aesthetic bliss," a notion that can be best understood with the help of Arthur Schopenhauer. Schopenhauer's views are associated with that "escape into aesthetics" of which Nabokov was often mistakenly accused. However, Schopenhauer did not advocate, and Nabokov did not practice, an artist's selfish retreat to an ivory tower: it is for the audience rather than for the artist that the beautiful provides a temporary haven by silencing the malevolent Will which, according to Schopenhauer, moves the world. Implicitly, aesthetic bliss has moral effects: the Will must be silenced, at least occasionally, because satisfied it can never be--when one desire is gratified, another takes its place. Nabokov's *King Queen, Knave* traces the roots of criminality to the fetishized satisfaction of conventionally recognized desires and needs.

Nabokov's texts often display a Schopenhauerian disbelief in clear-cut discrete concepts as a basis for the authentic life of the mind. Perception of the world must be a creative activity and bear an esthetic character. It must be an act of freedom. Bergson, for whom perception is action, defines a free act as one of which the self is the author. Whoever lives and perceives authentically is an artist, an author. It is in this sense that Nabokov's fiction is devoted to artists and art.

Yet creating one's own world does not mean comfortably excluding the ideas of the ugly, the tormenting, the disruptive. Nabokov's artistic response to the imperative of moral honesty lies not in ignoring evil but in a comic and surrealistic approach to it. In his dystopias, like *Invitation to a Beheading* or *Bend Sinister*, dramatic illusion is periodically dispelled by the grotesque shapes of evil, yet after a short narrative span both the evil and its shapes again become credible and familiar since we know that recent history has surpassed gloomiest fantasies. The persistence of this aesthetic struggle testifies to the power of the enemy. An individual's struggle with concerted drives towards totalitarian deindividualization must be constantly renewed.

Bergson's essay "Laughter" provides an insight into some methods of this struggle. According to Bergson, the comic demands, and produces, a momentary anesthesia of the heart. The temporary silencing of sympathy that accompanies laughter prevents thoughts of evil and suffering from overwhelming one's vulnerable consciousness. It is an alternative to forgetting. Therefore Nabokov's diversionary comedy often erupts at the threshold of the tragic.

The more far-reaching effect of comedy is corrective. Laughter is a weapon against incipient disorder: according to Bergson, adaptation to the changing conditions of life and society requires alertness of attention and elasticity of mind and body; by inspiring fear laughter softens down mechanical inelasticities. Though Nabokov would probably agree with Bergson that comedy pursues the moral aim of general improvement, his emphasis here is different from Bergson's: what Nabokov's works ridicule is not so much an individual's insufficient adaptation to society but, on the

contrary, the all too ready adoption of the conventional. For Nabokov Bergson remains a precursor poet, not a teacher.

So does Schopenhauer. The ultimate goal that Schopenhauer sets for mankind is the achievement of a state in which the Will should come to know itself and be abolished. That is the state of nothingness, the opposite of Being, though not what one imagines as void or darkness: "to those in whom the will has turned and denied itself, this very real world of ours with all its suns and galaxies, is nothing." The "Beyond" of Nabokovian cosmogonies is, however, not the opposite of our Being but a contiguous parallel realm, tantalizing in its proximity.

The conceptual structures of Schopenhauer and Bergson can add to our understanding of different aspects of Nabokov's art, yet it is ultimately the subversion of concepts and the blending of complexities into an indivisible iridescence of Nabokov's narratives that yields the moments of "aesthetic bliss."

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PALE FIRE AND THE WORKS OF KING ALFRED THE GREAT

by Priscilla Meyer

(Abstract of a paper delivered at the Annual AAASS Convention, Boston, November 1987)

Kinbote's Zembla and the tale of his royal escape is based on fragments of English history as well as on northern legends. The theme of the lost kingdom familiar from Nabokov's *Speak, Memory* and Humbert's "kingdom by the sea" is taken up in *Pale Fire* in terms of two English kings who were routed by enemies but eventually reclaimed their thrones: Charles II and Alfred the Great (848?-900).

In Alfred's campaign to rid England of Danish invaders, he was forced into hiding in the marshes of Aethelingey (January 878).

That is the site of the famous legend of Alfred and the Cakes: Alfred took refuge, incognito, in a neat-herd's hut, where the woman of the house asked him to watch her cakes. Preoccupied with affairs of state, Alfred let them burn and was soundly berated for his absent-mindedness by the peasant woman. Kinbote and his friend Otar, "a cultured *adeling*," wait outside the palace at the announcement of Queen Blenda's death. Nearby sits "a peasant woman with a small cake she had baked" (note to line 71). *Adeling*, a prince, is the English equivalent of the Scandinavian *aetheling*.

King Alfred laid a foundation for English literary culture by assembling the most learned monks of his time to translate the major compendia of knowledge from Latin into Anglo-Saxon. They translated Boethius' *De Consolatio Philosophiae*, St. Augustine's *Blossom Gatherings*, Bede's *Ecclesiastoical History of the English Nation*, and Orosius' *History*. Alfred up-dated the latter and added considerably to Orosius' description of the geography of Europe by consulting travelers. His most important consultant was Othere, a rich Norwegian who had discovered a passage to Russia and came close to Nova Zembla.

Shade tells Kinbote an anecdote about King Alfred's Norwegian attendant Othere (note to line 238). Othere is the Anglo-Saxon equivalent of the Scandinavian Ottar. Shade's tale describes Othere as a bard. Shade's Othere thereby refers equally to the Scandinavian skald Ottar the Black, who wrote a poem recounting the events of the life of St. Olaf, a Norwegian king who spent two years in exile in Novgorod. Nabokov conflates the two, Ottar and Othere, contributing to the pattern of mirroring of English and Russian culture that structures *Pale Fire*.

Alfred's other translations stress the temporary nature of life and the importance of the true value of the spirit. Boethius, cast down from his high position, consoles himself in prison with thoughts of eternal life. Alfred earned immortality by preserving and accumulating knowledge; *Pale Fire*, itself a compendium of references to northern history, geography, science and literature of the last one thousand years, updates Alfred's work.

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OTHER STATES OF BEING: NABOKOV'S TWO-WORLD METAPHYSIC

by Robert Grossmith

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Nabokov's fiction is informed by a two-world vision: implicit throughout his writing is a distinction between the world of the senses and another, supersensory realm intuited to lie beyond. Notwithstanding his avowed antipathy to Plato, the metaphysic reflected in his work is in all essential respects Platonic or Neoplatonic, an unhappy dualism constantly striving towards an ideal monism. In different ways -- through art, chess, love, madness, suicide -- all his major characteristics are trying to leave the Platonic cave and make their way into the sunshine, into those "other states of being where art... is the norm." His novels may be read as the story of these attempts.

The thesis is divided into three main sections. Part One ("Thematism") attempts a broad conspectus of Nabokov's metaphysical and epistemological attitudes, concentrating on the themes of time and death in his fiction. Part Two ("Figuration") then focusses on a number of characteristic Nabokovian motifs or image-complexes under the three headings of transparency, reflectivity and circularity/spirality. In each of these figures, or pairs of figures, one member is typically associated with the world of phenomenal reality (opague, reflected, circular), the other with an intuited noumenal realm (transparent, specular, helical). Part Three ("Intertextuality") concludes with intertextual readings in two novels: *Invitation to a Beheading* is seen to develop its idealist metaphysic through an elaborate gnostic-Neoplatonic subtext, while Ch. 14 of *Bend Sinister* is read as in part a meditation on, and reaction against, the materialistic monism of ancient and modern atomism.

Nabokov's metaphysical code, it is concluded, belongs broadly within the tradition of the *philosophia perennis*, though his ambivalent attitude towards the self, and the idea of loss of self, guards against any naively optimistic mysticism. Nonetheless, and despite his reputation for formal radicalism and technical innovation, the values embodied in Nabokov's work remain deeply traditionalist.

EMIGRE RESPONSES TO NABOKOV (IV): 1940-1984

by Brian Boyd

When this checklist began two years ago, it was not intended to continue past 1940. That year the first emigration disintegrated and Nabokov on his arrival in the United States began to live not the hermetic existence of the confirmed émigré but the life of a happy citizen of a country he had chosen as a second home. Reactions from this or that émigré to Nabokov the American novelist, now earning his literary income almost entirely from his English writings and increasingly widely reviewed in American and English periodicals, matter much less than the choruses of acclaim or disdain that once greeted the young Sirin's work and reverberated through the emigration.

I note all this to explain why this final instalment, unlike its predecessors, is not the result of a systematic search. Post-1940 émigré reactions to Nabokov simply count less in his career than pre-1940 material, since they no longer determined the growth of his critical reputation. Nevertheless, there remains much of interest. Nabokov works continued to appear in Russian--books like the 1952 *Stikhotvoreniya* and the 1954 *Drugie Berega* and shorter works like "Solus Rex" and "Slava"-- and were naturally reviewed in the Russian-language press; books such as *Nikolai Gogol* roused a different kind of reaction in native Russians than in the English-speaking readers for whom they were intended; long-time émigré reviewers and critics of Nabokov's work like Adamovich or Struve modified their opinions or assessed him in a new perspective; in the 1970s memoirs of Nabokov in his first forty years appeared as his coevals take stock of their own lives and his; in the 1980s judgments on Nabokov made in the earlier years of the emigration are being recorded in print as the diaries and correspondence of people like Bunin and Zaitsev see publication.

I offer this final batch of references, though far from complete, in the hope that it may save time for those researching in this area and provoke someone with additional citations to undertake a more exhaustive listing. At the latter end of the period I omit material already listed in the *Nabokovian*'s yearly bibliographies.

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Readers are encouraged to submit news, annotations, queries, and other items for publication.
