THE NABOKOVIAN

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NEWS

by Stephen Jan Parker

In the Fall 1991 issue we published remarks delivered by Brian Boyd at the program celebrating the acquisition of the Nabokov Archive by the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library. In this issue we are publishing the remarks delivered then by Dmitri Nabokov. These first appeared in the Fall 1992 issue of *Biblion*, and are presented here with the kind permission of the New York Public Library and Dmitri Nabokov. For a detailed description of the Archive itself, see "The Vladimir Nabokov Archive in the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library: An Overview," by James Goldwasser (*Dictionary of Literary Biography Yearbook 1991*: 186-190).

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The Nabokov Society will again hold its annual meetings in conjunction with the MLA and AATSEEL conventions, this year in New York City. At AATSEEL, on December 28 (1-3 pm, Grand Hyatt Hotel) the topic will be "The Russian Years," chaired by Charles Nicol (Indiana State University) and Alexander Dunkel (University of Arizona). Papers will be read by Gavriel Shapiro (Cornell University), Galya Diment (University of Washington), Maxim Shrayer (Yale University), and Alexander Dunkel.

There will be two sessions at the MLA. The first (December 29, 10:15-11:30 am, New York Hilton) will be a General Session chaired by John Burt Foster, Jr. (George Mason University). Papers will be read by Gavriel Shapiro (Cornell University), Tom Goldpaugh (Marist College), Virginia Blum (University of Kentucky), and Leona Toker (Hebrew University). The

business meeting of the Society will follow. The second session will take place on December 30 (3:30-4:45 pm, New York Hilton) under the topic, "Vladimir Nabokov's Discovery of America." The session will be chaired by Zoran Kuzmanovich, and papers will be read by John Burt Foster, Ellen Pifer (University of Delaware), Joel Brattin (Worcester Polytechnic Institute), and Shoshana Knapp (Virginia Polytechnic Institute). A full report on these various sessions will appear in the spring issue of *The Nabokovian*.

Two other papers on Nabokov will be delivered by Hana Pichova (University of Texas) and Bruce Holl (Trinity University) at the panel on Russian Emigré Literature at AATSEEL on December 28 (10:15-12:15, Grand Hyatt Hotel).

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Mrs. Jacqueline Callier has provided the following list of VN works received March - August 1992.

March
- "Wingbeat," tr. Dmitri Nabokov. In *Yale Review*, vol.80, no. 1 and 2.

April
- *Stikhotvoreniia* [Poems]. Leningrad: Khudozhestvennaia Literatura.
- *Autres Rivages* [Speak, Memory], tr. Yvonne Davet. Paris: Gallimard, Folio reprint.
- *Foc Pallid* [Pale Fire], tr. Assumpta Camps and Josep Jauma. Barcelona: Edicions 62, Catalan edition.
- *Regarde, regarde les arlequins!*, tr. Jean-Bernard Blandenier. Paris: Fayard, reprint.
- *Pale Fire*. London: Everyman's Library #67.

- *Pnin*, tr. Ramon Folch. Barcelona: Edicions 62, Catalan edition.
- *Selected Letters*. London: Vintage reprint.
- *The Gift* [in Japanese]. Tokyo: Fukutaken Shoten, in two volumes.

May
- *Mary* [in Hebrew]. Tel-Aviv: Kinneret.
- "Problems of Translation." In *Theories of Translation*, ed. Rainer Schulte and John Biguenet. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

June
- *The Enchanter*. New York: Vintage International.

July
- *La Veneziana* [13 short stories], tr. Serena Vitale. Milan: Adelphi.
- *L'Invenzione de Valzer* [The Waltz Invention], tr. Anastasia Pasquinelli. Brescia, Italy: Edizione L'Oblique.
- "The Razor". In *Das Zweitbuch*. Munich: Schnechluth.
- *Invitation au supplice* [Invitation to a Beheading], tr. Jarl Priel. Paris: Gallimard, Folio reprint.
- *The Enchanter* [in Japanese]. Tokyo: Kawade Shobo.
- *Lolita*, tr. Eila Pennanen and Juhani Jaskari. Helsinki: Gummerus, two-volume pocket edition.

- *The Enchanter* [in Greek]. Athens: Editions Nepheli.

August - *Lolita*. Paris: Gallimard, Folio reprint.

- *Tamte Brzegi* [Other Shores], tr. Eugenia Siemaszkiewicz. Warsaw: Czytelnik.

September - *Luzinova Obrano* [The Defense] and *Pozvani na Popravu* [Invitation to a Beheading]. Prague: Odeon Club.

- *Prawdziwe Zycie Sebastiana Knighta*, tr. Michal Klobukowski. Warsaw: Panstwowy Instytut Wydawniczy.

- *La Vraie vie de Sebastian-Knight*, tr. Yvonne Davet. Paris: Gallimard, Folio reprint.

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Odds and Ends

- From Mark Levandoski comes this review: "A very successful adaptation of *Laughter in the Dark* by Mary Zimmerman played at the Remains Theatre in Chicago last March. In addition to strong performances by Gerry Becker (Albinus), Christopher Donahue (Axel Rex) and Heidi Stillman (Margot), the production was enhanced by a thorough attention to detail, including: a brilliant repetition of a series of lines at the landlady-moderated meeting of Margot and Rex (suggesting that 'he came next day, and then again and again'), the use of black and white in the sets, and the use of film as a narrative device and, of course, for Margot's debut."

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New Publications

Alfred Appel, Jr. *The Art of Celebration. Twentieth-Century Painting, Literature, Sculpture, Photography, and Jazz*. New York: Knopf. A book which grew out of Appel's presentation at the Cornell Nabokov Festival, and in which Nabokov figures prominently.

Julian Connolly. *Nabokov's Early Fiction: Patterns of Self and Other*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

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NABOKOVIANA

1. A passage signaled by J.E. Rivers (University of Colorado) from the best-selling novel, *Outer Banks*, by Anne Rivers Siddons (New York: Harper, 1991):

"Vladimir Nabokov began *Speak, Memory* with the words, 'The cradle rocks above an abyss.' When I read it, years later, safe for the time being in a secret garden by the sea on Long Island, I cried. The man who had brought me there looked at me over his own book and smiled.

'Already?' he said. 'You just opened it.'

They were tears of kinship, and of vindication. It was like hearing the doctor say, 'You were right all along, and we were wrong. It isn't in your head. It's a real sickness. We apologize.' This Russian, himself an exile, had named the emptiness and shown me it was vividly and certainly there, under all our feet, and always had been. This Russian was a man who knew his way around an abyss. I might walk the abyss again, but from now on this Russian would walk with me, and had given me an entire company of fellow abyss walkers. I wish that I had met him when I first looked down and noticed that beneath me lay... nothing."

2. Fan Parker provides this excerpt from an article quoting Governor Weld of Massachusetts, in the *New York Times* in September: "greatest writer of the 20th century, no question . . . . I mean, I think Nabokov is so colossal I sometimes get depressed. The guy can hit you with a septilingual pun. That's an Excedrin headache for a wannabe! But I also think Nabokov can be uplifting . . . . Just a phrase can stay with me for decades, many of them. There's a throwawy reference in *Pale Fire* to someone meeting his lover, and just for a moment she was 'a shivering rag doll in his arms.' But 'shivering rag doll.' I mean, how perfect. I should think he's by far the most brilliant writer I've ever encountered. Again, a lot of emphasis on the language, but God resides in the well-chosen word in my book."

*

In recognition of the disastrous economic situation in that part of the world, we now provide *Nabokovian* subscriptions to sixteen individuals in Russia and Eastern Europe free-of-charge. If any reader wishes to sponsor one or more of these subscriptions, it would be gratefully noted and appreciated.

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Our thanks to Ms. Paula Malone and Mr. Jason Merrill for their invaluable aid in the preparation of this issue.

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PLEASE NOTE: Subscription renewals are now due for 1993. Rates have not changed: check the inside cover of this issue. Help us avoid the additional postage cost of renewal reminders by sending in your renewals now.

HISTORY-TO-BE: THE TALE OF THE NABOKOV ARCHIVE

by Dmitri Nabokov

I seem to be traveling through time and space from one prestigious institution to another and, like Vladimir Nabokov's absent-minded professor Pnin, I am not quite sure where I am, whether I am to speak or sing, and about what. But as I look around, and listen, my surroundings come into focus, and turn out to be very happy ones.

A very few days ago I was in Milan to present an exhibition of Nabokov lepidoptera, synchronized with the fine first specimen of a new series of Nabokov books in Italian. The festivities took place at the Milan Museum of Natural History, whose directors took me on a tour of the brilliantly illuminated public halls, then further and further backstage, amid exhibits in rooms that progressively grew dimmer, more approximate, where the dioramas became more skeletal, until the general air of proppiness and surrealistic behind-the-scenes jumble evoked another Nabokovian scenario: that of the short story "A Visit to the Museum," where an émigré Russian protagonist ventures ever deeper into a provincial French museum, enters increasingly eerie halls of sweating locomotives and scurrying passengers, half of music, halls of mirrors, to emerge at last through an unexpected door into a snowy cityscape. His surroundings are both familiar and foreign—some kind of Russia, perhaps? Then he sees a shopsign and notes with panic that it is spelled in the new, Soviet way, that he has somehow ended up not in a French townlet as he should have, not even in the Russia he

recalled from long ago, but amid the Bolshevik regime from which he had already once laboriously fled.

Vladimir Nabokov would have ventured into the inner chambers of the Milan Museum without qualms, as he would into those of this splendid institution. One must "caress the details," he advised. And just as a detail was the key to that museum story, so the details would entrance him here. With the passion of the scientist and the precision of the artist, as he put it, he would explore the details of the Berg Collection rooms, and fondle the priceless manuscripts among which his own have taken their place. The themes of voyage and exile, echoed in the museum story and in so many other Nabokov works, now, in a sense, are bound together in a happy repatriation to Nabokov's adopted country. And the world of mirrors. . . . As I was taking wing to perform operas in Colombia in 1970, Father wrote to me, in Russian:

> if you fly high over the tropical forest, you may notice what look like shimmering little light-blue mirrors—*Morpho* butterflies flying above the trees.
>
> I love you. Break a leg.

It is a well-known gypsy secret that mirrors unmask dreams. Another secret is that time is omnidirectional, and that it is *we* who move through *it*—forward, backward, to one side, through a time that is personal and different at every different moment. Or do I forget what my professor of time, old Duvet, once said, that only dream time is exempt from our notion of chronological order? No, don't hand me that mirror. If it is a dream, I like the dream. Who says we cannot exist simultaneously in more than one time or dimension? Let Father, in his way, live on right here, cozily enveloped by his precious papers.

The fate of the Nabokov Archive became a subject of my late mother's thoughts and mine not long after Father's death. But the repository had to be very

special, and the best intentions of those involved at first did not yield the right venue. To give credit where it is amply merited, let me recount in a few words how an act of benevolence played out on a much smaller stage than this one led to the final, larger conclusion.

A few years ago a dear quasi-aunt, whom I had known since my infancy, was dying in what had once been a cozy West Side apartment. She remained in the company of a beautiful gilded harp that she had once played professionally with her two late sisters. Her other belongings, from elderly shoes to an elderly television set, were gradually evaporating into a strange limbo, as if the stage were being set for her disappearance too. Those humble objects might have been useful to certain personnel—I believe one says "health-care providers" these days—whose employers make it clear they do not respond for vanishing property. But *she* was old and terminally ill, and useful to almost no one. She did, however, wish to die with dignity and without debt. A handful of inscribed Nabokov volumes, before they too disappeared with the gilded harp, might bring the wherewithal to cover her astronomically mounting medical expenses. Enter Matthew Bruccoli, friend, writer, publisher of special finely crafted volumes, co-publisher with Harcourt Brace Jovanovich of Vladimir Nabokov's lectures, plays, and letters, and a bibliophile to boot. On his recommendation, enter also Glenn Horowitz, intermediary for bibliophiles, man of erudition and elegantly patient perseverance, and friend-to-be. The rest, in which many other indispensable individuals played a part, is *history*-to-be. It is a pity that one of those important individuals, Rodney Phillips, has been prevented from joining us by unforeseen medical impediments. That does not diminish the vital part he played in the transfer of the Archive, from the day he and certain others inherited the momentum from late Berg Collection head Lola Szladits and from former Library president Vartan Gregorian. Rodney, together with Lisa Browar, visited Montreux where they spent many hours in the atom-proof Archive shelter and in

a glassy arbor perusing materials that had been thoroughly organized by biographer Brian Boyd, and transferred to new quarters without excessive disarray by a multinational team of movers and secretaries, when the Montreux Palace, whose upper floor my parents had occupied since the early sixties, was subjected to a euphemistic "lifting." The Library contingent was to return, together with Boyd, on a final crash mission, when the same moving team came to prepare the Archive for shipment to New York.

People have come and, sometimes tragically, gone. But it is gratifying that those who have succeeded them and those who remain—I speak, respectively, particularly of Father Healy and of Paul Fasana, as well as the Library's Trustees—have moved toward the goal with undiminished zeal. And the goal is a splendid one. No better home could exist—in the physical sense and the metaphysical—for Father's manuscripts, for those famous cards that had lived and voyaged in shoeboxes marked *Ada* or *Transparent Things* with an ornamental butterfly or other Nabokovian doodle, for his interlinearly marked and sometimes retranslated teaching copies of books he considered great, for the meticulous drawings of butterflies for two works he longed to complete but never did because of lamentable changes in publishers' plans, and for many other treasures. The locus is fortunate both for the meticulous care the material will receive, and for those scholars who will accede to it. And Nabokov was not an "expatriate." He loved America and hoped to return in spite of inertia imposed by his comfortable corner of old Europe, and might well have done so had fate not intervened. Yet he *has* returned in the guise of his most cherished documents.

The hand of a *happy* fate has in fact often guided Nabokovian events, even at implausible moments. Now there is a particularly felicitous conjuncture. Past pseudo-biographical sleaze has been obliterated by Brian Boyd's superb volumes, my father's works

have been concentrated in the hands of the most competent publishers worldwide, and translational horrors are gradually being expunged. Besides the good beginning at Adelphi of Milan, which has just made a bestseller of *The Gift* in a country whose vision of Nabokov had always been lolitocentric, Bompiani is preparing an *opera omnia*; Gallimard, in France, is issuing a set of folio paperbacks that will culminate in a three-volume Pléiade; Penguin and Weidenfeld continue their excellent work in England, as does Anagrama in Spain. The new editions everywhere are being made to conform to updated texts incorporating long-needed emendations that, as some of you might not know, I furnished to Random House for their fine new Vintage International Series, which, at a rapid rate, is filling a new shelf in Nabokovian bookcases. A new screen *Lolita* is under contract (no nymphet is yet cast since nymphets age in a hurry), a musical of *Invitation to a Beheading* is in the works, and various other interesting projects loom—all under the watchful eye of my faithful *dea* and *deus ex machina*, Smith & Skolnik, literary agents, and with the assistance of experts such as Morris Kahn, financial advisor, and Marina Sheriff, attorney.

Another *dea*, Ellendea Proffer of Ardis, is continuing her heroic project of a complete Russian Nabokov published in America, a project that risks eclipse by the mastodontic Soviet piracy of my father's works. There the pre-glasnost' bootleggers of samizdat were often better than many pirates of today: at least they usually circulated copies of accurate texts rather than the arbitrarily altered, hilariously misannotated, monstrously mistranslated, and, yes, still sometimes censored post-glasnost' versions of Nabokov, not to mention comical or commercially motivated misattributions such as that resuscitated canard Levy's *Novel with Cocaine*, ascribed, on its cover this time, to Nabokov, buckshot and all. When I have been asked why I did not attend Nabokov congresses in Russia my reply has been that as long as a single adjective must be censored, or a single bit of

gulag survives in Dnyepropetrovsk, I shall not be tempted, even by the arboreal aromas of my father's recollections. Neither shall I condone unilaterally mandated robbery. But perhaps, if bigoted gangs like *Pamyat'* can be held at bay, the thread of decency and culture that has somehow survived chaos and counter-chaos may truly bring Russia a less barbarous future. Then I might visit the former workers' paradise one day.

An interesting sidelight to current events evolved from some recent journalistic misinformation. According to a Washington daily, one of the new generation of young Russian entrepreneurs, tired of directing his empire from the back seat of his aging Volga automobile, had bought the former Nabokov town house in Petersburg, and for a pittance. The information of course proved false, while the more enlightened members of the Petersburg city government have confirmed previous Soviet feelers by expressing interest in the idea of a Nabokov museum *in situ* if a few dwellers can be evicted. Then again, dwellers have been evicted before.

If the idea has a sequel, I would envision such a museum as being affiliated, perhaps via one of the Nabokov foundations already extant in Russia, with a firsthand and first-rate Nabokov Foundation that I am creating in America under my will. And here the conjuncture—the publications, the multimedia projects, the congresses in Moscow, Petersburg, and Nice, Stephen Parker's Nabokov Society and informative *Nabokovian, and* the transfer of the Archive to New York—all of it will tie nicely together. For the new Nabokov Foundation, ideally, will have its headquarters right here at The New York Public Library, whence its squad of scholars, agents, accountants, and attorneys will carry on the work of publishing, administering, investing, and perhaps endowing a fellowship or professorial chair.

It is a pity that Father has not lived to bask in the current boom in general, and in today's festivities in particular, or to observe the background of accelerated history against which it all occurs. No matter what I or others do, his glory, a century from now, would probably be undiminished. But he would have smiled, proudly.

Nonetheless, *biography* can sometimes rise to the state of an art. In Nabokov's case there have been a couple of previous attempts—one by a venomous minor literary lady still living in the Russian emigration of the thirties. Her slim and slimy volume, as she has since finally admitted, was not so much about Vladimir Nabokov as against Véra Nabokov, mainly because she could not stomach my parents' long and blissful marriage.

A second effort came from a generally squalid character whom Father, in a rare instance of misjudgment, allowed limited access to his work and his persona. This scholar committed such exploits as singlehandedly transposing the Russian Revolution to 1916, and then suffered some bizarrely pathological jamming of the gears that caused him to turn on his subject in midwork like some miniature Salieri.

Some have referred to the result in the same breath as the Nabokov-Wilson dispute, a hilarious mismatch in itself. But the comparison becomes absurd at the thought of this malevolent biographical dwarf riding on Nabokov's coattails, as one critic has put it. The most merciful fate for the man is definitive oblivion, I would say.

But the antipodes can send us a genius as well as a wretch. New Zealander Brian Boyd, after a decade of self-sacrifice, performed the wonder of recreating Nabokov's Russia, then the émigré world in Germany and France where he emerged as a writer. Now he gives

us the America that was the background for Nabokov's great later works, an America he took with him, like checked baggage, for his last years in Switzerland. Those interested in accuracy now have a reliable source of fact and literary criticism. All of us have a splendid read. Without additional ado I introduce: Dr. Brian Boyd.

NABOKOV IN NICE
THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL NABOKOV CONFERENCE

by Stephen Jan Parker

"From the letter written in Soliès-Pont by a student to his mother, to the folders read by Luzhin about the 'indecently blue gulf,' or again to *Look at the Harlequins!* and Vadim McNab's idyll with Iris on a beach, there are hundreds of references to the *'Cote d'Azur'* in Nabokov's 'discursive' and fictional texts. The following selections contain some of his best evocations of the Riviera, a region which, for him, was apparently one of the most edenic places on earth after Vyra." These words preface "Nabokov and 'la Côte d'Azur'," a florilegium of texts from *Glory, Laughter in the Dark, The Real Life of Sebastian Knight,* "That in Aleppo Once...," *Speak, Memory, Lolita, Pale Fire, Ada,* and *Look at the Harlequins!* gathered by Maurice Couturier and presented in the official program of the Second International Conference on Nabokov -- an abundant gift to the participants from the conference organizer.

It will be difficult to improve on Conference II, "Nabokov: Autobiography, Biography and Fiction." Nice proved the perfect locale, once past the opening day's violent thunderstorms. Accomodations at the Hotel Altea were excellent, as were the greeting by Assistant Dean Kircher, the opening day reception, the daily gourmet luncheons at the restaurant universitaire, and the closing banquet. The conference had numerous sponsors: the CRELA (Université de Nice-Sophia Antipolis), the Faculté des Lettre, Arts et Sciences Humaines, the Department of English, the Centre d'Etudes de la Métaphore, the American Embassy, and hosted by the Bibliothèque Universitaire des Lettres.

Superbly organized and conducted by Maurice Couturier, with the assistance of Mme. Couturier and Professor Michel Fuchs, each of the three days were divided into morning and afternoon sessions, each session of 3-4 hours duration. All meetings were held in the the conference room of the University's library. Participants came from France, Germany, Scotland, Finland, Russia, Canada, USA, Israel, and New Zealand. The ambience, established early on through the charm and conviviality of Professor Couturier, was intimate and informal. Unlike the usual procedure at American conferences, discussion followed at the conclusion of each paper, rather than at the end of a session. And though each panel had a moderator, the intense, often prolonged discussions during the three days needed no intercession from a panel chair.

Several moments stand out in this writer's mind: J.D. Quin's fascinating slide presentation on "Nabokov's Neurology,"; Dmitri Nabokov's reading of "Sounds"; Gene Barabtarlo's slide/photograph presentation of Nabokov-related locales; Ellen Pifer's hilarious reading of Don Johnson's paper (Don was unable to attend because of a sudden illness). In all, a memorable and unforgettable event.

The capsule abstracts which follow are presented in the order in which papers were delivered. Fuller versions will appear in an early 1993 issue of the journal *Cycnos*, edited by Professor Couturier. To obtain a copy, write to Professor Andre Viola, Department of English, Université de Nice, 98 bd. Edouard Herriot, 06007, Nice cedex, France.

Brian Boyd "New Light on Nabokov"

Since *glasnost'* led to the 'rehabilitation" of Nabokov in the Soviet Union, it has been possible to investigate archives there that were formerly off

limits. Since the publication of the two volumes of my Nabokov biography, I have also had many readers, reviewers, translators, and scholars offer me corrections and additions. Most of the new material relates to Nabokov's early years, especially to the chronology of the years 1904-1906, to his years at Tenishev, and to his first decade in the emigration. There are revelations about his character, his Russian, his German, his school, his reading and his writing.

Vladimir Alexandrov "How Can Ethics Exist in Nabokov's Fated Worlds?"

A paradox underlies Nabokov's art and world view: although he professes faith in freedom and contingency, he does not embody them in his autobiography or his fictions, which demonstrate how he and his characters are trapped in fatidic webs that abut the transcendent. This closure stems from the world view that informs his works, their structure, the reading process that they activate, and the theoretical limits to representing freedom or contingency in narrative art. Nabokov's ethics are one of the foundations of his thought and art; but without freedom, dramatizing moral action becomes more than problematic.

Ellen Pifer "Innocence and Experience Replayed: From *Speak, Memory* to *Ada*"

To many critics, the publication of *Lolita* in the mid-fifties marked the end of a literary tradition--what Alfred Appel has called "the romantic myth of the child, extending from Wordsworth to Salinger." Far from sounding its death-knell, I shall argue, *Lolita* may prove to be twentieth-century fiction's most eloquent celebration of "the cult of childhood." Most centrally in *Lolita*, but throughout his other novels as well, Nabokov celebrates the child's natural innocence as the very ground or essence of human reality. Such

innocence must not, however, be confused with sexual innocence or chastity. Nabokov's vision of innocence and experience, like Blake's, does not conform to conventional categories or yield simple oppositions.

Permeating the landscape of Nabokov's fiction, "the child theme" receives still more explicit treatment in the author's essays and non-fiction. In a lecture devoted to Dickens' *Bleak House*, for example, Nabokov adamantly defends the Victorian novelist against the charge of sentimentality. Dickens's compassion for the child, he insists, is not an item of sentimental but of metaphysical faith. Examining Nabokov's fiction from this suggestive vantage, the reader discovers a similar faith--faith in the child's natural innocence that, by implication, extends to all human beings in their original state.

Gennady Barabtarlo "Nabokov and Wilson: A Strange Case"

While sieving the contents of the Wilson Archive at Yale's Beinecke Library, I found a number of unpublished documents of considerable importance that shed new light on various aspects of the two men's relationship at different stages, or added valuable details to the already known. Among them some thirty previously unpublished letters from VN to Wilson, and a dozen more from Véra Nabokov; typescripts of VN's works of the 1940s and 50s, some with important variant readings; a translation of the poem "To Prince Kachurin," with annotations, made specially for Wilson; Wilson's draft notes on VN's prose, jotted as he read his books and stored away for future use in an envisioned, but never written, critical esay on VN; a draft of Wilson's pseudonymous letter to editor, probably never sent, in which he tries to present the entire Eugene Onegin clash as an elaborate hoax staged by the two old sharp-penned pals; and letters to Wilson about VN by Katherine White, James Laughlin, Nicolas Nabokov and others. Making these

documents public--something that I intend to do eventually--will most likely sharpen or shift many established views and re-confirm others.

Simon Karlinsky "Nabokov and Chekhov: Affinities, Parallels, Structures"

Nabokov's attachment to the work of Anton Chekhov is well attested. The similarity of their outlook stems from their training in biological laboratories and their partiality to exact detail in both life and art. For both writers, creative endeavors were a part of natural life process and required no extra-literary guiding ideas or principles. For some critics this put them both outside the Russian (or American) literary tradition and it accounts for the remarkably similar initial hostile reception of their work.

As a writer, Nabokov learned some thematic and structural procedures from Chekhov: abrupt reversal of planned closure; reality reflected through the vision of an egomaniacal character or narrator; the dramatic effect of an event *not* happening; and development of leitmotifs which cancel or reverse the course of action.

Robert Scholes "Twins: Ernest and Vladimir, or 'Three Bathing Suits on a Line.'"

Nabokov once observed that Salvador Dali and Norman Rockwell were twins, one of whom had been spirited away by Gypsies at Birth. Taking this profound insight as my point of departure, I shall examine the voluminous evidence which forces us to recognize the same remarkable process of geminization at work in the lives and writing of Vladimir Nabokov and Ernest Hemingway. This Kinbotian exposition will be based upon actually existing and non-existing archival evidence of an impossibly conclusive sort, including versions of the same unpublished fragment by both writers.

Dmitri Nabokov

A trip to hear erudite Nabokovians has turned into an occasion to say a few words. I could use it to protest the many misdeeds in my father's regard committed in Russia (the most recent of which is the publication, for shady reasons, of Nosik's travesty of *Pnin*); and elsewhere by individuals such as a literary lady in Paris who has admitted that the tripe she writes is directed against Véra Nabokov (presumably because Mother was brilliant, happy, helpful, and Jewish); a couple of predatory obituarists who parroted her venom; or a churchly, unacademic nincompoop who inexplicably teaches at the Sorbonne and obsessively revives a long-exploded canard: the notion that Nabokov wrote Levy's *Novel With Cocaine*. I could praise a handful of gifted and dedicated Nabokovians in Russia, the outstanding Nabokov publishers in the West, and also that *rara avis*, the occasional brilliant translator. And of course I should commemorate the late Ledig Rowohlt, *the* publisher of Nabokov in Germany, and Gilles Barbedette, who set in motion the coming VN Pleiade. But rather than talk about Nabokovian matters, I shall read you some Nabokov: an early story of his called "Zvuki," "Sounds," previously untranslated into English, which simultaneously expresses remorse about some youthful callousness, and foreshadows some of Nabokov's best writing.

Julian Connolly "From Biography to Autobiography and Back: The Fictionality of the Narrated Self in the Work of V. Nabokov"

Many of Nabokov's works feature an authorial figure or authorial consciousness who may be represented in the text by a pair of figures, such as the narrator of a story and the narrated subject of that story. In some cases, such as "Recruiting" and *The Gift*,

the close relationship between the two figures is marked by an alternation of first and third-person narrative modes. A similar binary relationship may underlie the relationship in *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* between V, the narrator of the work, and Sebastian, the ostensible subject of V's narration. This paper explores the phenomenon of binary structures in the (auto)biographical text of that novel.

Maurice Couturier "The Distinguished Writer vs. the Child"

Nabokov did not like to talk in public and wrote almost all the interviews of *Strong Opinions* beforehand, considering them as "neatly paragraphed essay(s)." On the other hand, the discursive texts of *Speak, Memory* waver constantly between autobiography and fiction. This paper studies the changes between the French text of "Mademoiselle O" and its English version, and it analyses the paradoxical form of communication which develops between the real author, who was able to play freely with his fictionalized selves, and the real reader, who feels terribly intimidated and vainly tries to reach out for the author, often hearing only the echo of his own voice.

Geoffrey Green "Visions of a 'Perfect Past': Nabokov, Autobiography, Biography, and Fiction"

This paper explores the lapse in narrative point of view--from the first person narrative perspective ("I") to the second person narrative voice ("you") that occurs in the concluding, fifteenth chapter of Nabokov's memoir, *Speak, Memory*. Two versions of a scene on the beach in the south of France are compared (one, with Irina Guadanini, as recounted in Boyd's biography; the other, from *Speak, Memory*) to illustrate significant contrasts between biography and Nabokov's conception of autobiography. Nabokov is

seen to achieve unique representational insight and artistic transcendence by means of transforming biography ("average reality") into autobiographical fiction ("true reality').

Susan Elizabeth Sweeney "Nabokov's Game of Selves: Fictive Autobiography and Biographical Fiction"

Speak, Memory embeds a *mise en abyme* that reveals the relationship between narrating author and remembered self in autobiography and Nabokov's (other) fictions. This *mise en abyme* - Nabokov's description of an adolescent game which "consisted of parodizing a biographical approach projected, as it were, into the future" - exemplified how *Speak, Memory* characterizes authorship as impersonation of the self. Nabokov repeats this game of selves throughout the fiction, especially in later and more mannered novels like *Look at the Harlequins!*. Inevitably, Nabokov's would-be biographers find themselves merely replaying his own performance of this game -- whether they write Nabokov's "life" as if it were one of his fictions (as Field did in *Nabokov: His Life in Part*), or write fiction based upon his life (as Smooding did in *Inventing Ivanov*).

Leona Toker "'Who was becoming seasick? Cincinnatus': Some Aspects of Nabokov's Treatment of the Communist Regime"

Nabokov's books "returned" to Russia at about the same time as uncensored Gulag testimonies, by ordinary people and by some major writers, reached their native presses. Significantly, his works do not strike a discordant note in this context. A number of plot events and themes in his dystopias are artistic refractions of the story of Stalin's reign. The metaphysical facets of these themes find their expression on the level of imagery, e.g., in the "navigation" images in *Invitation to a Beheading*. In

more general terms, some of the moral-aesthetic attitudes and technical devices in Nabokov's dystopian novels are akin to those of the so-called "documentary prose" by Gulag survivors. The basis for the analogies is the harmony between the ethical drives of the two otherwise so different bodies.

Christine Raguet-Bouvart "Textual Regeneration and the Author's Progress"

The place of *Kamera Obscura - Laughter in the Dark* is unique: two languages for a basic text gave birth to two distinct novels. Before leaving Germany, Nabokov realized that even though his Russian Muse would never forsake him, he would have to call on another one. Rewriting meant adapting the creative act to another linguistic system, to be considered both in terms of presence and absence as well as in inverted images - the "camera obscura" device of the Renaissance painters haunting the two novels. An essential stage in Vladimir Nabokov's career, it marked the beginning of his multilingual and multicultural handling of literature - a new polysemic performance.

D. Barton Johnson "Vladimir Nabokov and Mayne Reid"

In *Speak, Memory* Nabokov draws on Captain Mayne Reid's 1865 Wild West adventure novel *The Headless Horseman* to introduce his cousin and best friend Yuri Rausch and the theme of sexual awakening. Mayne Reid has still other roles in Nabokov's life and works. Nabokov's first "literary" effort derived from Reid who came to be connected in Nabokov's mind with certain ideals of manly valor and sexuality. Most importantly, Reid created a myth of America in the 1840s that would, in many ways, become part of Nabokov's reality in the 1940s.

Stephen Jan Parker "Nabokov's Montreux Books: Part II"

In this paper the disposition of the Nabokov's library in Montreux and its dispersal following Mrs. Nabokov's move from the Montreux Palace Hotel in 1990 and the acquisition of the Nabokov Archives in 1991 by the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library are summarized. Some of the most interesting volumes from the library are then described and discussed in regard to the information and insights they provide: Nabokov's heavily notated editions of Pushkin, Gogol, Proust, and Kafka (a previously unknown edition), his language teaching texts at Wellesley, and the Guerney anthology, *A Treasury of Russian Literature*, which was the core text in his courses on Russian literature in translation.

J. D. Quin "Nabokov's Neurology"

Aberrations both physical and psychological, noted Dmitri Nabokov, are among the diverse sources of raw material that nurtured Vladimir Nabokov's artistic fantasy. Disorders of the central nervous system afflict many of the characters in Nabokov's works. This review considers both the common and rare neurological conditions that occur in his fiction. Nabokov's personal health, in particular his intercostal neuralgia, is discussed along with its relevance to his writings. Of the common neurology mention is made of cerebrovascular incidents, epilepsy, tic douloureux, migraine and insomnia. Of the rare neurology parietal lobe dysfunction, hallucinations and optic tract lesions are discussed. The recurrence of these conditions in the texts reminds us of Nabokov's scientific interest in unique phenomena and his fascination about the nature of consciousness.

Pekka Tammi "The St. Petersburg Text and Its Nabokovian Texture"

This paper will proceed via the notion of "St. Petersburg Text" (*petersburgski tekst*, coined by the Tartu semioticians, Lotman, Todorov, et al.) to a discussion of the concrete motif texture in Nabokovian writing. There will not be much ado about semiotics. The occurences of St. Petersburg as a literary topos will be traced (1) in Nabokov's Russian poetry; (2) in *Speak, Memory*; (3) in narrative fiction. Special heed will be given to intertextual links between the autobiography and the image of the city in the author's fiction.

Robert Alter "Autobiography as Alchemy in *Pale Fire*"

As a writer vehemently committed to conscious control and the autonomy of fictional imagination, Nabokov habitually denied any connection between his novels and his life. This denial would seem to hold persuasively for *Pale Fire*, the most elaborately patterned and the most playfully cryptographic of all his novels. But beyond the ingenuity of its formal design, *Pale Fire* evinces an evocative power in the representation of character and moral predicament that bears the weight of the author's personal experience. In Shade and Kinbote, he has split off and redistributed bits and pieces of his inner life, the former being a kind of American alter ego to his own role as adoptive writer, the latter a projection of an underside of the writer's self, the imaginist as isolate.

Suzanne Fraysse "A Portrait of the Artist as a Harlequin"

This paper examines the generic status of *Look at the Harlequins!* through its various reading pacts. The book is seen as an antiphonal reponse to *Speak*,

Memory not simply in that it sums up and puts to narrative use the problems raised by the writing of the autobiography but also in that it offers an original narrative strategy -- resting on the relationship between the "I" and the "you" of the text -- that aims not at depicting the real writer but at constructing his image in the interplay between *LATH!* and texts by and about Nabokov -- "The Invisible *LATH!*".

Herbert Grabes "The Deconstruction of Autobiography: *Look at the Harlequins!*"

While *Look at the Harlequins!* undoubtedly is Nabokov's last complete novel, a fictitious biography and not, as *Speak, Memory*, an autobiography proper, the kinship between the fictitious autobiographical narrator Vadim Vadimych N. and his authorial creator Vladimir Vladimirovich Nabokov is ostentatious enough to raise the question why Nabokov created such a "non-identical twin, a parody, an inferior variant" of himself when dealing with autobiographical material.

It seems that the irresponsible stance of the parodist allowed him to present the most central themes, the most puzzling intellectual and most urgent existential problems in his life and work without running the danger of becoming, if only according to his own standards, even slightly pathetic. He therefore chose to present his own past in terms of another novel, a fictitious autobiography of an inferior double, against whose parodic reduction and inversion the magnitude and opposite quality of the "original" can be imagined.

David Rampton "The Last Word in Nabokov Criticism"

Recent criticism has shed new light on the links between aesthetic and philosophical issues raised by

Nabokov's novels, and on those between the man and his work. Nabokov's discursive prose has helped organize these discussions. Deciding how to use comments made in interviews, lectures and letters requires readers to examine initial assumptions and to make crucial choices related to critical method. The narrative and rhetorical strategies in novels like *Despair* and *Lolita* force the reader to rethink such assumptions and strategies. Acknowledging the arbitrary element in the choices Nabokov's readers must make may help encourage a range of approaches to his work.

"TO PRINCE KACHURIN" -- FOR EDMUND WILSON.

by Gennady Barabtarlo

Perhaps the most curious among many unpublished documents by and about Nabokov in Wilson's archives at Yale's Beinecke Library is Nabokov's translation, with interlinear commentaries, of his Russian poem "To Prince S.M. Kachurin" (1947). The translation (which we reproduce here with Dmitri Nabokov's kind permission)[1] made expressly for Wilson about the time of the poem's composition is quite different from the one printed in *Poems and Problems*, and the parenthetical English lyrics amplify the Russian original so much that the piece should be indeed considered (as Nabokov only half-jokingly marks it) a valuable document.

"**Annotated translation** (this is a valuable document).

> **To Prince S.M. Kachurin** (who does not exist but whom the reader is supposed to take for an old friend of the author--with something of the sonorous apostrophic intonation Pushkin gives to the names of his friends in his poems).
>
> 1.
>
> Kachurin, I have acted upon your advice, and this is the third day that I am living among (art) museum surroundings in a blue drawing-room with a view on the Neva.

[1]Copyright by The Vladimir Nabokov Estate.

> Your poor friend is disguised as an American clergyman, and to all the valleys of Daghestan (in one of which Lermontov dreamt he was dying) I send my envious salutations (envious, because exotic and lethal as those romantic valleys are, they are less exotic and less terrible than the place I am describing).
>
> Because of the cold (in the room) and the palpitations ("double-systolic") in my forged passport (of my heart under my passport), I cannot sleep. To (other) explorers of wall-paper I send (these) lilies and (these) lianas (which I find in the floral pattern of the walls when I cannot sleep).
>
> > (the instrumentation of this strophe prepares a tremulous background for the gradual development of the bird theme--see further)
>
> But on the divan, where he has made his bed, and where he lies with his knees against the wall and his body enveloped up to the waist in a travelling rug, the interpreter they have assigned to me does sleep (so that I am enabled to jot this down).

2. (another entry in the secret diary "I" am keeping).

> When, last Sunday (now a week has passed since my arrival in Leningrad), after a kind of eclipse (or dark illness) that had lasted almost thirty years, I could (was strong enough) get up and walk as far as the window;
>
> > (the end of exile is rendered in terms of languid convalescence. Note the liquid and twittering *en sourdine* instrumentation that links up the floral pattern *supra*, with the theme of the awakening birds further on);
>
> when I saw in the mist of spring, in the mist of the young day, in a haze of subdued outlines (this is an impression of St. Petersburg in May) that (view)

which I had been keeping all these years as one keeps a much too gaudy postcard, that lacks a corner, cut off for the sake of the stamp that had been in that corner (garish and dead memory, with the stamp of reality gone, in contrast to the throbbing haziness of actual true living things); when all this appeared in such close proximity to my soul (the "when, last Sunday...; when I saw in the mist..." is one sustained movement that now is going to be resolved), then my soul sighed and stopped, like a train coming to a sighing stop in the stillness of fields.

And I longed to get out of town (into the country). A youthful moist langor again (as in spring days in town long ago) pervaded my body causing it to ache in a dreamy way (the strophe slowly stretches its limbs) and I began to turn things over in my mind (already I saw myself) sitting in the railway carriage and talking my companion (the interpreter) into (letting me out at a certain station). But all at once (for I am still in the museum-like drawing-room) he makes with his lips the vague smacking sounds that follow the moment of awakening, and then reached for his (Russian-English) dictionary.

3. (third entry. One or two days have elapsed)

I refuse to give up, for herein lies the explanation of a whole life--a life that has stopped, like a train in the roughish (or "scuffy") stillness of fields.

I imagine the twittering going on at a distance of sixty nine *versts* from the town (Leningrad), from this house where I stutter behind locked doors (this strophe contains the promised outburst of birds, rendered by *shchebetan'e v shestidesiati deviati verstakh*).

I imagine the station, and the slanting rain visible against some dark background, and then the tumultuous toss of the station-master's lilacs as

they become coarse and rumpled under the action of the rain,

and then the leathern apron of the carriage, with rivulets of rain trembling upon it, and all the details of the birches, and a red barn on the left side of the highway.

Yes, all the details, Kachurin, all the poor little details, such as the edge of a bluish-grey cloud, a rhombus of azure, and speckled trunks through stippled foliage.

But how shall I board the local, dressed as I am, wearing this overcoat, these glasses, and (in spite of my disguise) completely transparent, with a novel by Sirin (emigré novelist who was especially good at depicting nostalgic landscapes) in my hands?

4. (fourth and last entry)

I am frightened. Neither the rostral (galley-prow decorated) column (the two rostral columns are a prominent feature of the Neva view) nor, in the light of the moon, the steps leading (from the granite embankment) to spiral reflections, to the darkly mercurial taut waters--

can prevent one from seeing... the things of which I shall tell you when we meet--all the things I have to say about the new (type of Russian), broad-shouldered, provincial, and a slave.

I want to go home (home from Russia). Enough, Kachurin, may I go home? Back to the pampas of my free boyhood, back to the Texases I have found.

I am asking you, is it not time to return to the theme of the (Indian) bow-string, to the enchantment of the chaparral (the birds are

already there) of which we read in the Headless Horseman?

Is it not time to go back to Matagorda Canyon (place in the Texas mountains) and there fall asleep on the burning stones--with the skin of one's face prickly dry from the aquarelle paints (with which we used to daub our faces when we played Indians) and with a crow's feather in one's hair? (in other words, let me take the direct road to America straight from my boyhood and the Wild West novels I used to love)."

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.]

TWO NOTES ON *PNIN*

1. In this novel, Nabokov demonstrates his close familiarity with Flemish Renaissance art, and particularly with the paintings of Jan van Eyck. This was noted by Gerard de Vries in his article "Van Eyck's Mirrors" (*Nabokovian* 18 [Spring 1987]: 54-56). In discussing van Eyck's *Madonna and Child with St. Donatian, St. George, and Canon George van der Paele* in regard to *Pnin*, de Vries has suggested that Nabokov bears "a striking resemblance" to the Canon van der Paele, "when one thinks of the photo of Horst Tappe, taken in Montreux in 1963" (55). De Vries' suggestion is anachronistic, however, since *Pnin* was composed between 1953 and 1955, about a decade before Horst Tappe's photograph was taken, and at that time, if ever, Nabokov bore no resemblance to the Canon van der Paele, as can be clearly seen in the photograph by McLean Dameron (for both photographs, see *Selected Letters 1940-1977*, following 294). It seems that Nabokov's reference to van Eyck's painting fulfills a more subtle artistic function.

There is no doubt that Nabokov was fascinated by the Van Eyckean idea of an artist's presence in a painting, unbeknownst to the personae portrayed therein but recognizable by the spectator. We may recall that van Eyck employed this device in his

Giovanni Arnolfini and His Wife, in the background of which there is an inscription over a convex mirror: "Johannes de Eyck fuit hic 1434"; that is, "Jan of Eyck was here [as a witness to the marriage], 1434" (see Erwin Panofsky, "Jan Van Eyck's *Arnolfini* Portrait," *The Burlington Magazine* 64 [1934]: 124). The mirror "substantiates" this latter statement by reflecting, in addition to the newlyweds, two figures of "witnesses," one of whom is believed to be the artist himself (see H.W. Janson, *History of Art* [1963] 290-92). And the most recent study of the portrait suggests that both figures of the witnesses "are a sort of trademark or informal motto of the artist, showing that he was there, perhaps literally but also metaphorically" (Craig Harbison, "Sexuality and Social Standing in Jan van Eyck's Arnolfini Double Portrait," *Renaissance Quarterly* 43.2 [1990]: 254).

Van Eyck employs a similar device in the *Canon van der Paele Madonna*, where St. George's armor shows a reflection of the artist. Nabokov could have come across this in Aquilin Janssens de Bisthoven's *Les Primitifs flamands. Le Musée communal de Bruges* (Anvers: De Sikkel, 1951), which contains a detailed discussion of the painting (36-48) and its full reproduction, along with thirty details. Of special importance here is pl. XIII: it provides a close-up of St. George's armor, in which the image of the painter, with his left arm raised as though holding a brush, can be clearly seen. This book has been part of the Cornell University Library collection since February 1952 (I am grateful to Caroline Spicer of John M. Olin Library for this information), and it is very likely that it was in this volume that Nabokov discerned the artist's presence in the painting. Additionally, Nabokov could have read about it two years later, while at work on *Pnin*, in an article in which this specific detail is discussed: David G. Carter, "Reflections in Armour in the *Canon van der Paele Madonna*," *The Art Bulletin* 36 (1954): 60-62.

Thus, Nabokov's mention of this painting can be seen as an encoded reference to the authorial presence which the reader is supposed to discover, "find[ing] what the sailor has hidden." This authorial presence is manifest in the same chapter in Joan Clements' rhetorical question, "But don't you think--haw--that what he is trying to do--haw--practically in all his novels--haw--is--haw--to express the fantastic recurrence of certain situations?" (159), as it conveys "the principal feature of *Pnin*'s composition and of Nabokov's novelistic art in general" (Gennadi Barabtarlo, *Phantom of Fact* 246). And van Eyck's self-portrait as a reflection in the armor of St. George had, no doubt, a special personal appeal to Nabokov, who celebrated his birthday on April 23--St. George's Day.

2. The last chapter of the novel includes a description of a party at which Liza Bogolepov, "who also wrote poetry," and a "young composer, Ivan Nagoy" "were drinking *auf Bruderschaft*" (180). Ivan's surname evokes an association with Russian history of the late sixtenth century, since Nagoy was the maiden name of Ivan IV's seventh and last wife, Mariia. Curiously enough, an Ivan Nagoy was a historical figure: the list of guests invited to Ivan IV's wedding to Mariia Nagoy in 1581 contains the name of the bride's relative Ivan Grigor'evich Nagoy (I.P. Sakharov, *Skazaniia russkogo naroda*, 2 vols. [St. Petersburg, 1941-49], vol. 2, bk. 6: 67).

The profession and the last name of this fleeting *Pnin* character call to mind Modest Mussorgsky's opera *Boris Godunov*, in which the alleged murder of Tsarevich Dimitry, the son of Ivan IV by Mariia Nagoy, figures prominently. Our assumption that Nabokov may allude here to Mussorgsky's opera seems to be corroborated by the mention of Godunov in the novel (90). Furthermore, since Aleksandr Pushkin's drama *Boris Godunov* provided the basis for Mussorgsky's eponymous opera, *auf Bruderschaft*

drinking by Liza ("who also wrote poetry") and Nagoy ("a composer") may be viewed as a travesty of the creative alliance between Pushkin's and Mussorgsky's masterpieces. Finally, this intricate historical-musical-literary allusion may bring into play the "imposter" motif: in all likelihood, Ivan Nagoy, whose equal footing with Liza Bogolepov is established by their drinking *auf Bruderschaft*, is as much a composer as she, Anna Akhmatova's obvious impersonator, is a poet.

--Gavriel Shapiro, Cornell University

POSTSCRIPT TO A PURLOINED LETTER

> If we abstract from this fictitious letter everything that is personal to its supposed author, I believe that there is much in it that may have been felt by Sebastian, or even written to him, by Clare.
>
> --*The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*

In a recent essay I demonstrated that Nabokov alluded to both Edgar Allan Poe's detective story "The Purloined Letter" and to Arthur Conan Doyle's "A Scandal in Bohemia" (which was based on Poe's story) in *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* ("Purloined Letters: Poe, Doyle, Nabokov," *Russian Literature Triquarterly* 24 [1991]: 213-37). My essay concerned intertextuality and the anxiety of influence. However, Brian Boyd's account of Nabokov's affair with Irina Guadanini (*Vladimir Nabokov: The Russian Years*: 433-34, 437, 438-39, 440-41, 443-44) and its reflection in *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* (496, 500-02)--which appeared after my essay went to press--leads me to conjecture that Nabokov's allusions to Poe and Doyle also refer to the aftermath of his affair. This postscript extends my analysis of *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* in the light of this recent biographical information.

Boyd speculates that Nabokov may have expressed within the safely self-enclosed structure of *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* such "immediate personal themes" as "his burying of his past with Irina Guadanini"; he argues that Sebastian's fatal attraction to Nina, in particular, is "a stylized alternative continuation of [Nabokov's] own recent past" (501). Compromising correspondence was apparently the *leitmotif* of that recent past: Véra learned about the affair from an anonymous letter (438); Nabokov continued to exchange letters with Irina (under an assumed name) after reuniting with Véra, even after confessing everything to her (439, 440); and when Nabokov finally did end the correspondence, he asked Irina to destroy all his letters--and apparently assumed that she had done so when she returned his last letter unopened (444, 501). Boyd suggests that Nabokov's anxiety about this illicit correspondence is reflected in Sebastian's love letters from Clare Bishop and Nina Rechnoy, which he asks V. to destroy unread (500-01).

However, Boyd's biographical reading can be extended to other passages besides the one in which V. obediently burns Sebastian's love letters. As I argued in my essay, the novel does more than simply recount V.'s literal paper chase for these and other incriminating documents. It also invokes purloined letters in the other texts suppressed by V.'s narrative; in letters which are missing or misplaced, both from and to Sebastian; in transposed letters of the alphabet; and in letters which are embedded in V.'s own narrative, as well as within the texts by Sebastian that he quotes (such as the love letter in *Lost Property* that is addressed to the wrong recipient, which V. thinks is a real letter to Clare hidden in Sebastian's fiction). And it alludes to two detective stories with this same theme: "The Purloined Letter" and "A Scandal in Bohemia."

Both stories concern documents which provide conclusive evidence of an illicit love affair (a letter in

"The Purloined Letter," a photograph in "A Scandal in Bohemia") and which thus endanger a royal marriage. In each case, the detective's assignment is to locate the compromising document, which has been ingeniously hidden; steal it from the potential blackmailer; and return it to its rightful owner. This common plot has obvious parallels to Nabokov's situation after the end of his affair: in particular, his anxiety over the incriminating correspondence and his desire to protect his marriage to Véra at all costs. He apparently remembered two well-known detective stories, by writers who had been familiar to him since childhood (*Strong Opinions* 42-43, 174), when he sought to express these feelings about the affair in his novel. As Pekka Tammi recently remarked in these pages, "Literary subtexts underlie even the seemingly most personal of Nabokov's fictions" ("On Notaries and Doctors [*Glory* and Gumilev]," *Nabokovian* 28 [1992]: 51).

In alluding to "A Scandal in Bohemia," in particular, Nabokov simultaneously reveals and conceals Irina Guadanini's name in a way that is consistent with other disguises, mistaken identities, and "hide in plain sight" strategies in *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*. In order to understand how Nabokov does this, we must remember that V.'s search for his half-brother's real life consists, in part, of following the classic detective story charge, *cherchez la femme*--that is, of tracking down, one by one, the Russian women who stayed at the same resort as Sebastian in the summer of 1929. Before V. meets Lydia Bohemsky, the only name remaining on his list, he resorts to "an old Sherlock Holmes strategem" in order to find out what she looks like: "`A handsome dark woman?' I suggested. . . . `Exactly,' he replied rather putting me off (the right answer would have been: Oh, no, she is an ugly blond)." But when V. sees for himself "a fat elderly woman with waved bright orange hair, purplish jowls and some dark fluff over her painted lip," he knows immediately that she is *not* the woman he seeks (153).

Yet this apparently absurd encounter may have been designed, with what W.W. Rowe once called "the honesty of Nabokovian deception," to put the reader off the scent. The "old Sherlock Holmes stratagem," the *cherchez la femme* theme, and the name "Bohemsky"--which metamorphoses into "the fat Bohemian woman" in V.'s synopsis of Sebastian's last novel (175)--clearly allude to Arthur Conan Doyle's story "A Scandal in Bohemia." And this literary allusion contains, in turn, a clue to the identity of Irina Guadanini, the *femme fatale* in Nabokov's own life. In Doyle's story, the woman "of dubious and questionable memory" (*The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* [New York: Penguin, 1985]: 9), the adventuress whose affair with the King of Bohemia endangers his marriage, and whom Sherlock Holmes always remembers as "*the* woman" (32), is named "Irene."

--Susan Elizabeth Sweeney, Holy Cross College

WHERE THE HUM COME FROM: NEW PROVENANCE

Je trouve du côté du soleil levant Humbert frotteur.

Where Nabokov addresses his choice of the name "Humbert Humbert" for the narrator of *Lolita*, he speaks only of what he sees as the name's intrinsic evocative qualities. "I have toyed with many pseudonyms for myself before I hit upon a particularly apt one," the narrator of *Lolita* writes; "There are in my notes `Otto Otto,' and `Mesmer Mesmer' and `Lambert Lambert,' but for some reason, I think my choice expresses the nastiness best." In the *Playboy* interview Nabokov supports his character's sense of the name when he says, "The double rumble is, I think, very nasty, very suggestive. It is a hateful name for a hateful person," adding, "it is also a kingly name," and one which "lends itself . . . to a number of puns" as well as to "the execrable diminutive, `Hum'" (*Strong Opinions* 26).

Lolita scholarship has for the most part accepted these explanations as adequate and has limited its exploration of "Humbert Humbert" to celebrations of the Humbert variations in *Lolita* (and farther afield in echoes of HCE), and to locating links to umbrageous Others. However, as far as I am aware, no literary antecedent for the name "Humbert" has heretofore been identified.

My candidate for the honor has been pushed forward without introduction in the French fragment at the head of this note. He was M. Humbert of 20 Rue Porte-aux-Rats in Flaubert's hometown of Rouen, appearing in the 1849 *Almanac of Rouen* as a floor polisher (*frotteur*) and appearing here in a line from Flaubert's *Voyage en Égypte*.

The line records the moment at sunrise on Saturday, December 8, 1949 when, having climbed to the top of the Great Pyramid of Cheops, Flaubert discovers a surprise awaiting him. His travelling companion Maxime Du Camp had scrambled up ahead of him and planted a shop sign or placard that he had swiped from M. Humbert's shop and carried secretly all the way to Egypt for just this occasion. Flaubert's original field note on the incident reads simply, "*Max le frotteur*," and he later expanded this jotting: "*Je trouve du côté du soleil levant* Humbert frotteur *cloué sur la pierre*" (I find on the side toward the rising sun, *Humbert frotteur* nailed to the stone). *Frotteur* can signify either a floor polisher or a man who excites himself sexually by rubbing up against clothed women; the second meaning was current in 1849 and is still current in psychosexual jargon. By Flaubert's testimony, he and Du Camp led busy and varied sex lives, and certainly both understood the joke.

Incidentally, in his account, *Le Nil*, Du Camp doesn't mention nailing up the Humbert sign. Instead, in his public role of *homme serieux*, he expresses his

disgust at the graffiti he finds at the top of the pyramid (*Un Voyageur en Égypte vers 1850* [Sand/Conti, 1987]).

Flaubert's Egyptian notes also mention a M. Lambert several times. He was a Frenchman living in Cairo, an engineer employed in high positions by the Egyptian government and on close terms with Flaubert, who argued art-for-art's-sake against Lambert's utilitarian notions.

Now to draw the strands together, a campaign rhetoric for my candidate. In a minor work of Flaubert, an author Nabokov knows well and admires, and to whom he alludes often and intimately, we find a humorous anecdote about a Humbert whose trade is a double entendre, the second meaning of which is the sexual technique used by the doubled Humbert to achieve the first fricative *frisson* with his duplicate darling. In the same travelogue, we encounter a Lambert, whose name, doubled, is said by *Lolita*'s narrator to have been "toyed with" and rejected in favor of "Humbert Humbert."

If we find Humbert and Lambert tumbled together in Flaubert's narrative and, both doubled, in *Lolita*, with a sexual wordplay linking the two works, then, given Nabokov's idea of a good time, it certainly looks like he's been having one with us. One might prefer to think this is Nabokov's unconscious at work, but it would distress Nabokov. It would require that the misdirection by the narrator in *Lolita* and by Nabokov in the *Playboy* interview, be understood as conscious devices of Nabokov's unconscious, so it's best not to think that way at all.

"*Je trouve du côté du soleil levant*" can be very rudely mishandled into "it's finally dawned on me."

--Richard Lynn, Long Island U, Southampton

NABOKOV-McCRYSTAL

Vivian McCrystal in the class list of *Lolita* is, as has been noted several times (most recently in *Nabokovian* 27 [Fall 1991]: 34-35), a surrogate of Vladimir Nabokov. In the novel's second half, the McCrystal family appears, reminding us of the Nabokovs' own summer vacations in the American West. Recognizing them, Lolita pleads to be released from the prison of Humbert's fantasy:

> A hazy blue view beyond railings on a mountain pass, and the backs of a family enjoying it (with Lo, in a hot, happy, wild, intense, hopeful, hopeless whisper--"Look, the McCrystals, please, let's talk to them, please"--let's talk to them, reader!--"please! I'll do anything you want, oh, please . . ." (*Lolita* 159)

"From old Mrs. McCrystal, in whose white frame house he had spent a mediocre winter (1949-1950), Pnin purchased for three dollars a faded, once Turkish rug" (*Pnin* 69). [This recurrence of McCrystal is probably first noted in Dieter Zimmer, *"The Excitement of Verbal Adventure": A Study of Vladimir Nabokov's English Prose*, vol. I (Heidelberg: Jürgen Bodenstein, 1977) 285; for other aspects see Gennadi Barabtarlo, *Phantom of Fact* 128.] We recall that in *Speak, Memory* Nabokov had written: "I confess I do not believe in time. I like to fold my magic carpet, after use, in such a way as to superimpose one part of the pattern upon another" (139). There, the magic carpet was used to transport butterfly-hunting Nabokov from a bog near St. Petersburg to the vicinity of Longs Peak. Bestowing his favorite imaginative vehicle upon Pnin, McCrystal-Nabokov vouchsafes the reader a crystalline vision of the torment and triumph of living in time.

--Alan J. Shaw

A COMMERCIAL REPRINT OF V.D. NABOKOV'S *PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT* IN MOSCOW.

by Gennady Barabtarlo

When pirate publications of Nabokov began to float in the U.S.S.R. a few years ago, I pointed up in these pages several flagrant examples of editorial obtrusion of every form: omission, contamination, distortion, and even embellishment. Translations, naturally, fared much worse producing, without exception, more or less wanton vulgarizations of the original. But when the scene had become flooded by randomly assembled collections of Nabokov's Russian works, as well as by home-brewed translations of his English ones--now including even those that were published *after* the notorious legal cut-off year of 1973--I gave up. A well-meaning friend would point out to me, on occasion, the horrors of yet another debased short story, or a novel, or a lecture, or an interview, all rendered in the thievish jargon of the Soviet semi-intelligentsia, so that both the narrator and characters speak cant ("kvartplata", "kozhzamenitel'", "psikhushka"); English hardpans are drubbed into mingle-mangle (e.g. the title *and* the last sentence of **Transparent Things**); and poor Pnin (say) is made to express himself in a horribly crippled pigeon (to mark off his English vagaries) and to use the unceremonious second person singular in situations where his translator (Mr. Boris Nosik) no doubt finds it natural but any cultivated Russian quite impossible. Well, there is nothing to be done: that is how it apparently ought to be *pro loco et tempore*. But recently Mme. Elena Sikorski brought to my attention a little book the Soviets reprinted with cuts so gaping and arrant that she has asked me to place the summary of her analysis here, for the benefit of the abused Russian readers.

It is the famous memoir on the Provisional Government by V.D. Nabokov (the name on the cover reads "V. Nabokov," obviously with a view to boosting the sales by avoiding the middle initial: how odd that this little theme of a distinctive penname, which began with the appearance of "Sirin" in print, should have come full circle--on a reverse helix!). The joint publishers are The Moscow University Press and "SP <?> OST-VEST Korporeishen," 1991. The work was originally published in the first issue of the Berlin historical journal *Archives of the Russian Revolution* (1921); however, the present reprint is based on an expurgated Soviet version published in 1924 and "edited, with a preface, by I.N. Borozdin. Moscow: Mir," which casually admits that the text is reproduced "with insignificant omissions." Of course, what is insignificant to one may well be intolerable to another: the first *fifty* lines of the work are cut, as are the last twenty *pages* (devoted to the Bolshevik coup d'etat).

In the following sample passages, the text in italics has been cut in both Soviet editions (I give the Soviet reprint's page number first, then the English, by Virgil Medlin's and Steven L. Parsons' **V.D. Nabokov and the Russian Provisional Government, 1917**, Yale UP, 1976, whose translation I have slightly revised).

17 - 49: "...having experienced all the bitter disappointments, all the horrors, all the humiliation, and all the shame *of that nightmare year of revolution; standing before the ruins of a Russia torn to shreds, defiled, and dismembered; having experienced all the abominations of the Bolshevik orgy;* and having realized the unfathomable incompetence of those forces to whose lot the creation of a new Russia has fallen, I ask myself. etc..."

28 - 63: "And so it was to these considerations that the police force was made a sacrifice, *and a few months later its staff (as well as that of the gendermerie) naturally joined the ranks of the Bolshevik thugs of the worst sort ('fish go where it's deeper, men, where it's better')"*

28 - 64: "Among the members of the State Council were such men as N.S. Tagantsev, A.F. Koni, and other less well-known but quite respectable and irreproachable people. *The present masters of the situation (whose hour, on the other hand, has already struck) [one could still think so in April of 1918... <VDN's later footnote>], Messrs. the Bolsheviks, have, of course, never been concerned with such questions <the plight of former officials, civilian and military. GB.>, and the very possibility of putting such questions would be met by the Lenins and Trotskys with outright derision. They are utterly indifferent to the fate of individual people. 'When you chop down a forest, chips must fly' <= "you can't make omelettes without breaking eggs'>--that is their convenient answer to everything. Besides, they do not have, and have never had, to face the above-mentioned difficulties because surely no one could be so naive as to turn to them expecting a fair and humane treatment. In perfectly good conscience they threw out the entire Senate and the entire magistracy, and the tragically hopeless predicament of people who, after working all their lives, now find themselves, in their old age, literally without a crust of bread, does not trouble them in the least.*

The Provisional Government was in a different position. Not possessing Jacobin fearlessness, which is often combined with Jacobin shamelessness, it found it extremely difficult to resolve the general problem regarding the fate of members of institutions that were being closed..."

The choice to reprint a mutilated Soviet edition rather than the original émigré one may have been dictated in the present case by commercial greed more than by a political diet, but it is inexcusable

nonetheless. Incidentally, the complete Russian text was reproduced, in 1988, by Overseas Publications Interchange, Ltd., a London firm, with an introduction by Mikhail Heller, and is readily available.

"EROS AND THANATOS IN THREE WORKS BY NABOKOV"

(Abstract of an M.A. thesis, San Francisco State University, December 1991)

by Janis G. Wick

Nabokov's dismissal of the "Freud" of his own creation may have reflected a deep desire on the novelist's part to distance himself and his work from the powerful hermeneutics of psychoanalysis. In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud delineated the devices used by the psyche to shape desire, fear and anxiety into the narrative of a dream. He argued that an understanding of how these devices are used by the psyche permits interpretation of dreams. In an analogous manner, the writer may take potent unconscious material and, through literary device, not only create a narrative but also embed, in the narrative structure itself, that potent material.

Critics have argued that, in *Speak, Memory*, Nabokov wrote little about his father and his brother Sergey because of the pain associated with their deaths. Yet, if the appearance and disappearance of both in the text are examined carefully, what emerges is a repeated pattern of presence and absence that mimics memory, that is, that father and brother are brought to life in fleeting moments only to disappear into a textual death and then to reappear more vividly than ever. Narrative structure and device work to expose the "truth" of memory--the desire and ambivalence in attempting to recapture an irretrievable past. For the writer and the reader the text is an *experience* of memory not only an account of it.

In *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight (RLSK)*, one finds a doubling of desire, ambivalence and death embedded in the narrative structure. Freud understood the double as a deep split in the psyche in which the recognition of mortality and unacceptable sexual desire is projected onto a second self. Nabokov saw himself as "man" revolting against what the "fictionist" revealed. In the multiple and interpenetrating narrative levels of *RLSK*, as described by Shlomith Rimmon, ["Problems of Voice in Nabokov's *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight.*" *Critical Essays on Vladimir Nabokov*], the writer attempts to resolve the split between the effeminate "fictionist," who writes of a "fatality which clings to love," and the "biographer," who would cleanse away the touch of a soldier's uniform and "appear in a cold aura of purity" before his brother. Nabokov attempts to exhaust possible narrative strategies, which both conceal and reveal, but the doublings of unacceptable desire and death and man and fictionist are not resolved, and the multiple narrative levels do not coalesce into unity. V writes, "I am Sebastian, *or* Sebastian is I" (italics added) not "Sebastian and I are one."

David Packman suggests that, in *Lolita*, there is yet another doubling, that of "the desire represented in the text and the reader's desire for text." [*Vladimir Nabokov: The Structure of Literary Desire*, 1982] He argues that the narrative devices of Humbert's pursuit of Lolita--prolongation, repetition and detail--seduce the reader and create a need for consummation. The "attractively simian" Humbert, though, not only pursues; he is haunted by the belief that a "hirsute" man, a "brother," pursues him. The devices of prolongation and repetition, as well as absence and presence, in this second narrative produce a "felt sense" not of desire but of anxiety, dread and the need for resolution of the double. But, again, there is no resolution. Clare Quilty, the "brother," lives with a "feminine manner" and dies with a "feminine 'ah'"; the "intolerable bliss" Humbert anticipates at the thought of killing Quilty becomes a slapstick satisfaction of

desire as Quilty falls dead into a "purple heap"; and the desire for "bliss" and "immortality" in art is reduced to a printed "heap."

Geoffrey Green argues that the act of writing is an "outward projection of inner states of being," the truth of which is "in the telling," [*Freud and Nabokov*, 1988] that is, in the construct erected by the psyche to transform thought and anxiety into art, which, for writer and reader, provides the experience rather than the recounting of desire, dread, death, loss and bliss. A very private man may well have taken personal conflict and tragedy and transformed it through narrative structure and device, perhaps in spite of himself, into a profoundly felt experience of writing and reading.

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by Stephen Jan Parker

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