THE VLADIMIR NABOKOV

RESEARCH NEWSLETTER

Published semi-annually
at the University of Kansas
by the Vladimir Nabokov Society

Editor: Stephen Jan Parker

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

Subscriptions: individuals, $4.00 per year; institutions, $5.50 per year. For subscriptions outside the USA add $1.00 per year for postage. For airmail: add $2.00 for Canada and Pan Am; $3.00 for Europe. Back numbers are $3.00 each for individuals and $4.00 each for institutions. (Numbers 1 and 2 are available only in xerox copy). Checks should be made payable to The Vladimir Nabokov Society.

Address all inquiries, submission of items, and subscription requests to:

The Vladimir Nabokov Research Newsletter
Slavic Languages & Literatures
The University of Kansas
Lawrence, Kansas 66045

THE VLADIMIR NABOKOV
RESEARCH NEWSLETTER

Number 8 Spring 1982

CONTENTS

NEWS ITEMS AND WORK IN PROGRESS

by Stephen Jan Parker

The 1982 annual meeting of the Vladimir Nabokov Society will be held in two locales. One segment will be held in Los Angeles in conjunction with the annual meeting of the MLA, an organization with which we still seek affiliation. Under the title, "Nabokov's Games," the session will be chaired by D. Barton Johnson (Germanic and Slavic Languages, University of California, Santa Barbara, 93106). The business meeting of the Society will take place at this gathering.

Another segment will be held in Chicago, also in December, in conjunction with the annual meeting of AATSEEL. Samuel Schuman (Guilford College, Greensboro, NC 27410) is arranging a panel discussion on the topic, "Vladimir Nabokov: Aesthete and/or Humanist." Professor Schuman writes: "To many readers, scholars, and students, Vladimir Nabokov and his works have seemed chill, distant, self-consciously artificial, and even mechanistic puzzles: a major critical study of the author is entitled 'Escape Into Aesthetics.' Other readers, though, take a clue from John Shade in Pale Fire who comments that 'The password is pity.' To such readers, Nabokov's writings embody humane concerns and possess, beneath their polished surfaces, depths of warmth, love, tenderness, and compassion." Individuals with a strong position on either

side of this dichotomy, as well as those feeling that these views of the artist can be reconciled, and who would be willing to make a brief presentation of their opinions and participate in a panel discussion should contact him on or before June 1.

*

The following list of Mr. Nabokov's works appearing September 1981 - February 1982 has been provided by Mrs. Vera Nabokov:

September 1981 - Maschenka (Mary). tr. Klaus Birkenhauer. Hamburg, West Germany: Rowohlt Ro-ro-ro.

September 1981 - Lolita, tr. Brenno Silveira. Sao Paulo, Brazil: Abril Cultural, paperback.

September 1981 - Het Oog (The Eye), tr. M. Coutinho. s'Gravenhage, Holland: Uit. BZZToH, new edition.

September 1981 - Uitnodiging Voor Een Onthoofding (Invitation to a Beheading), tr. M. & L. Coutinho. s'Gravenhage, Holland: Uit. BZZToH.

November 1981 - Lectures on Russian Literature, ed. Fred Bowers. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich & Bruccoli Clark.

November 1981 - La Transparence des Choses (Transparent Things), tr. Donald Harper and J.B. Blandenier. Paris: "10/18" edition, Fayard, paperback.

November 1981 - Machenka (Mary), tr. Marcelle Sibon. Paris: Fayard, Edition Select paperback.

November 1981 - Lolita, tr. Bruno Oddeira. Italy: Mondadori, Euroclub Narrativa reprint.

November 23, 1981 - "Autres Rivages" extract in Les Insectes, Bernard Durin, Paris: edition De-Noel.

November 1981 - Despair. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin paperback.

November 1981 - Eugene Onegin. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, Bollingen Series LXXII, paperback edition in two volumes.

November 1981 - Mary, Transparent Things, Poems & Problems. New York: McGraw Hill paperbacks.

December 1981 - A Verdadeira Vida de Sebastiao Knights (The Real Life of Sebastian Knight), tr. Brenno Silveira. Brazil: Francisco Alves publ., Collection "A prosa do Mondo."

December 1981 - Details of a Sunset, Japanese edition. Agent UNI, Shueisha publishers.

January 1982 - La Defensa (The Defense), tr. Pilar Giralt. Barcelona, Spain: Argos Vergara, "Alternativa 32" edition.

January 1982 - Lectures on Literature. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Harvest-Book paperback.

February 1982 - Russian Short Stories, ed. David Richards. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin (contains "Spring in Fialta," tr. Vladimir Nabokov).

February 1982 - Lolita, tr. Brenno Silveira. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil: Distribuidora Record paperback.

*

Bruccoli Clark Publishers (2006 Sumter St, Columbia, SC 29201) is preparing an edition of VN's lecture on Don Quixote, which he delivered in his class at Harvard. They are looking for a student from the Harvard class who would be willing to share his notes on Don Quixote and perhaps provide mimeograph handouts Nabokov circulated to his class.

Bruccoli Clark is now offering their limited edition of VN's Lectures on Ulysses in a custom binding by individual order only. Interested parties should write directly.

*

Simon Karlinsky (Slavic Languages & Literatures, University of California, Berkeley 94720) writes that an abridged version of his essay on VN's Lectures on Russian Literature will appear in Partisan Review, date not yet known.

*

Gleb Struve (1154 Spruce, Berkeley, CA 94707) had a piece published recently which bears on Nabokov: "Ob odnom berlinskom literaturnom kruzhke" (About One Berlin Literary Circle), Novoe Russkoe Slovo, 4 October 1981.

*

Julian Connolly's (Dept of Slavic Languages & Literatures, University of Virginia, Charlottesville 22903) article, "The Function of Literary Allusion in Nabokov's Despair", will appear in the Fall 1982 issue of the Slavic and East European Journal.

*

Maurice Couturier (Département d'Anglais, Faculté des Lettres, 98 bd. E. Herriot, 06036 Nice, France) has brought to our attention his considerable body of work on Nabokov. His thèse d'état is abstracted in this issue. His book, Nabokov (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1979), remains the first and only book in French on Nabokov. He translated Glory (1981) and Nabokov's Dozen (1982) into French for Julliard, and with Yvonne Couturier is now translating Details of a Sunset and preparing the publication of the complete short stories of Nabokov (including a few of the Russian stories which Nabokov did not translate into English). Among Professor Couturier's many publications on Nabokov, the most recent include: "The Subject on Trial in Nabokov's Novels," in Proceedings of a Symposium on American

Literature (Poznan, Poland: Poznan University Press, 1979); "Nabokov," a new entry in the 1980 edition of Encyclopaedia Universalis; "La métaphore nabokovienne," in Métaphore (Université de Nice, December 1980); "Stratégie énonciative paramimétique," in Etudes Anglaises (April-June 1981). Most recently, Professor Couturier organized a conference on Postmodern Fiction (Nice, April 1982) in which many papers deal, partly at least, with Nabokov. Of particular interest: He is now preparing a special issue of Delta (Université de Montpelier, France) on Nabokov to be published in 1983. He writes that articles in English are welcome. Interested persons can reach him directly at the address given above.

*

Pekka Tammi (Tehtaankatu 34 D d 8, 00150 Helsinki 15, Finland) has two review-articles recently published: of Samuel Schuman's VN: A Reference Guide, in Neuphilologische Mitteilungen, No. 4, 1981, pp. 479-83; and of Ellen Pifer's Nabokov and the Novel, in Quinquereme, No. 1, 1982, pp. 108-111.

*

Annelore Engel (Slavische Seminar, Universitat Hamburg, Von-Melle-Park 6, 2000 Hamburg 13, West Germany) is translating Donald Morton's Vladimir Nabokov (New York 1974) into German for Rowohlt, Reinbeck bei Hamburg. Her husband, Peter Engel, translated three of Nabokov's Russian poems into German for the volume, Russische Lyrik,

edited by Efim Etkind (Piper & Co., Munich, 1981). The poems are "K Rossii" (1928), "Sneg" (1930), and "K Rossii" (1939).

*

Marina Astman (112-50 78th Ave, Apt. 6-1, Forest Hill, NY 11375) presented a paper, "Nabokov and America", at the 1981 Annual AATSEEL meeting in New York City.

*

Marina Naumann (29 Oxford Circle, Skillman, NJ 08558) has a review of Peter Quennell's VN: A Tribute in Russian Language Journal, Spring-Fall 1981, pp. 293-97.

*

Bucknell University Press has announced the publication of Victims: Textual Strategies in Recent American Fiction by Paul Bruss. The three authors treated in the volume are Nabokov, Barthelme, and Kosinski.

*

Nabokov's Fifth Arc: Nabokov and Others on His Life's Work, edited by J. E. Rivers and Charles Nicol, is due this spring from the University of Texas Press. The book contains the first English translation of the "Postscript to the Russian Edition of Lolita" and the first American edition of the "Notes to Ada by Vivian Darkbloom." Both the translation and the edition were read and approved by Mrs. Vera Nabokov. The

frontispiece is a previously unpublished photograph of Nabokov during the period of his work on Look at the Harlequins!.

*

Very special thanks to Ms. Paula Oliver and Mr. Al Korbanoff for their assistance with this issue of the Newsletter.

THE 1981 NABOKOV SOCIETY MEETING

by Samuel Schuman
Program Director

The sixth consecutive annual meeting of the Vladimir Nabokov Society was held on Tuesday, December 29th, 1981, at the Roosevelt Hotel in New York City. This year, as last, the meeting was conducted under the hospitable auspices of AATSEEL (American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages). Papers, which are abstracted elsewhere in this issue, were presented by Gladys M. Clifton (on the parody aspects of the poem "Pale Fire"), Alex E. Alexander (on foot fetishism in Lolita), Susan Vander Closter (discussing The Gift) and Sergei Davydov (concerning the "Matreshka-Technique" in "Lips to Lips"). A brief response to the papers was offered by Beverly L. Clark, of Wheaton College, wherein the reaction to the studies, overall and individually, was strongly positive, and a few points of disagreement were noted as well. Nina Berberova concluded the formal program with a special presentation on ten English writers with whom Nabokov would have been acquainted in his Russian youth.

As the hour was getting late, the question period was quite short.

Equally brief was the business meeting of the Society, since there were no electoral nor constitutional matters to discuss. The one subject considered was that of location and affiliation for the next meeting of the Society, as in December, 1982, AATSEEL will

meet in Chicago, while the MLA will be in Los Angeles. It seemed to be the concensus of the meeting that, if these two organizations did in fact meet at the same time and far apart, we should try to have some sort of activity in both venues. Information on this subject is given in the News section of this issue (page 3).

ABSTRACT

"The 'Matreshka-technique' in Nabokov's 'Lips to Lips.'"

by Sergej Davydov

(Abstract of the paper presented at the Annual National Meeting of AATSEEL, New York, December 1981.)

The device of encapsulating one or several texts within another text is one of Nabokov's favorite literary techniques. This technique I propose to call "matreshka-technique." In Nabokov's "matreshkas" the inner text, written by the hero, is enclosed within the outer authorial text. Unlike the "manuscript found in the bottle," where the relationship between the text and the frame is static, the inner and outer texts of Nabokov's "matreshkas" enter into an intricate and dynamic relationship. Their coexistence under one cover or title is far from symbiotic. Provoked by the inner text, the outer text opens a polemic discourse. Their discord vacillates between different degrees of antagonism such as parody, mockery, parasitism, sabotage, and outright hostility. Nabokov's "matreshkas" are palinodial works combining two narrative voices--one, the unmarked, aimed outward, and the other, marked voice, having as its target the inner text. In this sense, Nabokov's "matreshkas" are examples par excellence of what M. Bakhtin termed the "double voiced discourse."

In my paper I discuss three narrative levels on which Nabokov carries his "double voiced discourse." On the first level the discourse assumes the form of travesty, on the second--the form of parody, on the third--the form of satire.

The relationship between Nabokov's story and Ilya Borisovich's novel can be best described as travesty. Ilya Borisovich's melodramatic novel provides the pattern as well as the fabric for Nabokov's sartorial enterprise--from the scraps of an "alien text" Nabokov stitches together a work of his own. The result is a travesty, "a grotesque imitation," rather than the more noble variety of parody which "always goes along with genuine poetry."

In order to treat the story as parody one must turn to the work of a more prominent author than Ilya Borisovich. In his book on Gogol Nabokov admits that "after reading Gogol one's eyes become gogolized and one is apt to see bits of his world in the most unexpected places. I have visited many countries, and something like Akaky Akakyevich's overcoat has been the passionate dream of this or that chance acquaintance who never had heard about Gogol." The grotesque vivisection of Ilya Borisovich is in fact executed with Gogolian scalpel and in Gogolian tragi-comic tone. As far as its content is concerned, Nabokov's story continues the well known theme of unfortunate "scribes" who were robbed of the object of their infatuation. The comparison of "The Overcoat" and "Lips to Lips" concludes with the discussion of the somewhat paradox role

of the narrator. In my opinion, the narrator undertakes that sartorial task which even the "devil" Petrovich so "piously" (Luke 5:36) refused--namely to mend the old garment. Nabokov unfolds the frayed fabric of Ilya Borisovich's novel and patches it with the lordly material from his story. In this motley garment the new verbal texture of the story is joined stitch to stitch with the novel's threadbare fabric. Gogol's story ends on a fantastic note. The disrobed phantom of Akaky Akakyevich roams the streets of St. Petersburg and gets even with the alleged villains. A no less whimsical parallel to Gogol's story can be found also in "Lips to Lips." Not unlike Shakespeare--who used to appear in the role of the Ghost on Elsinor's walls--Nabokov appears in his story as a specter, sent out to haunt and punish the real villains. However, to account for this conjecture, it is necessary to shift from the 19th Century St. Petersburg to Paris of the 1930's, from the fantastic mode to the realistic, from the fictitious villains to the real ones, and ultimately, from parody to satire.

The last part of my paper deals with Nabokov the satirist. It shows that the fabula of the story "Lips to Lips" is taken from the actual lives of Nabokov's arch enemies--G. Adamovich, G. Ivanov, N. Otsup--and how its kaleidoscopic sujet is composed from various works of the members of this Paris group, including I. Odoevtseva, Z. Hippius, A. Burov, R. Blokh, A. Tal. The last look on the story and on Nabokov's personal relations to the Russian Parnassus in Paris is cast through the prism

of Pushkin's poem "Arion." I conclude with a formulation of the "moral message" of V. Nabokov/Sirin, who "far from having been a frivolous firebird, . . . was a rigid moralist, kicking sin, scuffing stupidity, ridiculing the vulgar and cruel--and assigning sovereign power to tenderness, talent, and pride."

ABSTRACT

"John Shade's Poem: Nabokov's Subtlest Parody"

by Gladys M. Clifton

(Abstract of the paper presented at the Annual National Meeting of AATSEEL, New York, December, 1981.)

Most criticism of Pale Fire has focused mainly on Kinbote's "Commentary" and given scant attention to the Pale Fire poem. The majority of those who have commented on the quality of the poetry have praised it without offering any close reading. Though a few readers have been mildly critical, they have been vague about what makes the poetry seem less than first rate. Most readers appreciate the brilliant passages of lyric description, such as the opening dozen lines. The point that needs more stress is, I think, that such bravura flashes are not sustained; indeed they are often undermined by disastrously jarring, even grotesque, drops in tone and manner.

It is an obvious irony that Shade, the eminent Pope scholar, writing in Popian couplets, should be so prone to "sinking in verse." His attempts to evoke pathos are frequently sabotaged by clinkers. For example, invoking the memory of his late parents, he writes: "... chance words, I hear or read/ Such as 'bad heart' always to him refer,/ And 'cancer of the pancreas' to her." Even the painful memory of his young daughter Hazel's suicide by drowning is

nearly rendered ridiculous by a trite final couplet with a thudding end rhyme: "A blurry shape stepped off the reedy bank/ Into the crackling, gulping swamp, and sank." However, we smile only at Shade's sinking, not poor Hazel's, because Nabokov has so skillfully modulated the changes that we do not lose sight of the genuine pathos or of his sly intelligence behind his invented poet of lesser intelligence--and lesser talent.

The Pale Fire poem is not a poetic masterpiece on the big themes of love and death. The poem does masterfully parody such treatments, making Shade the conscious parodist in passages that mock Milton's solemnity and Eliot's angst. But at other times there is a shift to unconscious self parody in passages of embarrassingly intimate personal revelation and downright narcissistic self regard. Shade takes us into his bathroom to show us himself in a state of naked inspiration, composing his verses in the bath while he shaves. Nor are we spared nail paring.

We may be puzzled by this crudity, not typical of Nabokov's own verses or of his persona Shade at his best. We find the reason for it in remembering what Nabokov was attempting: to write a plausible contemporary American poem. He referred, in fact, to "Pale Fire" as "the American poem" and "the hardest stuff I ever had to compose." His models in the 1950's were poems in what might be called the academic-confessional mode, confessional poems by respectable professors like himself. Snodgrass's Heart's Needle was awarded the

Pulitzer while this novel was in progress, and Lowell's work was much honored.

Anyone with Nabokov's fastidious private nature could not possibly wholly approve of such coarsely self-revelatory verse. (His own autobiography, Speak, Memory, reveals virtually nothing intimate.) Though he mostly refrained from expressing strong opinions on the verse of his American contemporaries, I believe that John Shade's poem is Nabokov's comment on the excesses of the popular confessional mode.

Notes From A Descriptive Bibliography

by Michael Juliar

As part of a comprehensive Vladimir Nabokov descriptive bibliography I have been compiling for over a year, I am offering the readers of the VNRN the fruits of my findings in certain difficult or complex areas. I hope that any omissions or mistakes will be noticed and rectified. Please write to me at: Michael Juliar, 74 Kings Road, Little Silver, NJ 07739.

Also, if any--library, collector, dealer, scholar--has an unusual or very rare Nabokov item--book, periodical item, pamphlet, translation, ephemera--I would like to hear about it in detail.

ITEM 1.

As part of the bibliography, I am doing a census of four of the rarest Nabokov books. Please, if you have a copy or know of the existence of one, contact me. I need to know the location of the book (if a private collector--I am one myself--doesn't wish the location of his copy made public, I will honor that confidence) and its condition (including its original dust jacket, if it was issued with one). The four books are:

1) Stikhi, 1916 Petrograd privately printed edition. Copies are numbered in black ink, 1-500, on the verso of the title-page. I need the copy number.

Though very rare, I doubt there are as few copies extent as some believe--three, four. An informal census so far reveals:

Copy no. 234 at The Lilly Library, Indiana University.
Copy no. 338 at The Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin.
Copy no. 417 in private hands.

The Nabokov family has at least one copy and I have heard of or seen informal citations for at least three others. I believe more have survived revolution, war, depression and disintegration. In the fall of 1980, a copy at auction in New York fetched $6400.

According to one member of the émigré community in New York, Nabokov at least once (in the early 60's) placed ads in émigré newspapers seeking out copies of Stikhi. He apparently bought up a few of them and, because his older self disapproved of his earlier verse, he burned the copies.

2) Al'manakh: Dva Puti, 1918 Petrograd privately printed edition, published with Nabokov's Tenishev schoolmate, Andrei Balashov. I do not know if it was numbered. This book is, I think, even rarer than Stikhi. I have found no copy in the U.S. The Nabokov's have the only one I'm aware of.

3) Camera Obscura, 1936 London John Long, Ltd. trade edition, translated by Winifred Roy. The colophon at the foot of

page 288 gives a 1935 date, but it was published in January, 1936. There are not a small number of these around, but I don't know if that means ten or dozens. If I find more than ten, I will give up the census on this one. In 1980, a California dealer catalogued a copy without dust jacket for $1500. A year later it was still unsold.

I have found none with a dust jacket. I need to know what it looks like.

An informal census shows:
one copy at the Lilly Library, Indiana University.
one copy at the British Library.
one copy at The Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin.
(one copy catalogued at The Ohio State University Library, but now missing.)

According to the English catalog of Books and "The Hollins Critic," Vol. III, No. 3, June, 1966, a "cheap edition" in wrappers was published in January 1938. I have found no other citations and certainly no copies. John Long Ltd.'s successors know nothing. What does anyone else know?

4) Despair, 1937 London John Long, Ltd. trade edition, translated by the author. Nabokov said in the foreword to his 1966 translation, "The only copy extant is, as far as I know, the one I own." Nabokov didn't know. There are other copies, but they are very rare. In 1980, a California dealer catalogued a copy without dust jacket for $2250. It sold immediately, buyer unknown.

It's dust jacket is rarer still. The Washington University Library at St. Louis has a dust-jacketed copy, which I have not examined, of what could be the "cheap edition" (see below). It is in plain gray paper covers (or boards, depending on who describes it) with the dust jacket. However, it is the opinion of Holly Hall, the library's head of special collections, and also of the dealer the book was purchased from, that this is an advance or review copy.

An informal census shows:
one advance copy, with dust jacket at the Washington University Library, St. Louis.
one copy, at the Lilly Library, Indiana University.
one copy, rebound, at the Wellesley College Library.
one copy at the British Library.
one copy at The Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin.
(one copy catalogued at The University of British Columbia Library, but missing for some time.)

According to the English catalog of Books and "the Hollins Critic," Vol. III, No. 3, June, 1966, a "cheap edition" in wrappers was also published, in February, 1939. Like Camera Obscura above, I don't know anymore about this. The successors of John Long, Ltd. have no information either. Can anyone help?

ITEM 2

Re: Three Russian editions - the title-pages read:

V. SIRIN: PODVIG: ROMAN: IZDATEL' STVO "Sovremennyia Zapiski" ANNALES CONTEMPORAINES /roman/: 106, rue de la Tour, Paris (16^{e}) /roman/ PARIZH: 1932

V SIRIN: KAMERA: OBSKURA: ROMAN KNIGOIZDATEL'STVA: "SOVREMENNYIA ZAPISKI": I PARABOLA

V. SIRIN: PRIGLASHENIE: NA KAZN'; ROMAN: DOM KNIGI -PARIZH

* Note: All transliterations from the Russian are according to System II of J. Thomas Shaw's "The Transliteration of Modern Russian for English-Language Publications." /roman/ means the type is not Cyrillic, but roman.

There is no conclusive evidence as to exactly when Kamera obskura was published. For no clear reason, Field prefers 1932 (in his bibliography, though 1933 in his earlier Nabokov: His Life in Art). And he feels Podvig was first published in 1933. In his foreword to Glory, Nabokov states that Podvig was published in 1932 and Kamera obskura in 1933. Only Nabokov makes sense. Five of the six Podvig excerpts (not including the serialization) appeared before the first Kamera obskura excerpt. Podvig was serialized in Sovremennyia Zapiski nos. XLV-XLVIII in 1931-32. Kamera obskura was

serialized in nos. XLIX-LII in 1932-33. Certainly, since Kamera obskura followed Podvig in the periodicals, it also followed Podvig as a book.

There is another point of confusion, by Zimmer and Field (as well as in the bibliography at the end of the 1964 French L'Arc issue devoted to Nabokov, which was most probably taken from the earlier Zimmer work). Because of it, collectors and dealers and librarians have sought out the "other" Russian book editions of three of Nabokov's works supposedly published in Europe in the 1920's and '30's. There almost certainly were no "other" or second book editions. At least I have found not one iota of a citation (other than from Field and Zimmer) to testify to the existence of more than one European Russian language book edition each of Nabokov's Podvig, Kamera obskura and Priglashenie na kazn'.

There are few citations stronger than a dealer's catalog entry and a library's catalog card. Such citations are created with a book physically at hand. A cataloger may err in a description or he may make an incorrect inference because he has only one copy of the book. Still, our hard-working cataloger has handled the book and not just seen a reference to it. Since books by Vladimir Nabokov are sought and are expensive (high prices quickly float rare books to the surface) and since no one anyplace, as far as I am aware, has ever described a European Russian language edition of Kamera Obskura other than the 1932 Berlin Sovremennyia Zapiski/Parabola edition, I feel confident that no others exist.

This rejection of multiple editions also applies to the 1932 Paris Sovremennyia Zapiski edition of Podvig and to the 1938 Paris Dom Knigi edition of Priglashenie na kazn'.

I have another reason to feel that I am right. Russian émigrés who wrote, published and lived the literary life of the times in Europe have told me that the émigré publishing houses were subsistence operations. They were run on very little money and generated very little more. It made no sense, I am told, to publish the same book in two different cities at the same time. Or the same book in the same city in a short period by two different publishers. It just made no economic sense. There was a ready and efficient traffic in books and magazines between Berlin, Paris, Prague, Shanghai, Harbin, and any other city or country in which enough Russian émigrés lived together to form a community. Even Nabokov's books, which eventually were more popular than most, were probably never published in editions of more than 1500 copies, maybe 2000. With such small press runs and with cheap mails to other countries, what publisher would consider multiple-city printings? It was certainly more sensible to print all the copies in one place and make distribution agreements with publishers or distributors elsewhere. Even today almost all American books published in Canada (which has a larger readership than anything the émigrés could ever have imagined for themselves) are printed in one location (usually in the U.S.) and simply distributed in Canada by the Canadian publisher, often without even a title-page cancel.

Also, note the back cover of Kamera obskura. It mentions a publisher's warehouse--"Petropolis-Verlag"--in Berlin and another one--"Maison du Livre Etranger"--in Paris. Yet, the title-page mentions "Sovremennyia Zapiski" and "Parabola" as the publishers, no city stated, and the copyright page gives the book printer as "Speer & Schmidt, Berlin." That salad of cities, publishers and printers tossing around in the memories of émigrés for three or four decades could be the cause of the confusion.

To recapitulate: Kamera obskura was published in Berlin in 1933 in a joint effort of Sovremennyia Zapiski and Parabola. It was printed by the Speer & Schmidt Printshop of Berlin and distributed in Berlin by Petropolis and in Paris by Maison du Livre Etranger. It is possible that it was also distributed by others. There was no other Russian edition of the book until 1978.

Similarly, Podvig was published in Paris in 1932 by Sovremennyia Zapiski; contrary to Zimmer, there was in 1932 neither a Paris Rodnik edition nor a Berlin Petropolis edition. And Priglashenie na kazn' was published in Paris by Dom Knigi; contrary to Zimmer, there was no 1938 Berlin Petropolis edition, and contrary to Field, there was no 1938 Berlin Dom Knigi edition.

Multiple-printing, multiple-edition copies of Nabokov's 1930's Russian language European editions are a chimera.

ANNOTATIONS AND 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.)

Pushkin Embedded

Among numberless enchanting trapfalls the Nabokov translator, let alone reader, is likely to get into without even realizing it are pieces of poetry scattered throughout his books and inconspicuously disguised as plain narrative. Sometimes it is extremely difficult to spot such instances, partly because those verses often have their enjambmental joints straightened out, thus assuming an especially natural prosaic intonation. Several more or less obvious examples of this device in The Gift, with its elegant Onegin-stanza closing, are well known.

In Pnin, the modest poetic harvest cropped by reticent Roy Thayer at the end of the "house-heating" party (ch. 6, p. 163) may be easily rearranged as follows:

> We sat and drank, each with a separate past
>
> locked up in him, and fate's alarm clocks set

> at unrelated futures--when, at last,
>
> a wrist was cocked, and eyes of consorts met . . .

But later in the book, when the author's representative introduces Pnin's letter of proposal (the good re-reader has been aware of its exact location since p. 45), another cryptic quatrain ripples through the surface of prose, this time with a definite Pushkinian implication. Here is the passage (pp. 182-83), arranged into its regular strophic attire:

> The letter has by chance remained
>
> among my papers. Here it is:
>
> "I am afraid you will be pained
>
> by my confession, my dear Lise."

(Immediately after, the narrator disingenuously wonders why Pnin addressed Liza "by this French form of her name" and provides a plausible explanation; actually, he did it to maintain the narrator's rhyme.) This is, of course, an echo of the epistolary exchange between the main characters of Eugene Onegin and, especially, of Pushkin's representative's introduction to Lenski's farewell doggerel, which in Nabokov's own translation goes as follows (EO, 6 XXI, 1-2):

> The verses chanced to be preserved;

I have them; here they are.

In the paraphrastic version in Pnin VN replaces the natural intonational break between the lines by the overrunning enjambment repeated in the second pair, thus increasing greatly their prosaic value, lightly touching in passing his favorite Pushkin yoke-bell.

It also rings for a moment in Ada (Part 3, Ch. 2) during a casual dialogue between Van and Greg Erminin, which, as Carl Proffer quite correctly noted (in A Book of Things About Vladimir Nabokov, p. 276), alludes to Onegin's exchange with the Prince in EO. But the subtle point is that it is also a poetic paraphrase of Pushkin.

> "So you are married? Didn't know before.
>
> How long?" "About two years."
>
> "To whom?" "The Larin girl." "Tatiana?"
>
> "She knows you?" "I am their neighbor."

(EO, 8, XVIII, 1-4, trans. VN)

> "(So you are married)? Didn't know it.
>
> How long?" "About two years." "To whom?"
>
> "Maude Sween." "The daughter of the poet?"

> "No, no, her mother is a Brougham."

(Ada, p. 454, arranged as verse)

Upon Greg's last rejoinder Van reflected: "Might have replied 'Ada Veen'"--which rhymes with "Sween." Well, he certainly might not, if only because one extra syllable would have disfigured the tetrameter. The iambic possibility shapes up later on the page: "You mean Miss Veen?" I didn't know it." It is not followed up, though. Meanwhile, Van has explained that "Brougham" is indeed pronounced "Broom." It is curious to note that in his Commentaries to EO, Ch. 8, Nabokov indulges in an absolutely devastating quoting of the mistranslations of this very stanza by his predecessors.

Let me repeat, these important, stylistically as well as thematically, instances of hidden and allusive poetry ingrained into its narrative surroundings present a great danger for a potential translator. I happen to know that the current translator of Pnin (into Pnin's native language) is aware of such cases; so must a future worker of Ada, who, no doubt, will have numberless other impediments to stumble over and ditches to dodge.

-- Gene Barabtarlo, The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

ABSTRACT

"A Discussion of The Gift, the novel in which Vladimir Nabokov artistically confronts Nikolay Chernyshevski"

by Susan Vander Closter

(Abstract of the paper presented at the Annual National Meeting of AATSEEL, New York, December, 1981.)

The Gift, though fiction, defines Nabokov's relationship to others--to other major literary artists like Pushkin and Gogol. This focus on Russian literature is particularly important since The Gift is his last novel in Russian, his Russian masterpiece. The development of Nabokov's Fyodor Godunov-Cherdyntsev reflects both Nabokov's growth as a writer and Russian literature's progression from Pushkin's poetry to Gogol's prose. The stylistic shift does not suggest a rejection of one form for another but an integration of the past's material and technique with the creations of the present. It should come as no surprise to Nabokov's readers that The Gift's portrait of Nikolay Chernyshevski, who is as synonymous with "moral fiction" as Nabokov is with Pushkinian pure art, is painted with vastly different colors than the one treasured by many Russian émigrés. Godunov-Cherdyntsev--autobiographer and artist--celebrates the creative imagination, and, in Chapter Four, his biography of Chernyshevski, he describes a philosophic perspective in complete opposition to his own: anti-lyre, anti-art, and anti-imagination.

Godunov-Cherdyntsev's major literary transitions are linked with two Nabokovian favorites--Pushkin and Gogol. Just as Fyodor's childhood memories once seduced his imagination, Pushkin feeds his preoccupation with the past, leading him back in time toward his homeland and then toward the memory of his father. Fyodor hopes, like Pushkin, to extract "poetry out of his past" but finds that when he tries to write a biography of his father he creates a Kubla Khan landscape--colorful and enchanted--but he suffers because he cannot truly know, and can only superficially approach, the image of Konstantin Kirillovich as if it were a two-dimensional likeness captured by his Kodak. After Fyodor falls in love with Zina Mertz, the present reasserts itself and he no longer seeks his poetry in the past. His memory brings images from his father's biography to his love poem to Zina so that the past merges with the present, with Berlin, in order to express Fyodor's love for fantasy and simultaneously for Zina Mertz, "Half-Mnemosyne . . . half-shimmer." The poem demonstrates Fyodor's anti-Chernyshevskian sensibility, his uncalculated, bliss-filled love for Zina, and his faith in imagination.

Fyodor eventually makes an artistic shift due to this reinforced faith in imagination. When he moves to Zina's, a distance "about the same as, somewhere in Russia, that from Pushkin Avenue to Gogol Street," he aesthetically does leave Pushkin behind him and takes up Gogol's company. Instead of nostalgically and romantically pursuing the past and his homeland, Fyodor decides that

his homeland is within him, eventually describing the poetry and exoticism of this internal homeland by contrasting it with the barrenness of Nikolay Chernyshevski's. Fyodor becomes Gogolian when he paints a common view from the unique perspective of his own eyes. Gogol made the mirror he held up to the world, and, when Godunov-Cherdyntsev holds a mirror up to Nikolay Chernyshevski, the reflection is distinctly Fyodor's and is, as Koncheyev points out, unlike the heroic portrait which Russian émigrés had taken away with them.

Aware that Chernyshevski is considered a hero of the 1860's, Fyodor nevertheless sees his emotional and social clumsiness and sees in him the roots of the didactic and anti-artistic Bolshevik platform. Opposed to proponents of freedom of the arts, to ivory-towered poets like Fet, Chernyshevski made artists fear manipulation and the possibility that fiction which once dealt in an organic way with relevant socio-economic factors would instead be dominated by them and be turned into more sermon than art. For Chernyshevski, reality is superior to art. He treats beauty like a taxidermist or a mortician, studying each feature piecemeal, scientifically. Fyodor notes that Chernyshevski's cerebral clumsiness is associated with physical clumsiness--his tendency to cover himself with ink and to break crockery. All of his absurdities lead to an aesthetic which argues in a "shrill, didactic voice" against pure art and for a reality improved as a result of literature's lessons. Art is a means to a better society not an end in itself.

Fyodor has taken great pains to create more than an anti-Marxist, anti-utilitarian treatise. The biography, a beautifully and geometrically styled work of art, is Fyodor's Invitation to a Beheading, his Bend Sinister. The images are striking and hypnotically echoed throughout; the sentences sing. Memory and imagination join forces in order to create a work of art out of Chernyshevski's past, and his experience enables Fyodor to see the patterns in his own past and to reach a sophistication in The Gift he did not demonstrate in his Poems. The Gift's memoirist is young, and, like the young Nabokov who started Speak, Memory (then Conclusive Evidence) when his greatest work was still a thing of the future, Fyodor has clearly defined his aesthetics and has started to experiment with language. When we seek in fiction a definition of Nabokov's aesthetics, we need look no further than The Gift.

ABSTRACT

"(L')Enonciation du roman nabokovien"

by Maurice Couturier

(Abstract of Dissertation for the award of Doctorat d'Etat, Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1976)

This dissertation, too thick for publication in France, is, to date, the only one in France on Nabokov. It is a post-structuralist study of Nabokov's "English novels"; it also makes many references to the Russian novels. It claims to examine the reading problems raised by Nabokov's works in connection with the established literary conventions, and to analyse Nabokov's texts as "textes de plaisir" (to paraphrase Barthes). The dissertation is divided into 7 chapters:

Ch. 1 - "Ego contre texte" (a comparative study of "First Love" as autobiography and fiction, a study of the Chernyshevski chapter in The Gift, a presentation of the theoretical background).

Ch. 2 - "Les mas/rques de la narration" (narrative strategies in each individual novel).

Ch. 3 - "Personne" (names, portraits, caricatures, and a special study of the nymphet).

Ch. 4 - "Homotextualité" (the "other texts" by Nabokov in his novels: poems, letters, Nabokov's own novels mentioned. Also a long essay on Pale Fire).

Ch. 5 - "Intertextualité" (the "other texts" not by Nabokov, either mentioned or quoted: psychoanalysis, literary works. For example, Hamlet in Bend Sinister, Chateaubriand or Tolstoy in Ada).

Ch. 6 - "Récit" (titles, openings and endings, Don Juan as a Nabokovian archetype; echoes. The Quilty subplot).

Ch. 7 - "Ecrit" (deixis, interior monologue and free indirect speech, theatrical correlatives, metaphors, the Nabokovian sentence, word games).

A fifty-page bibliography.

Professor Nabokov: A Review Essay

by Stephen Jan Parker

One may presume that with the appearance of Lectures on Russian Literature (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich & Bruccoli Clark, New York, 1981), following Lectures on Literature (1980), the public has now been given what is expected to be the complete record of Vladimir Nabokov's classroom teachings. If this is the case, then the reader of the two volumes of Lectures will come away with incomplete knowledge of both the content and approach that Nabokov brought to his courses.

At Cornell University Nabokov regularly taught two courses: Literature 311-312, "Masters of European Fiction" and Literature 325-326, "Russian Literature in Translation." The material in the two volumes of Lectures derives from these courses. Facing the problem of how to organize and present Nabokov's lecture notes and text annotations, the publishers decided to issue two volumes, one devoted to European, and the other to Russian writers. Thus in Volume One they excluded the Russian authors with whom Nabokov dealt in the "Masters" course (Gogol, Turgenev, Tolstoy), and subsequently included them with other Russian writers treated in the Russian literature course. "The Dostoevski, Chekhov, and Gorki sections in this volume are from Russian Literature in Translation," Fredson Bower, the editor, writes, "which . . . also included minor Russian writers for whom the lecture notes are not preserved." The format of the two volumes gives the erroneous impression that Nabokov's treatment of his subject matter in the two courses was essentially similar, except for the inclusion of additional biographical and bibliographical detail in the Russian literature course.

After reading the two volumes of Lectures, a person familiar with Nabokov's own writings may well wonder, where is Pushkin? Did Nabokov really omit consideration of this beloved poet in his courses? And where are the other poets whose works Nabokov translated? And what about The Song of Igor's Campaign? Did Nabokov's view of Russian literature really begin with Gogol, the first author treated in Lectures on Russian Literature? The answer is, of course, no. Pushkin, other poets, Gogol the dramatist, and other prominent Russian writers were indeed taught regularly in Nabokov's course. Unfortunately this is not made clear in volume two of the Lectures. In "Masters of European Fiction" Nabokov taught books; in "Russian Literature in Translation" Nabokov taught not only books, but literary history as well.

In the autumn of 1958, in his last semester of teaching at Cornell University, this writer was a student in both of Nabokov's classes. The "Masters" course drew several hundred students to Goldwin Smith B Lecture Hall, and competed in campus pop-

ularity only with a course on the history of folk songs in which Peter Yarrow, then a teaching assistant (later Peter, of "Peter, Paul, and Mary"), played to regular sing-alongs. Nabokov's Russian literature course met down the hall in a much smaller room which accomodated the approximately thirty-five students who were enrolled. Unlike the totally formal arrangement in the large lecture hall, the Russian literature class allowed for a certain interplay between students and teacher and occasional questions were allowed.

Professor Nabokov began his survey with a lecture on Russian history (from the year 862) and early chronical literature, and moved with dispatch to The Song of Igor's Campaign on which the class was to spend several weeks. Nabokov's translation of, and commentary to, this twelfth century epic was published the following year by Random House. Though one of the course texts (Treasury of Russian Literature, ed. Bernard Guilbert Guerney, Vanguard Press, New York 1943) had a translation of The Song, it was Professor Nabokov's translation that was taught, line by line with expansive commentary.

Following brief consideration of the intervening years, essentially barren of notable literary work, the survey moved into the seventeenth century and an explanation of the schism in the Russian Orthodox Church and the life and writings of Archpriest Avvakum, a person, we were told, whose literary talents and not religious

tenets made him outstanding. Consideration of Peter the Great (with reference to Pushkin's "The Bronze Rider" and Falconet's statue), was followed by some detailed consideration of Mikhail Lomonosov, and his prosodic reforms. This was the occasion for Professor Nabokov to demonstrate poetic feet in the following manner:

Iamb:	Vermónt
Trochee:	Kánsas
Anapest:	Illinóis
Dactyl:	Míchigan
Amphibrach:	Wyóming

Consideration was then given to Gavriil Derzhavin, Russia's first prominent poet, and his "Ode to God" (1784).

Then began work on the nineteenth century and the era of Alexander Pushkin. Following introductory remarks on Pushkin's youth, Nabokov gave brief consideration to "the blissful lack of originality" in the writings of Russia's sentimentalist, Nikolai Karamzin, and to the poetry of Vasili Zhukovski, whose defects, we were told, were his oversimplification and delocalization. Pushkin's life, death, and several works were then presented in considerable detail, capped by several weeks of a line by line study of Eugene Onegin. The students were expected to work carefully with the copies of Nabokov's translation, taken from his manuscript, which were placed on reserve in the library. It was a rare privilege to discover Pushkin's masterpiece through the filter of Professor

Nabokov's knowledge and sensibility accompanied throughout by his inimicable readings and forceful delivery. Among several items which never did find their way into his four-volume translation and study of Eugene Onegin, Professor Nabokov averred that stanzas 36-37 of Chapter Eight, wherein Eugene reads the book of his life and fate, were his particular favorites.

From Pushkin the class moved on to Gogol. As in Lectures on Russian Literature, the material presented in class derived from Nabokov's own Nikolai Gogol (1944). Students read and studied Dead Souls, The Overcoat, and The Inspector General. The texts for the two former were in the Guerney anthology; the text for Dead Souls was a paperback edition by Rinehart & Co. (New York 1942) translation also by Guerney, introduction by René Wellek. The class was told to disregard the introduction, and in the first lecture the students were given a line by line correction and amplification of Guerney's translation as an illustrative exercise. The study of Gogol completed the semester's work, and also Professor Nabokov's academic career.

Fredson Bowers conjectures that "because he was lecturing on Russian literature in translation, Nabokov could not discuss the importance of style in any precise detail." Actually, the line by line work on The Song of Igor's Campaign, various poems, Eugene Onegin, and passages from Gogol allowed Nabokov multiple opportunities to develop and exemplify questions of style at great

length. Indeed, Nabokov was better able to convey fine stylistic points when working with the Russian works than he was able to do with Flaubert's French in the "Major Writers" course.

The final examination in Literature 325, January 1959, was as follows:

EUGENE ONEGIN (1 hr., 40 minutes):

1. Describe the structure of its stanza (measure and rhyme).

2. Lyrical and professional digressions.

3. Dates of composition and publication.

4. Onegin's two visits to the Larins.

5. Tatiana's letter.

6. Lenski's death.

7. Descriptions of winter: list some details, with references.

DEAD SOULS AND THE INSPECTOR GENERAL (50 minutes):

8. describe the rambling comparison (no examples).

9. Chichikov's appearance and manner.

10. Gogol's Little People ("secondary characters") in the novel or the play.

Students WHO HAVE TAKEN 311 will answer the following questions INSTEAD of 8 and 9:

8a. The character of Hlestakov.

9a. "Gogol's play is poetry in action."

As can be inferred from the questions, in order to do well on the final examination the student had to have a command of the works in extensive detail.

The lectures in Lectures on Russian Literature come from only the second semester of the survey course, with the exception of the section on Gogol. The chapters on Turgenev, Dostoevski, Tolstoy, and Chekhov appear to be well reconstructed and offer Nabokov's unique perceptions. The presentation of Tolstoy's Anna Karenina (or Anna Karenin, as Nabokov prefers), in

particular, offers insights as original and penetrating today as when they were first delivered these many years ago.

Bowers is correct when he writes that "perhaps the most valuable contribution that Nabokov made to his students was not merely his emphasis on shared experience but on shared informed experience." Many of the students who took Nabokov's courses came to understand that he had given them, in the words of Fyodor Godunov-Cherdyntsev, his own great gift of "knowledge-amplified love" brought to bear upon classics of literature.

ABSTRACT

"Die Elemente des Grotesken im Prosawerk von Vladimir Nabokov."

by Maria-Regina Kecht

(Abstract of Dissertation for the award of Ph.D., Innsbruck University, Austria, 1981.)

The object of this thesis is to demonstrate and analyse the elements of the grotesque in Nabokov's prose fiction which have hitherto been ignored by critics. The use of artistic techniques and motives of the grotesque is investigated here at the levels of content, structure and form, as well as style. The study intends to clarify whether the grotesque in Nabokov's fiction is confined to a few of his works, or whether the grotesque can be regarded as an essential component of his compositional strategy. The question of the specific function of the grotesque in Nabokov is also of major interest: Is the grotesque only employed to serve the purpose of ornamentation, to achieve an alienation effect, or does the grotesque determine the substance of Nabokov's writing? A selection of novels and short stories representing Nabokov's individual creative periods makes possible a critical judgment on the development and the significance of Nabokov's grotesque creation.

The study consists of two main parts. In the first part origin and development of the grotesque are briefly discussed, and its changing importance in the different literary

periods is described. The focus of interest is placed hereby on the modern understanding and interpretation of the grotesque. This presentation is followed by a detailed analysis of the complex term "grotesque". Effect, means, motives, and function of the grotesque are subsequently depicted. The second and major part of this thesis is devoted to the investigation of the grotesque in selected works from Nabokov's oeuvre. Seven novels and five short stories, which paradigmatically illustrate Nabokov's poetic creation from his early days of exile in Berlin to his last years in Montreux, are analysed to reveal the inherent elements of the grotesque and their significance within the literary structure of the work. Detailed, text-immanent analysis of various novels and stories proves that Nabokov's manner of creating the grotesque is closely related to his world view and his understanding of art.

It becomes clear that the grotesque possesses essential, functional value with regard to content, structure, and style. Elements of the grotesque are particularly prevalent in the sphere of theme and content, but they can also be observed in the spheres of language and composition. The mixing of disparate levels of representation, the sudden alternation of the comic and the dreadful, of horror and farce, characterize Nabokov's works. Not in any novel or short story do we find pure tragedy or comedy. All traditional motives of the grotesque are applied by Nabokov. The dominance of thematically grotesque elements is often underscored in its effect by the peculiarities of Nabokov's language and style.

In using the grotesque Nabokov's prime intention is to unmask banality and vulgarity, and in a contrastive way, to stress imagination and creativity. Everything that impairs or destroys the power of imagination and originality is worthy of condemnation and is denounced by means of the grotesque. Nabokov fights the world of poshlust with grotesque techniques.

Within Nabokov's ouevre we can notice a progressive evolution of the grotesque. In his early works the grotesque is restricted to the sphere of theme and content. Nabokov's growing independence and interest in modernist techniques led to a preference for experimenting with form and language. Grotesque modes of expression are used with regard to composition and style to attain an all-encompassing alienation effect. In Nabokov's late, mature works the different means of the grotesque, which are employed at the three levels of content, structure, and style, merge into one another. The grotesque becomes more complex and more impressive. The grotesque granted Nabokov the liberty and the possibilities of artistic development for which he was searching all his life. Nabokov's world view and his artistic conception found an adequate mode of expression in the grotesque.

ABSTRACT

"Ambiguity in Vladimir Nabokov's Invitation To A Beheading"

by Leona Toker

(Abstract of the paper presented at the conference on Ambiguity in Literature and Film at Florida State University in Tallahassee, January 30, 1981.)

Ambiguity is the structural principle of Invitation to a Beheading, the structural idea through which the form and the thematic contents are adjusted to each other. The system of values presented in the novel seems to dictate the author's choice of technical procedures.

The novel contains sets of mutually exclusive fabula details. On the literal level the resulting ambiguities could only be resolved by ascribing some of the episodes to the protagonist's dreams or hallucinations, yet the text does not sanction such a reading. The impossibility to decide whether a scene reflects the dreams of Cincinnatus C. or his waking experience induces the reader to waive the literal plane of action as unimportant. Ambiguity creates gaps in the fabric of the fabula, and thus calls the reader's attention to the multilevel symbolic meanings beyond the surface. This effect of ambiguity has a thematic significance appropriate to the gnostic world view that permeates the novel.

The cumulative effect of ambiguity is that of emphasis on the dreamlike insubstantiality of the fictional world. The protagonist learns that he can escape his predicament only by denying that it is real. The novelist, however, knows this all along, therefore he uses grotesque imagery, serene absurdities and metamorphoses in order to prevent the setting of the novel from congealing into a semblance of reality. The task is not easy: the setting keeps gaining substance despite its fantastic shape because we know that historical events often surpass the gloomiest anti-utopian fantasies. It is the ambiguity that enables the novelist to render the fictional world as "fluid and irresponsible" as a dream.

Ambiguity reaches its climax in the final scene of the novel, where the protagonist is shown rising from the execution block and calmly walking away, declining, so to say, the invitation to his own beheading. Some commentators hold that it is the soul of the beheaded Cincinnatus making its way to another dimension; others note that the execution never takes place. I side with the critics who refuse to settle the issue on the literal plane. My contention is that the moment after Cincinnatus has lain his head on the block, the author dismantles the fictional world and thus aids the protagonist in his fantastic exit. Just as, according to Nabokov, the Nighttown scenes of Joyce's Ulysses are not the hallucinations of the characters but the fantasies of the author, so the final scene of Invitation is the implied author's self-conscious fantasy rather than an account of what is supposed to have

happened to Cincinnatus. Thus, to the very last does the implied author refuse to fashion the world of Invitation either in realistic or in earnestly supernatural terms, because by doing so he would have re-enacted the protagonist's early mistake of treating his oppressors as real. It is through this appropriate structural formula that the implied author practices what he believes in, achieving a perfect unity of contents and form.