THE NABOKOVIAN

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News

by Stephen Jan Parker

Nabokov Society and Conference News:

There were approximately thirty persons at each of the Nabokov sessions at the annual MLA and AATSEEL meetings. The annual business meeting of the Society's Board of Directors took place following the Society's MLA session on December 28, 1995. Attending were: Gennady Barabtarlo, Julian Connolly, John Burt Foster, D. Barton Johnson, Charles Nicol, Zoran Kuzmanovich, Samuel Schuman, and Elizabeth Sweeney.

1. President John Burt Foster announced that D. Barton Johnson and Ellen Pifer had been elected as President and Vice-President for the 1996-1997 term. It was also reported that John Foster's monumental report surveying Society activities for the last seven years had been successful in renewing our coveted status as an "allied organization" of the MLA.

2. Over the past few years, the Society's official publication, *The Nabokovian*, has been joined by the scholarly journal *Nabokov Studies*, its electronic affiliate, NABOKV-L, and ZEMBLA, the Nabokov web site, established by Jeff Edmunds with the generous assistance of the Penn State University library. Noting that *Nabokov Studies* and NABOKV-L had been established under the auspices of the Society, it was proposed that the relationship be formalized and that the editors of these organs be ex officio members of the Society's Board of Directors. Zoran Kuzmanovich, editor of *Nabokov Studies*, reported that his institution, Davidson College, had agreed to participate in the funding and publication of the journal for the three-year period 1996-1998. [After the fact, I would like to express appreciation on behalf

of the Society to Zoran Kuzmanovich and Jeff Edmunds for their successful efforts to gain homes and funding for *Nabokov Studies* and ZEMBLA, as well as to their respective institutions for generously agreeing to support these enterprises.] The Directors present voted to formalize the relatioship of the journal, the web site, and the e-list to the Society and to make their respective editors ex officio members of the Board. The President agreed to make any necessary changes in the Society's By-Laws.

3. The number of conference sessions sponsored by the Society has greatly increased in recent years. It was agreed that the Vice-President's official duties would include (in addition to the present charge of arranging one of the two annual MLA sessions) overseeing all conference activities. Although any member of the Society may arrange a Nabokov session, information about the session, its program, and abstracts of the papers should be sent to the Society Vice-President who will have the responsibility for obtaining the requisite information from the session chairs and reporting to the membership via *The Nabokovian* and NABOKV-L. Pursuant to a proposal by John Lavagnino, it was also agreed that the call for papers for the "topical" session of the two MLA slots should be initiated in the year preceding the conference so as to give prospective presenters sufficient lead time.

- D. Barton Johnson

*

The *Nabokovian* would like to keep its readers informed of the various activities and events that will surround the 1999 centennial celebration of Vladimir Nabokov's birth. Festivities are already being planned in Switzerland, Russia, England, Germany, France, Italy, and the USA. We ask our readers around the world to send us all information regarding plans and preparations.

*

Odds and Ends

-- Recently published: Nassim Winnie Berdjis, *Imagery in Vladimir Nabokov's Last Russian Novel (DAR), Its English Translation (THE GIFT) and Other Prose Works of the 1930s*. Frankfurt/M: Peter Lang, 1995.

-- A branch of the Nabokov Society is being formed in Korea under the direction of Professor Chol Kun Kwon of Seoul National University. Professor Kwon also serves as President of the Korean Association for Slavic Studies.

-- Stephen Crook, Librarian, the Berg Collection informs us that on the evening of June 3 the Manhattan Theatre Club at City Center (131 West 55th St.) will present "Lolita at 40," a dramatic reading in celebration of the novel, forty years after the publication of the original in Paris.

-- Vladimir Nabokov Web Site: Zembla: The Nabokov Butterfly Net, a World Wide Web site devoted to the life and works of Vladimir Nabokov, is available through the university libraries of Pennsylvania State University. The URL is:

http://www.libraries.psu.edu/iasweb/nabokov/nsintro.htm

Zembla includes a detailed chronology of Nabokov's life, sample full-text articles from recent issues of *Nabokov Studies*, extensive indexes to back issues of the *Nabokovian* and to Nabokov's interviews, unpublished bibliographical materials, original fiction related to Nabokov's work, and photographs of Nabokovian locales in Russia, Europe, and the United States.

*

Dr. Kurt Johnson, a lepidopterist at the American Museum of Natural History and an authority on Nabokov's lepidopterological work, invited several

persons to submit Nabokovian names with etymologies for a number of newly discovered species of Neotropical blues. Nabokov-related names previously adopted include Luzhin, Pnin, Kobalt, Hazel, Lolita, Mashenka, Nodo, Odon, Tintarron, Ada, Pierre, Shade, Cincinnatus, Aurelian, Haze, Clare, Humbert, Kinbote, Sirin, Vera, Zembla, Delalande, and Krug. Two of the names newly proposed and subsequently accepted were:

From D. Barton Johnson: "I propose 'Tamara,' a name with deep Nabokovian resonance. 'Tamara,' with its echo of the Russian word *tam* ('there'--as opposed to the 'here' of the life-long exile), signified many things to Nabokov, among them the idea of a transcendent world. But most obviously, of course, it evokes Tamara, his first love, described in Chapter XII of *Speak, Memory*. Separated first by whim and then by revolution and exile, "Tamara' became the theme of Nabokov's first novel, the 1926 *Mashenka* or *Mary*. Closely identified with Nabokov's summers at Vyra and his initial efforts as a poet, Tamara came to stand for the lost paradise of youth and Russia. This identification is suggested in one of the most pognant passages in the memoir. After the Nabokov family had fled St. Petersburg for Crimean exile, the former lovers maintained a fitful correspondence across their ravaged homeland. As the Nabokovs sailed into their final exile, the young Nabokov was tormented not so much by the sense of leaving Russia, but 'by the agonizing thought that...letters from Tamara would still be coming, miraculously and needlessly, to southern Crimea, and would search there for a fugitive address, and weakly flap about like bewildered butterflies set loose in an alien zone, at the wrong altitude, among an unfamiliar flora' (last sentence of chapter XI)."

The name was adopted for a new species, *Pseudolucia tamara*, a recent addition to Argentine *pseudolucia* fauna.

From Stephen Jan Parker: "I would like to propose 'Zina.' Zina is, of course, the heroine of Nabokov's novel, *The Gift*. The love shared between Fyodor (the hero) and Zina is unique in Nabokov's fiction. Their love, to quote my own book, epitomizes the ideal union of two separate individuals in which the discreetness of neither is violated. Zina is perhaps the closest Nabokov came to placing his own wife, Vera, into his fictions. To quote from the text of *The Gift* (p. 189, standard edition), Fyodor writes: 'And not only was Zina cleverly and elegantly made to measure for him by a very painstaking fate, but both of them, forming a single shadow, were made to the measure of something not quite comprehensible, but wonderful and benevolent and continuously surrounding them.' In brief, Zina is the most ideal of all Nabokov's female characters."

The name was adopted for a new species, *Pseudolucia zina*, a recent addition to Chilean *pseudolucia* fauna.

Complete information and photographs regarding the "Blues" can be found in the volume, *A Special Compilation--Neotropical "Blue" Butterflies*, Reports of the Museum of Natural History, University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point, No.'s 43-54, December 1995.

*

Russian language editions of Nabokov's works, published 1988-1993, which have been received in Montreux:

Angelom zadetyi (Poems). Moskva: Vsia Moskva. 1990.

Blednyi ogon' (Pale Fire), perevod Aleksandra Sharymova. *Avrora* No. 1, 1991.

Blednoe plamia (Pale Fire), perevod Sergeia Il'ina. Sverdlovsk: Biblioteka cheloveka. 1991.

Vesna v Fial'te (Spring in Fialta). Moskva: Prometei. 1989.

Drugie berega (Other Shores). Moskva: Knizhnaia palata. 1989.

Drugie berega (Other Shores). Leningrad: Politekhnika. 1991.

Zashchita Luzhina (The Defense). Moskva: Fizkul'tura i sport. 1989.

Zashchita Luzhina (The Defense). Moskva: Sovremennik. 1989.

Izbrannoe (Selected Prose and Verse: The Gift, Pnin, stories, verse). Moskva: Raduga. 1990.

Lolita. Moskva: Ans-Print. 1991.

Lolita. Moldavia Literaturnaia, (Kishinev) No. 2-6, 1990.

Mashen'ka, Zashchita Luzhina, Priglashenie na kazn', Drugie berega (Mary, The Defense, Invitation to a Beheading, Other Shores). Moskva: Khudozhestvennaia literatura. 1988.

Podlinnaia zhizn' Sebast'iana Naita (The Real Life of Sebastian Knight), *Pnin*, *Bend Sinister*, perevod Sergeia Il'ina. Sankt-Peterburg: Severo-zapad. 1993.

Rasskazy, Priglashenie na kazn' (Stories, Invitation to a Beheading). Moskva: Kniga. 1989.

Rasskazy, vospominaniia (Stories, The Eye, Other Shores). Moskva: Sovremennik. 1991.

Romany (Novels: Mary, The Defense, Kamera Obskura, Invitation to a Beheading). Moskva: Sovremennik. 1990.

Romany: Istinnaia zhizn' Sebast'iana Naita (perevod A. Gorianina i M. Meilakha), *Pnin*, *Prosvechivaiushchie predmety* (perevod A. Dolinina i M. Meilakha). (Novels: The Real Life of Sebastian Knight, Pnin, Transparent Things). Moskva: Khudozhestvennaia literatura. 1991.

Romany, rasskazy (Kamera Obskura, Ultima Thule, Solus Rex, stories). Sankt-Peterburg: Entar. 1993.

Sobranie sochinenii v chetyrekh tomakh (Collected Works in Four Volumes). Moskva: Pravda. 1990.

1. *Mashen'ka, Korol', dama, valet, Vozvrashchenie Chorba* (Mary, King, Queen, Knave, Return of Chorb story collection).
2. *Zashchita Luzhina, Podvig, Sogliadatai* (The Defense, Glory, The Eye, short stories).
3. *Dar, Otchainie* (The Gift, Despair).
4. *Priglashenie na kazn', Drugie berega, Vesna v Fial'te* (Invitation to a Beheading, Other Shores, Spring in Fialta story collection).

Volume 5 addition to the above series: *Lolita*. 1992.

Stikhotvoreniia (poems). Moskva: Molodaia gvardiia. 1991.

Stikhotvoreniia i poemy (poems and verse). Moskva: Sovremennik. 1991.

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Regarding *Nabokov Studies*

Issue Number 3 will soon be available from
Zoran Kuzmanovich
Editor, *Nabokov Studies*
English Department
Davidson College
Davidson, NC 28036.

Subscriptions rates: Volumes 3 to 5 (1996-8) are available at the rate of 1 year/1 volume = $21.50; 3

years/3 volumes = $60.00; foreign subscriptions add $4 per year, $10 for 3 years. Send name, mailing address, e-mail address if available. Payment should be in US$.

Issues Number 1 and 2: Number 1 (1994, 233 pp) costs $21.00; Number 2 (1995, 300+pp) costs $28.00; add $1.50 for overseas postage. They can be obtained from three sources:
(1) Zoran Kuzmanovich, as indicated above

or

(2) D. Barton Johnson
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Santa Barbara, CA 93106
(checks should be made to D. Barton Johnson, and in the lower right hand corner should indicate "Nabokov Studies #1, #2 or both")

or

(3) Vladimir Nabokov Society
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University of Kansas
Lawrence, KS 66045
(checks should be made to "Vladimir Nabokov Society")

*

Our thanks, as always, to Ms. Paula Courtney for her assistance in the preparation of this and every issue of *The Nabokovian*.

ANNOTATIONS & QUERIES

by Gennady Barabtarlo

[Submissions should be forwarded to Gennady Barabtarlo at 451 GCB University of Missouri, Columbia, MO 65211, U.S.A., or by fax at (314) 445-3404, or by e-mail at **gragb@mizzou1.missouri.edu** • Deadlines are April 1 and October 1 respectively for the Spring and Fall issues. • Most notes will be sent, anonymously, to at least one reader for review. • If accepted for publication, the piece may be subjected to slight technical corrections. Editorial interpolations are within brackets. • Authors who desire to read proof ought to state so at the time of submission. • Kindly refrain from footnotes; all citations and remarks should be put within the text, or if necessary, as endnotes. • References to Nabokov's English or Englished works should be made either to the first American (or British) edition or to the Vintage collected series. • All Russian quotations must be transliterated and translated.]

ON THE ORIGINS OF NABOKOV'S NEURALGIA

Nabokov was afflicted by six bouts of intercostal neuralgia from 1932 onwards. The severity of the attacks varied considerably. It will be useful at this point to list the attacks in chronological order:

(1) After November 26, 1932 and continuing into the spring of 1933. His first attack was severe and confined him to bed during the winter of 1932/33. By May 1933 he was well (Boyd, *Russian Years*, p. 401).

(2) The end of September 1939 into early October. Nabokov was confined to bed for a week after influenza graded into his second and much milder episode (*RY*, p. 512).

(3) February 1945. Again, influenza was followed by neuralgia and he spent another week in bed (Boyd, *American Years*, p. 83).

(4) The end of March 1950. This was probably the mildest attack as he apparently was not confined to bed for any significant time. Yet again, influenza was doubled with neuralgia (*AY*, p. 146).

(5) From about November 1968 into the first half of 1969 he was again stricken with a "sever attack" and this was aggravated by a return of his lumbago, which had hospitalized him in 1955 (*AY*, pp. 270, 564).

(6) Boyd briefly mentions his "recurrent neuralgia" striking again in April 1974 (*AY*, p. 568).

Quin has written about Nabokov's use of cardiac pathology in his fiction and Nabokov's lending to some of his characters varied measures of his own afflictions (*Nabokovian*, No. 26). I will address the origin of Nabokov's neuralgia. A close reading of Boyd provides evidence that a football injury may have been the causal precondition to the development of his intercostal neuralgia.

Sometime about the 1st of March 1932, Nabokov was injured and knocked unconscious while playing soccer. Boyd quotes Vera Nabokov, "After he had broken his ribs . . . I put my foot down" (and he was not permitted to play soccer anymore). There is no further mention of Nabokov's broken ribs. It does not even rate an entry in the index to the *Russian Years*. Nor is their evidence of Nabokov ever considering this injury as being a contributing factor to his troubled medical condition in the 1940s or later in life.

Boyd quotes Nabokov's description of his intercostal neuralgia as "a cross between pneumonia and heart trouble with the addition of an iron finger prodding you in the *ribs* (my emphasis) all the time." Nabokov had not been affected by any serious illness since his appendectomy in 1917. With the exception of his

long struggle with poor dental health, Nabokov's adult illnesses can be seen in retrospect as beginning with this first attack of neuralgia. But was this condition in turn actually produced by the trauma injury on the soccer field?

Nabokov's nervous state was often stretched to its limits by his own immense demands on himself, imaginatively, emotionally, and physically. Indeed, his first attack of neuralgia came in the final tiring phases of writing *Despair* and later afflictions of neuralgia and lumbago can be seen to follow hard on the heels of the culminating stages of their major works (particularly after finishing *Bend Sinister*, *Ada* and *Lolita*). However, as Nabokov was almost always in the midst of a major project it is not possible to conclusively link *each* attack with a nervous crisis.

Nine months separated his soccer injury and first major attack. It is a curious coincidence that another attack in 1945 came nine months after his near fatal food poisoning on June 6, 1944. This brief illness was soon followed by important changes in Nabokov's health. In early June 1945, his doctor advised him to quit smoking; he then gained considerably weight; in early 1946 he was again checked out for persistent symptoms of a serious but undefined disease. No satisfactory diagnosis was made, not even after a bronchoscopy in 1948. Did the violent internal writhings of his food poisoning reaggravate earlier internal injuries dating to 1932 which, in turn, produced his undiagnosable pains?

It is tempting to connect Nabokov's adult health to complications originating with his soccer injury. Readers with medical backgrounds (especially experts in the nervous system and sports injuries) may be able to offer more learned interpretations of the evidence presented here.

--Michael Chenoweth, Elkridge, MD

In his introduction to *Bend Sinister*, Nabokov describes the method by which Krug realized "in a sudden moonburst of madness" that his fate is at the command of a greater creative force. Nabokov writes,

> Thus in the second paragraph of Chapter Five comes the first intimation that "someone is in the know"--a mysterious intruder who takes advantage of Krug's dream to convey his own peculiar code message. The intruder is . . . an anthropomorphic deity impersonated by me. (xviii)

As a literary agent, the anthropomorphic deity has given critics of Nabokov's fiction a way to discuss, among other things, the Gnostic themes of a world of fallen matter and the role of a devious craftsperson in a chain of endless regressions leading to a brighter realm of consciousness. The mischievousness of such a demiurgic character is meaningful in that it enriches a world of complexities while allowing the anthropomorphic deity, impersonated by Nabokov, to place himself inside that world.

One instance of this tension between hidden creator and revealed creature appears in *Ada*, where we catch a glimpse of the anthropomorphic deity in the guise of a photographer. Chapter 38 unfolds the scene of a family dinner at the Veen manor, "not a scene in a play, as might have seemed--nay *must* have seemed--to a spectator (with a camera or program) placed in the velvet pit of the garden." (250) During the dinner, Van and Demon appear to see a flash of lightning. "'If you ask me,' said Demon, turning on his chair to consider the billowing drapery, 'I'd guess it was a photographer's flash. After all, we have here a famous actress and a sensational acrobat.'" (258)

The lightning suggests that Nabokov, acting as an anthropomorphic deity, "photographs" the scene, but a more mundane cause of the flash might be the kitchen boy at Ardis, Kim Beauharnais, whom Marina calls a "snap-shooting fiend." (255) Eventually Kim blackmails Ada after revealing that he has amassed a portfolio of compromising photos of Van and Ada. In her defense to Van, Ada says, I *had* to pay for it, lest he show poor Marina pictures of Van seducing his little cousin Ada--which wold have been bad enough; actually, as a *hawk of genius*, he may have suspected the whole truth." (397, emphasis added)

A key to deciphering "hawk of genius" as a play on words which reveals Nabokov's signature in *Ada* can be found in the "Anniversary Notes" section of *SO* (written shortly after *Ada*'s publication), when Nabokov addresses Jay Neugeboren on the pronunciation of his name:

> I would suggest 'talk of' or 'balk of' as more closely conforming to the stressed middle vowel of that awkward name ('Nabawkof'). I once composed the following rhyme for my students:
>
> The querulous gawk of
> A heron at night
> Prompts Nabokov
> To write. (302)

The phrase "hawk of genius," referring to Kim, can now be read as "Nabokov genius," providing a connection between Kim, the incarnation of the anthropomorphic deity in the "velvet pit" of the fiction, and Nabokov working from above. Brian Boyd has noted,

> <Nabokov's> father had once given him a copy of *Madame Bovary* which he had inscribed "livre genial--la perle de la litterature francaise" ("a book of genius--the pearl of

French literature"). In his own copy of *Ada*, Nabokov wrote on the flyleaf: "genial'naia kniga--perl amerikanskoi literatury" ("a book of genius--the pearl of American literature").

Nabokov cleverly declares himself a genius on *Ada*'s flyleaf as well as nestling the same declaration within the fiction through the device of the anthropomorphic deity and a cloaked rhyme.

(My citation of Brian Boyd comes from his article, "Ada," in *The Garland Companion to Vladimir Nabokov*, ed. Vladimir E. Alexandrov (New York: Garland, 1995) 3.)

--Adam D. Ott, University of Virginia

THE ORIGIN OF "THE PROUSTIAN THEME IN A LETTER FROM KEATS TO BENJAMIN BAILEY"

Humbert Humbert's paper "The Proustian Theme in a Letter from Keats to Benjamin Bailey", although discussed by only a few critics, seems to have been explored adequately (see John Burt Forster, Jr., *Nabokov's Art of Memory and European Modernism*, p. 220 and 251; "Nabokov and Proust," in *The Garland Companion to Vladimir Nabokov*, p. 479). But perhaps something might be added regarding the *origin* of this theme.

Even when first looking into Keats' letters the Proustian theme is quite easy to find in the letter of 22 November, 1817 (Carl R. Proffer, *Keys to* Lolita, p. 136): "But as I was saying - the simple imaginative Mind may have its rewards in the repetition of its own silent Working coming continually on the Spirit with a fine Suddenness - to compare great things with small - have you never by being Surprised with an old Melody - in a delicious place - by a delicious voice, felt over again

your very Speculations and Surmises at the time it first operated on your Soul - do you not remember forming to yourself the singer's face more beautiful than it was possible and yet with the elevation of the Moment you did not think so - even then you were mounted on the Wings of Imagination so high - that the Prototype must be here after - that delicious face you will see." As to the Proustian theme Proffer directs the reader to chapter III of *Le Temps Retrouvé* and concludes, after mentioning the main parallels, that "no brief quote can adequately convey Proust's ideas." Nabokov's discussion of this chapter in *Lectures on Literature* ("the great third chapter," p. 246), published twelve years after Proffer's book, confirms Proffer's explanations amply. William Anderson ("Time and Memory in Nabokov's *Lolita*," *The Centennial Review*, 24, Summer 1980, p. 364) in addition to these links sees a remarkable parallel between Keats' phrase and a passage from *Un Amour de Swann* in which the hearing of a piano sonata instantaneously kindles the memory of the protagonist.

When reading Keats' letter, however, one is seized by a far more striking similarity. Keats discusses the impetus of "an old Melody", "a delicious place" and "a delicious voice". This conjunction comes, so it seems, straight from chapter XLI of Sir Walter Scott's *Guy Mannering*. The threesome, melody, place and voice and its impact on memory are all present here, and in what magnificence. In this chapter it is related how Bertram, one of the main characters of the novel, set foot on the shore unknowingly close to the enchanting ruins of the castle of his father and ancestors. Having been kidnapped at the age of five, he only has "tender though faint remembrance" of his childhood. But his memory is revived by the surroundings he knew so well, he is reminded of a tune, "took his flageolet from his pocket, and played a simple melody." The music causes a nearby "damsel" to sing the matching

ballad. Although this damsel is given only two sentences, her presence is of much importance because her singing restores Bertram's memory completely. In the *Roxburgh-edition* (1859-1861) for example, two full-page illustrations, on subsequent pages (rendering the old castle and the damsel) express the powerful and unforgettable effect these scenes have on the reader.

"The narrative interest in Bertram" says Edgar Johnson (*Sir Walter Scott, the Great Unknown*, London: Hamish Hamilton, 1970, Vol. I, p. 533) "is that of self-recognition," and this is achieved by means of searching the recesses of memory.

In retracing his earliest recollections Bertram wonders whether their vagueness might not indicate that they stem from "a state of previous existence." In his letter Keats too tends to locate the origin in the "here after", and the same surmise is found with Nabokov as he classifies the probing of his childhood "next best to proving one's eternity" (*Speak, Memory*, Ch. 1). In discussing *Lolita*, Brian Boyd mentions Humbert's" attempt to escape the trap of time" (*A.Y.*, p. 228) and it is certain that Humbert's paper is a far less harmful attempt than his capturing of Dolly as a venture to find a communion with "the intangible island of entranced time" where she is supposed to dwell (*Lolita*, I. Ch. 5).

However convincing the supposition might be that Scott supplied the background for Keats' letter, we have to face the statement of Keats' landlord and friend, Charles Brown, "that Keats had not then read that novel." In the Summer of 1818 (a year after the letter to Bailey was written) Keats and Brown toured the Lake District, the Scottish Borders and the Highlands. Brown's report, from which the above quotation is taken, is a reconstruction by Brown from the journal he kept during the tour, and was published in 1840 (Carol Kyros Walker, *Walking North with Keats*, New Haven and London: Yale U.P., 1993, p. 223 and p. 237). Together with his report, Keats' poem "Meg

Merrilies" was published. Meg Merrilies, one of the more successful monochrome minor types of Scott, figures in *Guy Mannering* and triumphantly dominates several scenes. Brown writes how one morning during the trip in the Borders "he chatted half the way about *Guy Mannering*" and how much the scenery reminded him of Meg Merrilies. The fact that Brown was the first to publish the poem might have been a reason to bring into prominence his own role. Brown's editorship on a different occasion has not been uncriticised (M. Buxton Forman, *The Poetical Works of John Keats*, London: Oxford U.P., 1931, Introduction, p. XIV-XV). It is curious to see that Brown mentions his telling Keats of *Guy Mannering* (which "Keats had not than read") on the walk from Dalbeattie to Kirkcudbright which took place on Friday, July 3rd, while Keats had already written a letter containing the poem to his sister on July 2nd. Brown says that Keats was writing the ballad *during* the trip, whereas, Keats says that "*since* I scribbled the song we walked through a beautiful country to Kirkcudbright" (italics added). Moreover, it is unlikely that a recountal of *Guy Mannering* concentrates so much on Meg Merrilies (the events which befall Bertram as well as the characters of Dandie Dinmont, Dominie Sampson and Guy Mannering, and not to forget the heroines, seem far more interesting) that Keats was enticed to devote his poem to her. His inspirations more likely to have come from the reading of the novel itself. (Walker, p. 163, emphasizes Meg Merrilies' popularity by mentioning a race-horse named after her in 1916, but, to give another example, Dandie Dinmont's name was given to a whole breed of terrier dog.)

Furthermore, in his letter of 5 January 1818 Keats discusses Scott's novels generally. Apart from *Rob Roy* which left the press on 31 December 1817, five of his novels were published at that time: *Waverley, Guy Mannering, The Antiquary, The Black Dwarf* and *Old Mortality*. As Keats mentions

The Antiquary explicitly it is more likely that his reference applies to the first two novels published earlier. A final argument can be found in the poetry of Wordsworth to which both Keats and Scott refer. In *Guy Mannering* we read: "'Why is it,' he thought, continuing to follow out the succession of ideas which the scene prompted 'why is it that some scenes awaken thoughts, which belong as it were to dreams of early and shadowy recollection, such as my old Brahmin Moonshie would have ascribed to a state of previous existence? Is it the visions of our sleep that float confusedly in our memory . . .'" Why Scott mystifies Wordsworth (who, different from i.a. Southey and Shelley, had no inclination to turn to Asia for inspiration) into the name of the Brahmin, is unclear, but he must have meant this poet as "shadowy recollections" is borrowed from his famous "Ode, Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood" (l. 149). And the floating visions of sleep recall the lines 56-57; "Whither is fled the visionary gleam? / Where is it now, the glory and the dreams?," while the "previous existence" might be taken from Wordsworth' "Tintern Abbey," line 149.

Keats, who took an "exceeding delight" in Wordsworth' "Ode" and who was "never weary of repeating it" (M. Buxton Forman, *Letters of John Keats*, London: H. Milford, UP, 1931, Vol. I, p. 74) must have recognised Scott's allusions which might have caused him to refer in his letter to Bailey to this "Ode" as well in his hope "that years should bring the philosophic Mind" which is, without Wordsworth's assertive mode, taken from line 186.

In summary it can be said that in view of Brown's inaccuracies, the unlikelihood that the recounting of *Guy Mannering* might have led to an hypertrophy of such disproportion of Meg Merrilies that it inspired Keats' poem, and the very close correspondences between Keats' letter and Scott's chapter XLI that the Proustian theme

originates in Scott and subsequently in Wordsworth because he was digging dung in his garden while composing his "Ode" (Dorothy Wordsworth, *Grasmere Journal*, entry of 27 March 1802). It is not very plausible that Humbert, as his creator never showed any appreciation for Scott's prose works, did enough digging to unearth the origin of Keats' Proustian theme and so has little reason to complain of the six or seven scholars who chuckled over his paper.

--Gerard de Vries, Voorschoten, The Netherlands

COMPUTING *LOLITA*

While re-reading the very first page of *Lolita*, I've been struck by a very odd and intriguing sentence, which, at the first glimpse, seemed utterly obscure and impossible to understand. Actually, it turned out that this sentence was then followed by similar strange lines which, when put altogether, and only then, made sense and constituted a riddle. This enigma, almost sneaking its way through the first 40 pages of the book, seems to shed some new light on the text; or more explicitly, some new incertitude on it. Indeed, a reader willing to crack this mysterious code would then realize that the answer to this riddle is nearly as puzzling as the riddle itself and that the final explanation only arrives in Chapter 19 when the whole mechanism of the enigma is at last understandable.

But let's submit its compact version to your sagacity:
(All pages are referred to the Weidenfeld and Nicholson edition).

The question is to find when (which year) that particular summer took place.

1. "Oh when? About as many years before Lolita was born as my age was that summer." Part one, chapter 1, p. 11
2. "I was born in 1910, in Paris". Chap. 2, p.11
3. "But that mimosa [the mimosa of "that particular summer"] grove . . . until at last twenty four years later, I broke her [Annabel's] spell by incarnating her in another [Lolita]." Chap. 4, 17
4. "Now at twelve [when HH meets Lolita for the first time], she [Lolita] was a regular pest." Chap. 11, p.47.

All the information in brackets is just meant to clarify the riddle for someone who wouldn't know anything about the novel. No extra information should be sought from the book in order to find the answer. A corollary question could be to find out in which year Lolita was born, and in which year Humbert Humbert met Lolita for the first time. The correct answer should not only give these dates, but also prove that it's mathematically the unique possible answer. It should also try to explain the discrepancy found between the result and what the text urges to believe.

Answer

The set of 4 assertions written above can be reduced into a high school arithmetic problem if we call x the year of that particular summer, y the year of birth of Lolita and z the year of their first encounter.

1 and 2 become:	$y = 2.x-1910$
3 becomes:	$z-x = 24$
4 becomes:	$z-y = 12$

The determinant of this system is:

$$\begin{vmatrix} 2 & 1 & 0 \\ -1 & 0 & 1 \\ 0 & -1 & 1 \end{vmatrix} = 3$$

It is therefore not equal to 0, which assures us to obtain a unique, non trivial solution, which is:

$x=22$
$y=34$
$z=46$

Such a solution, even if very satisfying from the mathematical point of view, becomes quite embarrassing when compared to the text. Indeed, the story strongly urges the reader to believe that this summer took place in 1923:

". . . this was just before sending me, in the autumn of 1923, to a lycée in Lyon (where we were to spend three winters); but alas, in the summer of that year, he was touring Italy with Mme de R. and her daughter, and I had nobody to complain to, nobody to consult." Chap 2. p.13

"When I was child and she was a child, my little Annabel was no nymphet to me; I was her equal, a faunlet in my own right, on that same enchanted island of time; but today, in September 1952, after twenty-nine years have elapsed, I think I can distinguish in her the initial fateful elf in my life." Chap.5 p.19-20

In a brave attempt to elucidate this mysterious mismatch, I substituted another version of the third assertion, dug out p.40, in which HH contradicts himself (Is that intentional? Is that meant to show how HH's brain suddenly flooded by adrenaline, looses track of time, as he sees Lolita for the first time?):

"The twenty five years I had lived since then, tapered to a palpitating point, and vanished." Chap. 10, p.40

Anyway this new input turned out to be of little help because the resolution of the system then gives the following solution:

x=23
y=36
z=48

. . . which is correct for the year of HH's affair with Annabel, but still doesn't explain the odd result for y and z. So, was this riddle set up on purpose to mislead a reader fond of chessboard enigmas and arithmetic problems? Of course not, the answer is much more trivial, and is given by the revelation of Lolita's birthday:

"On Lo's twelfth, January 1, 1947, . . ." Chap.19, p.81

It thus allows us to write down an little calendar for the events mentioned above:

HH's birthdate: 1910
HH's encounter with Annabel: summer 1923
Lolita's birth: 1935-01-01
HH's first meeting with Lolita: June 1947

The very reason for the slight mismatch between the riddle's result and the text comes from the "ABOUT" of the first assertion. For the sake of easiness, it was then roughly translated in the mathematical language as an "exactly", whereas it should have been understood as a "plus or minus 18 months" (18 months being the average between the extreme boundaries 12 and 24 months, depending on when HH is born in the year).

Some comments:

The question of knowing whether this riddle, *a pure classic in style*, perfectly matches with the text or underlines some inconsistencies is probably of no importance. On the other hand, I have found quite funny that a book dedicated to a twelve year old girl contains in its first lines such an odd sentence ("Oh when? About as many years

before Lolita was born as my age was that summer."), a bit like one of these high school arithmetic problem we all suffered on (<<In how many years, the sum of the age of Fred (190) and Julie (6) will be half of the sum of their parents' age (both 35)>>humm humm, does it ring a bell?).

But beyond the arithmetic, it's the way the riddle appears in the story that is interesting: it's not given as a block, that the reader has to solve. It's rather like a snake that the reader has to track through the lines. The first assertion sounds like an attractive mystery (three unknowns in one sentence), but the second one, already, sounds more like the beginning of a clue, just enough to tell the reader that there is some consistency and that the other crucial sentences must be somewhere in the text; up to him to reconstruct the puzzle. Indeed, the way clues of this riddle have been dispatched in the text (randomly, or so it seemed . . .) reminds a detective story, or more likely the tortuous twists and turns of a chess problem or even more likely the twists and turns of the mind of a mad man. Don't forget after all, that it's the same mad man who ". . . discovered there was an endless source of robust enjoyment in trifling with psychiatrists: cunningly leading them on; never letting them see that you know all the tricks of the trade; inventing for them elaborate dreams, *pure classics in style*. . ." (Chap.9, p.36). Elaborate dreams or elaborate riddles? A game within the text, a detective story, a chess problem . . . none of that sounds too unfamiliar for Nabokov; just to mention the eye and the idea that the whole book is meant to be a game, or more perniciously; a test! Who's able to crack the identity of the eye? Who's able to crack the riddle and to find out in which year was Lolita born, before the text explicitly mentions it? Actually, I think this riddle inlayed in the text reminds me much more of *Pale Fire* than *The Eye*. Just as if, suddenly, the little music of a riddle embedded in the chronicle of a murder, resonated

as the echo for the chronicle of murder embedded in the music of a poem. . . .

--Yvan Chaxel, University College, London

LOLITA'S RIDDLE

The recent consensus reached by various Nabokovians that Humbert's fateful summer with Annabel must have been 1922 runs into a problem when other, more straightforward, evidence is brought into play. Namely, Humbert tells us that his first year of travels with Lolita--which journey commences directly from Camp Q at the end of his first summer in the Haze household--covered August 1947 to August 1948 (*The Annotated Lolita* 154 *and* 175). This means that he first met Lolita in June of 1947. Using now the figure of 24 years cited by HH as the gap between Annabel and Lo, this 'Annabel summer' occurred in 1923--not 1922.

Moreover, the 1947 starting point for Humbert's relationship with Lolita (and hence the 1923 date of his sojourn with Annabel) is later corroborated when Humbert speaks of the "three empty years" (253) that passed between Lolita's escape from the Elphinstone hospital and the arrival of her letter dated September 18, 1952. This means that she forsakes HH for Quilty on Independence Day of 1949. Knowing as we do that she and HH have spent two years in miserable cohabitation, we are again brought back to 1947 as the starting point of their relationship. These figures could be further underscored by various evidence relating to Lolita's birthdays (evidence which, by the way, shows that she was born in 1935, not 1934; see, for instance, p. 255 for evidence that her fifteenth birthday took place-- in absentia from HH--on January 1, 1950). [Since submitting this note to NABOKV-L, I have looked back at the early portion of the novel and found, to

my chagrin, still more straightforward references to the 1947 starting point for Humbert's relationship with Lolita, beginning with John Ray's reference tot he "fatal summer of 1947" in his foreword to the fictional memoir (*The Annotated Lolita* 5). Those who are interested in a minute chronology of all the events in the novel might also consult Carl Proffer's 1968 book, *Keys to Lolita*, specifically Appendix B entitled "A Calendar of *Lolita*."]

If it is tempting to find in this discussion a sequel to the "Three Days' controversy that occupied the considerable attentions of Dolinin, Connolly, and Boyd in the recent *Nabokov Studies* #2, we might notice that, in this case, Nabokov has covered his math with two notable ambiguities in the passages Chaxel has cited. First, HH tells us that he was born in 1910, but does not specify the exact birthday. This lack of preciseness makes it possible that he might have been 12 in the summer of 1923 if, for instance, his birthday were in November of 1910. To explain this ambiguity another way, the passages quoted by Chaxel misled the various problem-solvers to treat the numbers involved as integers -- perfectly whole numbers -- when in fact these numbers, because they all refer to years (which can, at the least, be broken up into 365 distinct parts), cannot be treated as meek and entirely manipulable integers. Second, note that HH describes his Annabel summer as occurring "ABOUT as many years before Lolita was born as my age was that summer" (emphasis added). If he had used 'exactly' instead of 'about,' then we might accuse the author of slipping up in his math, but the actual phrasing leaves him a subtle way out.

Finally, there is always this to help us fend off the natural temptation to seek solutions to Nabokov's elegant riddles by applying seamless algebraic formulae to his plot sequences:

"In this divinely absurd world of the mind, mathematical symbols do not thrive. Their interplay, no matter how smoothly it works, no

matter how dutifully it mimics the convolutions of our dreams and the quantums of our mental associations, can never really express what is utterly foreign to their nature, considering that the main delight of the creative mind is the sway of the seemingly incongruous detail over a seemingly dominant generalization. When commonsense is ejected together with its calculating machine, numbers cease to trouble the mind. Statistics pluck up their skirts and sweep out in a huff. Two and two no longer make four, because it is no longer necessary for them to make four. If they had done so in the artificial logical world which we have left, it had been merely a matter of habit: two and two used to make four in the same way as guests invited to dinner expect to make an even number. But I invite my numbers to a giddy picnic and then nobody minds whether two and two make five or five minus some quaint fraction." (VN, "The Art of Literature and Commonsense")

--Brian Walter, Washington University, Saint Louis

ON EXILES AND REGICIDES

In *Look at the Harlequins* Pt. iv, ch. 1 there appears the narrator's assistant "Waldemar Exkul, a brilliant young Balt, incomparably more learned than I; *dixi*, Ex!").

Woldemar Graf Uxkull-Gyllenband (1898-1939), a German count of Swedish extraction and Professor of Ancient History in Tu"bingen, was killed in a traffic accident a few months before the outbreak of the war. He was best known in the scholarly world for his *Plutarch und die griechische Biographie* (Stuttgart 1927); for an obituary see *Bursians Jahresberichte* 284 (1943) 58-60.

The coincidence of the Nordic origins and of the name with that of the learned assistant, in a book with biography as its central theme, is obvious enough. The shared Christian name with the author may have helped; the change of the first letter of the surname may well be due to Nabokov's interest in exiles, and thus "Ex!" at the end of the above quotation should be regarded a private joke.

However, there is one more connexion to be explored. The above-mentioned obituary, delayed by the circumstances, was written by Alexander Graf Schenk von Stauffenberg, himself an ancient historian and brother of Claus, who attempted to assassinate Hitler on July 20th, 1944: the Stauffenbergs were first cousins of Uxkull-Gyllenband. It appears that it was Uxkull-Gyllenband's father who introduced, after the death of his only son, his nephew to the conspiracy. Nikolaus Graf von Uxkull-Gyllenband was among those executed after the failure of the assassination. May one surmise that the name stuck somehow in Nabokov's memory in the Berlin days and was revived and introduced into a late work because of his interest in regicides?

--Joseph Geiger, Department of Classics, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

CHUKOVSKI AND THE NABOKOVS

by Anna Muza

Two volumes of Kornei Chukovski's diaries, recently published by his granddaughter Elena Chukovski, contain several references to the Nabokov family that may be of interest to Nabokov scholars. (K. Chukovski. *Dnevnik. 1901-1929*. Moskva, Sovetskij pisatel', 1991. K. Chukovski. *Dnevnik. 1930-1969*. Moskva, Sovremennyj pisatel', 1994. The two parts are further referred to as (I) and (II) respectively.)

Kornei Ivanovich Chukovski (1882-1969) lived a long life, spared by time and, more remarkably, by the Soviet regime. An original critic, reviewer, and translator who became known in the prerevolutionary decade, he continued his diverse activities after 1917 and was recognized toward the end of his life as a prominent literary historian, authority on Anglo-American literature and the theory of translation, essayist, editor, and, last but not least, creator of eccentric and delightful verse for children. The degree of Honorary Doctor of Literature bestowed on him in 1962 by Oxford University testifies to the significance of his work; yet the overall significance of his cultural role is much broader and can hardly be expressed in formal terms. A biographer and a scholar, dedicated to the restoration of the past in its human element and palpable detail, Chukovski was a conscious and conscientious chronicler of literary and artistic life. Invariably surrounded by prominent or promising literary personae of the day, from Rozanov and Blok to Akhmatova and Pasternak to the Futurists to the Formalists, he looked at his milieu from a historical perspective and devoted much labor and zeal to the preservation of cultural memory.

His book *On Alexander Blok, the Poet and the Man* (1925), written immediately after Blok's death, remains one of the best contemporary insights into the poet's inner world and lyrical gift. In the 1960s, Chukovski published his memoirs of those among his distinguished acquaintances who were approved of or tolerated by the ruling ideology. Ten years after his death, his remarkable collection of autographs and literary miscellania, *Chukokkala*, finally saw light and presented, even in its mutilated and incomplete form, rare data, unexpected connections, meaningful trifles that rekindled life in the dead matter of the past. Now his diaries ultimately represent Chukovski's knack as an observer who combined sharp judgment, psychological subtlety and historical sense. It has been remarked that upon Chukovski's death in 1969 Russia lost the last link to her past; yet Chukovski ensured that the link not be entirely lost after his "brief crack of light between two eternities of darkness" had extinguished.

Fascination with memory, nuance and detail underlies the Nabokov-Chukovski conversation across time and space. Generally, the Nabokovs kept emerging in Chukovski's life in a pattern that would have amused the author of *Pnin*. Approached in the 1910s by V.D. Nabokov for an expert opinion on his son's verse, Chukovski in the last years of his life worked on a critical review of the son's translation of *Eugene Onegin*. Chukovski's ardent passion for the English language and literature made his encounter with the Anglophile Petersburg family more than likely. Indeed, according to Chukovski, Konstantin Nabokov, Vladimir Dmitrievich's brother, "fell in love with [him] after [his] translations of Whitman." (II, 404) Chukovski remembered his relationship with Konstantin Nabokov in 1968, sick, hospitalized, jotting down "whatever came to mind". Curiously, what came to his mind one nightly hour was Konstantin's

"lean figure, gaunt and rumpled face, excellent suit from a Parisian tailor. He came to see me in Kuokkala straight upon arriving from abroad, without even paying a visit to his mother in Siverskaya (the whole Siverskaya belonged to the Nabokovs). I had no money. The family was huge. Our entire dinner consisted of pea-soup. I was going on a tour with a lecture on Oscar Wilde, if memory serves. He accompanied me to Moscow, to Vilno, to Vitebsk, and listened to my lecture, the same lecture, over and over again. He would stay in expensive hotels and take me to expensive restaurants which led to a considerable dwindling of my honoraria. After we had returned to Moscow, certain things Kostya did made me *realize* that he was a homosexual and his love for me was a kind of yearning. He loved art, was extremely courteous and interested in poetry. Later I met him in London where he served as the First Secretary of the Russian Embassy, and our friendship came to an end. But in Petersburg we have been close." (II, 404-405)

According to Elena Chukovski, Professor Shiaikovich's archive in the University of Stockholm contains forty letters written by Konstantin Nabokov to Chukovski between 1909-1916 (II, 510). The meeting in London that the diarist refers to must have occured in 1916 when representatives of the Russian press were invited to visit Great Britain, Russia's war ally. It is not clear what circumstances terminated Konstantin Nabokov's relationship with Chukovski, yet the latter was destined to have a Nabokov for a companion during his stay in England. Unsurprisingly, the delegation included Vladimir Dmitrievich in his capacity of the editor of the newspaper *Rech'* and, one assumes, that of a connoisseur of the British world. As it often

happens, the two men, belonging essentially to very different circles, were drawn to each other in a new context, away from home. Chukovski recalled some of their shared English experiences in 1922, having learnt about V.D. Nabokov's death. The long diary entry that follows reveals that, despite numerous reservations about V.D. Nabokov's personality, Chukovski's impression of him was both deep and lasting.

"March 29 [1922]

(. . . .)

Nabokov has been killed. Lord, how many deaths: Doroshevich yesterday, Nabokov today. I remember Nabokov for about fifteen years. Not particularly gifted, he was a typical best student. Everything he did deserved an "A". His book *In England*, mediocre, colorless, and dull, resembles a school paper. Amazingly little did he notice in England; amazingly lifeless was his account of it. He had the superiority of the best student, too. I remember the speech he delivered at a dinner (writers' dinner) in London, concerning the situation in Russia. In very reserved terms he expressed his delight at the sovereign's visiting the parliament. It suited the moment very well and was conceived to create a (minor) sensation in the press. The success really exhilarated him. I remember how, overjoyed, he invited me to accompany him to the theatre and at the supper afterwards kept referring to that speech of his all the time. His Petersburg house in Morskaya [street] where I was once or maybe twice looked like a citadel of egotism: three storeys, a great number of rooms with only one family living there! His essays (e.g. on Dickens) are but sentimental and spiritless compilations. The first word that everybody uttered when it concerned Nabokov: a grandee, isn't he?

"It disturbed everyone at the editorial office of *Rech'* that he came to the office in a motorcar, that he kept a cook, held a subscription to the opera and so on. (Hessen tried to live up to him most

amusingly: he would also frequent the ballet, listen to an opera with the score in his hands and so on.) His suits, his ties were aped and envied. He treated the [paper] reporters politely yet icily. As for me, we become closer for a while: I was a friend of his brother's, Konstantin Nabokov: apart from that, he was curious to know my critical opinion of his son's verse. I visited him two or three times and did not like it at all: everything looked standoffish and non-Russian. There was a landing on the main stairway beyond which he would not go, seeing off the insignificant visitors. Those who tend to take offense got offended indeed.

"Yet there was something good about him too. The voice, first of all. A heartfelt and heart-piercing voice, coming from God knows where. I recall our ride on the top-deck of an omnibus in Newcastle one wet night. The fog was marvelously thick. It felt as if we were on the bottom of an ocean. Any lights were prohibited for the fear of zeppelins. People were passing by in total darkness. Sitting next to me, Nabokov kept talking--in such a penetrating voice, like a poet. He was delivering commonplaces yet they sounded poetic. After the foreign fashion, he called me simply Chukovski, and I called him simply Nabokov, and there was a certain charm in that. He knew literature, particularly foreign literature, like the back of his hand; the staff of *Rech'* were so confident in his omniscience that they would turn to him for reference (particularly Azov): where does this quotation come from? when did the German poet so-and-so live? And Nabokov would answer. Yet his knowledge was trivial, data rather than knowledge. He knew everything than an educated person is supposed to know, only that much and nothing else. Another nice thing in him was his tender love for Korolenko whose good disposition he cherished very much. His involvement in Beylis's trial also must be considered a significant personal (not public) achievement. There also was some precision or

purity in him, as it was in his handwriting, lacking wit, but bold, even, large and straight. He was a pure and conscientious man; his wife adored him excessively, almost passionately, in public. He must have been providing assistance (financial) to quite a few people, at the same time keeping clear and plain records of it (it seems) in a notebook, equally clear and accurate.

"He did not condescend to such dull people as O.L.D'or: indeed, what could he discuss with a Jewish jester of poor taste, who was ignorant of both good books and good manners! Now Old'or has avenged himself most repulsively. His article is despicable in its presumptuousness and forced cynicism. [O.L.D'or's article on V. D. Nabokov was published in *Pravda* on April 1, 1922.] Having read it, one suffers all the more that the man who has been killed was such a calm, pure, benevolent gentleman who stood in no one's way, who, even though a millionaire, belonged to the Russian intelligentsia.

"Incidentally: I have just remembered a remark he made in 1916 upon the public welcome we had received in London:

-- Oh, what liars we must feel now! We keep smiling as if nothing were the matter, while...

-- While what?

-- While the army is falling apart; a disaster is imminent, we expect it any day...

He said that exactly one year before the revolution, and I have recalled these words of his many times.

Striking, prophetic words are written on his account in my *Chukokkala*:

The hero will be honored with [an obituary in]
a black frame
And a typographic tear
By the fireproof Milyukov.
And Hessen will become an orphan.

Milyukov turned out to be fireproof [so in English - A.M.] indeed. This was written by Nemirovich in 1916." (I, 205-206)

In 1916, the notion that Milyukov would have to lament V. D. Nabokov's death was merely a joke made by the journalist and writer Vassily Nemirovich-Danchenko. An account of it can be found in Chukovski's commentary accompanying *Chukokkala*. As the ship taking the representatives of the Russian press to Britain was crossing the Northern sea, some prankster wanted to scare his colleagues, informing them that the sea was virtually saturated with German mines and the perilous journey could very well be their last. The writer Alexei Tolstoy took it so seriously that he immediately jotted down a report on the hazards the delegation had to endure on its way. After the incident had been cleared out, Nemirovich wrote a jocular poem in Chukovski's album, discussing the losses the Russian public would suffer should all the members of the delegation perish at sea. In the previous stanza V. D. Nabokov is said to have borne "his journalist's sword without fear and without reproach": the knightly metaphor appears no less "strikingly prophetic" in hindsight.

Concerning Chukovski's opinion of Nabokov's first "little book" of verse, Brian Boyd says that the critic "wrote the young poet a polite letter of praise but enclosed in the envelope, as if by mistake, a rough draft outlining a franker judgment." (*Vladimir Nabokov. The Russian Years*, p. 121) Chukovski's journals reveal no traces of such an incident: it is remarkable, however, that he would ask a young author of whose talent he did not think much to write something into his precious *Chukokkala* (Boyd, 117). Perhaps it was his appreciation of the father or the family name that prompted the critic to do so; or perhaps his opinion of the son's verse was not so low after all.

According to Elena Chukovski, *Chukokkala* has preserved one early poem of Vladimir Nabokov which is not to be found in the 1979 edition. It is also worth mentioning that Chukovski's perception of certain traits of V. D. Nabokov bears

striking, sometimes literal, resemblance to Vladimir Nabokov's portrait of his father in *Speak, Memory*. VN says of V. D. Nabokov's school years that "his desire to excel was overwhelming": a feature that Chukovski saw as fundamental in Nabokov Senior. VN devotes a whole passage to his father's "copy-book-slanted, beautifully sleek, unbelievably regular hand, almost free of corrections, a purity, a certainty..." Asserting that his father belonged, "as he did by choice, to the great classless intelligentsia of Russia", Nabokov gives his answer to the question that "disturbed" the raznochinets Chukovski and many others in his environment: could "a grandee" and "a millionaire" truly belong to the intelligentsia? Chukovski's view of the matter could have been decided by the circumstances of V. D. Nabokov's death; but the opinion he expressed in 1922 was identical to VN's.

Chukovski himself appeared on the pages of *Speak, Memory* in connection with the same visit to England--this epicentrum of the waves of recollections. Working on his autobiography, Nabokov discovered in the New York Public Library his father's book, *A Report on England at War*. The book which Chukovski dismisses with his characteristic vehemence was not meant as a *jeu d'esprit* of a travelling man of letters: it was but a collection of VDN's daily reports covering the official visit for his newspaper. The reporter's son may have felt somewhat disappointed (not unlike Chukovski) not to find "many samples therein of his habitual humor." Perhaps willing to restore his father's true voice and wit, the author of *Speak, Memory* chose to tell an amusing anecdote which is not recorded in V. D. Nabokov's book:

> "There had been ... a funny interview with George V whom Chukovski, the *enfant terrible* of the group, insisted on asking if he liked the works of Oscar Wilde--"dze ooarks of ooald." The king, who was baffled by his interrogator's

accent and who, anyway, had never been a voracious reader, neatly countered by inquiring how his guests liked the London fog (later Chukovski used to cite this triumphantly as an example of British cant--tabooing a writer because of his morals)." (*Speak, Memory*, G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1966, p. 254)

In the Russian version of the autobiography, *Drugie berega*, the episode is presented with a variance. The king answers in French--and king's French was "not much better than his interlocutor's English. Chukovski grasped only that the king was changing the subject"; the conversation thus becomes a virtual quid pro quo.

Chukovski countered, to use Nabokov's word, in 1961. As the following passage shows, he must have read *Speak, Memory* earlier but left no indication of that in the diary. However, he remembered the Nabokov version of the royal interview in a rather unexpected context, namely, when reading *Pnin*.

"Now I am reading Vladimir Nabokov's *Pnin* [both the name and the title are in English - A.M.], a great tale of the glory of a virtuous Russian man thrown into American academic life. The book is poetical and wise: it is about the Russian quasi-professor Timofey Pnin, absent-minded, childish, funny and magnanimous. The book is permeated with sarcasm--and love.

In this book, the author imparts to the reader his recollections of a Russian whom he had met in Petrograd, in Paris, in America. The Russian in question does not hold a particularly high opinion of his biographer's truthfulness. Once, in Pnin's presence, the story-teller began discussing a certain Lyudmila and Pnin gave a loud cry of warning to his listeners:

"Don't believe a word he says... He makes up every thing. He is a dreadful inventor" (p. 153) [the

quotation appears in Russian and then in English - A.M.]

Regretfully, I have discovered this through my own experience. In his memoirs, the novelist tells a story he heard from his father, Vlad. Dmitrievich Nabokov: allegedly, when I appeared in Buckingham Palace before the king, I asked George V a question about Oscar Wilde. Nonsense! The king read his speech from notes, and so did V. D. Nabokov. One was not supposed to converse with the king. All this is a fable. He belies his father..."

Chukovski thus believed the son, not the father, to be "a dreadful inventor." Chukovski gave *Pnin* to Anna Akhmatova whose personal association with it was much more immediate: Akhmatova's verse is parodied in the novel. Unlike Chukovski, Akhmatova was too offended to be able to give the book its due: her reaction has been aptly recorded by Lydia, Chukovski's daughter and Akhmatova's friend, in *her* diary:

"Tonight's indignation concerns *Pnin* ... She did not like the book on the whole and as regards herself, she considers it to be a lampoon."

In 1962, Chukovski was allowed to visit England to receive the honorary degree from Oxford University in person. When in London, he saw another participant of the debated exchange at the royal reception: he remained silent but his reappearance provided the last chapter in this story:

"... I trodded away to the immortal beautiful Westminster abbey and on my way [saw] monuments: a monument to Canning, to Lincoln and ... George V. I was shaken. In Moscow, I got used to walking among the statues of people I knew: Mayakovsky, Gorky; but here in London, to find a statue, a huge and pompous one, of the man whom you have seen alive, whose voice you have heard -- it is very strange." (II, 317)

Short references to Vladimir Nabokov's works are scattered in Chukovski's journals of the last

years of his life. In 1965, he remembered Nabokov's characterization (in *Drugie Berega*) of the painter Ilya Repin (1844-1930), Chukovski's dear friend and artistic idol. "Now Repin's name is on the banner of the reactionaries, so in keeping with the current trend one should refrain from praising him; but to hell with the trend -- despite everything, I loved him very much, though I agree with Vl. Nabokov that his *Pushkin at the Examination* and *The Duel of Onegin and Lensky* are but paltry pictures." (II, 370). In 1967, Chukovski started reading *Invitation to a Beheading* but could not get beyond 40 pages: the book seemed "obscure and pretentious rubbish" to the eighty-five-year-old reader. (II, 393) He kept working on his review of Nabokov's *Onegin*, occasionally deploring his inability to devote the necessary amount of time to this endeavor. Chukovski does not indicate whether the review was meant for publication and most likely it was not; even in the "liberal" 60s the scrupulous diarist never mentions where or from whom he obtained any of Nabokov's books. Perhaps Nabokov's *Onegin* simply gave the aged critic a chance to reflect on the two things he cherished most: Russian poetry and English language.

ANNOTATIONS TO *ADA*
6. Part 1 Chapter 6

by Brian Boyd

To the other abbreviations listed in *Nabokovian* 30: 11-12 and 32: 54 I should add TS, for the typescript of *Ada* (a copy exists in the Berg Collection, New York Public Library, and another at the Beinecke Library, Yale). I quote from the Yale TS, listing only the most interesting variants (such as the astonishing example at 42.34).

Forenote:

For the first time Van and Ada are alone together--perfectly innocently, despite Marina's qualms, as Van imagines them at the end of the previous chapter.

Joyce called the deflating earthiness of *Ulysses*'s closing chapter the necessary countersign to Bloom's passport to eternity (Stuart Gilbert, ed., *Letters of James Joyce* [New York: Viking, 1957], I, 160). In the same way, Nabokov underwrites the later lyricism of Van's relation to Ada and Ardis by stressing in this chapter the mundaneness of their first afternoon together: their mutual unease, Van's peevish irritation, his initial edginess at Ardis.

Just as *Ulysses* highlights a particular "art" in each chapter, this chapter focuses on architecture, as Ada shows Van and us around Ardis Manor. Teaching Austen, Nabokov would stress that "Without a visual perception of the larch labyrinth in *Mansfield Park* that novel loses some of its stereographic charm" (*SO* 157), and his *Lectures on Literature* feature his maps of Sotherton Court (31) and Mansfield Park (33), the latter with the comment "We shall never reach the moon or explore the blue mountains of Venus if [we] continue to prefer the general to the specific, the group to the individual." He wants his readers to be

ABSTRACTS

NABOKOV'S EYE

by Samuel Shuman

(Abstract of a paper presented at the Philological Association of the Carolinas in March, 1995)

"I think I was born a painter—really!—and up to my fourteenth year, perhaps, I used to spend most of the day drawing and painting and I was supposed to become a painter in due time" (*SO* 17).

This paper explores the workings of Nabokov's visual imagination through the careful and detailed explication of two scenes of striking pictorial quality. Both passages are well-known, and have been cited for their particularly visual character. They are from very different works.

The first text is from *Laughter in the Dark*, and is the climatic scene of the automobile accident which blinds Albinus. Nabokov said "the scene of the accident I saw vividly as a film" (Appel, *Nabokov's Dark Cinema*). The paper notes the garish colors and dizzying shifts of perspective of the scene.

The second passage is the "stereoscopic dreamland" found at the end of Chapter Five, section 1, of *Speak Memory*: the arrival in Russia of Mademoiselle. This is a picture of shadows, dappled clouds, vague iridescence and delicate sparkle.

Both passages involve dramatic and surprising shifts, the first of place and the second of time. The first is lurid, the second, muted.

In each tableau, and in much of Nabokov's magic prose, there is a breathtakingly exact and ambitious visual character, and a confident parading of self-reflective artistry. It is as if the

subject of Nabokov's paintings, finally, is nothing other than the signature of the artist himself.

A NEW VERSION OF A WELL-KNOWN NABOKOVIAN TEXT: *LAUGHTER IN THE DARK* RESHAPED IN RUSSIAN

by Alexander Luxemburg

(Abstract of a paper delivered at the Nabokov Conference, Texas Tech University, 1995)

It is well known to all Nabokov scholars that his Russian novel *Kamera Obskura* (publ. 1932) differs in many significant respects from its English version *Laughter in the Dark* (publ. 1938). No other version of a Nabokovian text has been so substantially changed as this one. Naturally *Kamera Obscura* and *Laughter in the Dark* should not be viewed as separate novels, but they are, as Field has stated in 1967 "fraternal twins". The differences between them have been thoroughly analyzed by J. Grayson in *Nabokov Translated*. The most striking of these differences are the following ones: 1) The names of the characters are not the same in the two versions. Kretschmar became Albert Albinus, Magda became Margot, and Robert Gorn was transformed into into Axel Rex. 2) The protagonist's new name may be associated with the idea of whiteness and expresses well his naivete and his moral blindness. He also lets the author stress the white/black contrast pattern and to identify the cinematographic imagery. 3) Axel Rex's co-director's role has been emphasized. 4) Chapter 1 has been radically rewritten by the author who starts the English version not with Gorn (Rex), but with Albinus, which is much more logical. Besides, the new opening paragraphs serve as a short summary of the text and stress the

author's full command of the events. 5) Chapters 28 and 29 of *Laughter* introduce the writer Udo Conrad (instead of Hegelkrautz), whose comments on literature and the writer's role reflect Nabokov's own position. 6) But what may be regarded as the most essential characteristic of the English version is its greater stylistic subtlty. Nabokov manages to realize here the specific traits of his play and game stylistics which have been definitely underdeveloped in the novel's Russian version.

It seemed to me that to reconstruct *Laughter in the Dark* in Russian might be a very promising task. I had no doubt that the Russian readership should not be spared the privilege of knowing the other (and I think better) version of Nabokov's widely read novels but it was essential to reshape it in Russian in such a way that it might be perceived as an authentic Nabokovian one. This translation is now available (*Smekh v Temnote*, Rostov na Donu: Kniga, 1994). I must specify that the term "translation" is not fully adequate for describing the method of reshaping. Both variants have been compared and in most cases the Russian text of the first one has served as the basic one. Most of the Nabokovian alterations have been introduced from the English version. Some have been neglected because they must have been motivated by syntaxical or lexical differences between English and Russian. The analysis of the Russian and English *Lolita* helped me to effect this reshaping. Special attention has been paid to preserve the peculiarities of the Nabokovian punctuation which is in his Russian texts somewhat different from his English ones. The most difficult aspect of this work consisted in retaining heavy cases of word-play which appeared in the English version. I am positive that it is not contrary to the Nabokovian practice to create versions of versions of his texts.

HUMBERT HUMBERT: LOLITA'S ENCHANTED HUNTER

by Corinne Laura Scheiner

(Abstract of a paper delivered at the Nabokov Conference, Texas Tech University, 1995)

In "The Magic of Words" (1909), Andrey Bely develops his theory of poetic creation. As a Symbolist and especially as one influenced by Steiner's theories of anthroposophy, Bely believes in the possiblity of a synthesis between the material world and the spiritual world. The "word" provides the locus of this synthesis, for every "word" has both material and spiritual properties, that is sound and meaning, and therefore functions as a quasi- symbol. In addition, poetic speech has the ability to represent the flux and causality of life, for it is a temporal art as opposed to a spatial one. Bely posits that language is an instrument of creation and thus, the "word," which is sound, creates a new world. Bely distinguishes the "word" from terminological and abstract concepts, for only the "word" possesses this creative ability. The poet must, according to Bely, employ poetic and imaginal speech in order to relieve languages and the world from the weight of dead and dying words.

In this paper, I attempt to establish the Belyian influence on Nabokov both in his writings on literature and in his literature itself. First, I examine Nabokov's remarks in *Lectures on Literature* about poetic creation as the creation of a new world and the relationship between the created world of the poet and other worlds. I also discuss Nabokov's view on the roles of the writer, specifically that of enchanter. Second, I examine the process of writing and the figure of the writer as presented in Nabokov's own fiction, with the example of the narrator of *Lolita*, Humbert

Humbert. In analyzing the process of Humbert's poetic creation and the creations themselves, it is possible to establish whether or not Nabokov employs Bely's theories. Humbert recognizes himself first and foremost as a creator of words. I claim that "Lolita," here in quotations indicating its status as a "word," functions in the text as Humbert's ultimate creation.

The rest of the paper is devoted to an analysis of the transformations which "Lolita" undergoes in keeping with Bely's theory of the cyclical progression of eras of degeneration and re-creation in an effort to justify the reading of "Lolita" as the product of Humbert's poetic creation following Bely's specifications. This paper shows that Nabokov's *Lolita* clearly illustrates Bely's ideas of poetic creation and of the role of the poet for Humbert follows the process of bringing to life imaginal speech and expresing in language the inexpressible.

MANY A PLEASANT TUSSLE: EDMUND WILSON AND THE NABOKOVIAN AESTHETIC

by Brian Walter

(Abstract of a paper delivered at the Annual MLA Convention, Chicago, December 1995)

Few prospects horrified Nabokov more than the indifference of his reader. Nabokov's art of preciseness and exclusion entails great costs from both the writer and the reader, requiring of the latter an ability to extract from the act of reading a "shiver of satisfaction, to share not the emotions of the people in the book but the emotions of its author -- the joys and difficulties of creation." Nabokov seeks the audience's surprised pleasure to confirm the affective quality of his work.

This general predicament of the reader's response to Nabokov's work is intensified in the specific case of Edmund Wilson's audience. Only a few of Nabokov's books ever earned a kind word from his friend, and this despite Wilson's habit of being, in Jeffrey Meyers' words, "usually (with the exception of Nabokov) very generous about his friends' work." Moreover, Wilson's criticism is not simply a case of the one-noted Marxist critic decrying a lack of social concern in Nabokov's work; as Galya Diment notes, "Wilson . . . habitually upheld one's absolute right to be a 'pure artist' if the artist's talents and inclinations directed him or her that way." Given his characteristic generosity, Wilson, in his disaffection with his friend's work, understandably drew Nabokov's numerous overt efforts to call attention to the great effort he has expended for the sake of his reader's delight. Thus, Nabokov's attempts to win Wilson over offer a useful microcosm of his work's troubled, complicated relationship with its readers, manifesting the author's great defensiveness while simultaneously extending his earnest, personal, but highly qualified invitation to share in his aesthetic bliss.

My paper briefly sketches the important influence exerted on Nabokov's work by his long struggle with Wilson. Far from introducing into the work a tone of private pettiness, Wilson, by his opposition, in fact lends it precisely the sort of historical dimension -- no matter how diffuse or disguised --that Nabokov consistently scorned.

"MON SEMBLABLE, MON FRERE": BROTHERHOOD, SILENCE, AND THE UNKNOWABLE IN *SPEAK,MEMORY*

by Kevin Ray

(Abstract of a paper delivered at the Annual MLA Convention, Chicago, December 1995)

In what would be a simple three-page description of the ambivalent relations between brothers of very different temperaments, Nabokov, in *Speak, Memory*, sounds a deep note of troubled regret. After a quick dispatch of Kirill, placing him within the author's created life, setting, circumscribing him within the limits of the writer's self-definition, Nabokov returns to Sergey and attempts again what he has, by his own admission, failed before. "For various reasons," he writes, of Sergey, ten months his junior, "I find it inordinately hard to speak about my other brother." To Kirill, his youngest brother and godson, "as happened in Russian families," Nabokov devotes two brief paragraphs of likeness and affection, the younger brother echoing, somewhat diminished, the life and the enthusiasms of the elder. "He loved seaside resorts and rich food," Nabokov writes, and we sense the comfort of his recognition. "He loathed, as much as I do, bullfighting. He spoke five languages. He was a dedicated practical joker. His one great reality in life was literature, especially Russian poetry." Kirill is, for Nabokov, explicable, and can be mapped into his own life.

But Sergey is not mappable, does not make himself available to Nabokov's memory and to the shaping of his pen; he remains enigmatic, to his brother's obvious frustration. Commentator's on Nabokov's representation of this "other brother" have offered, as a rule, two explanations, origins for distance in childhood, in adulthood, and

persisting long into memory: Sergey's homosexuality, revealed through Vladimir's indiscretion, and the tragic bravery of his death. Both are strongly operative, but neither accounts for Nabokov's hesitation and the narrative blankness that issues from the problem of representing Sergey. Rather, Sergey is narratively created *as a problem*; he is created as a problem of memory, an absence. While other elements of Nabokov's life and family history may be forgotten -- lapses still somewhere present, able to be retrieved -- Sergey is, at heart, that unretrievable of absences, a person never known, always alien. He is, in Nabokov's narrative of memory, a blind spot. *Speak, Memory*, centered around the unknowable, unrememberable, hence unwritable, places Nabokov in a circumstance in which, as in the narratives of his much-unloved Freud, forgetfulness overtakes memory, and absence makes itself felt more powerfully than presence. Sergey is a place of unbeing, unknowing.

In this attempted, continually failing, recovery of the personal past, Sergey's attributes become attenuated, the senses by which Nabokov may know him (directly or by affinity) fewer, until Nabokov is left sifting impressions which are insistently visual. The author, sensing that, unlike Kirill, unlike others, *this* is one who has never been known, has never been an intimate, another self, tries to construct this "other brother" from the outside in, from shards, fragments, visual clues. But Sergey remains effaced, and defeats him again; he will not be remembered whole. This paper asserts the centrality of Nabokov's failure to recover and represent Sergey to the memorial project of this decidedly un-Proustian book.

THE LIMINAL AND THE SUBLIMINAL: NABOKOV'S PREFATORY PERSONAE

by Marilyn Edelstein

(Abstract of a paper delivered at the Annual MLA Convention, Chicago, December 1995)

Only recently have literary theorists begun to reconsider the "death of the author." Perhaps because of the hegemony of this assumption in the last twenty years, few critics have analyzed the effects of novelists' non-fiction on the interpretation of their novels. Even fewer have analyzed the effects of those liminal texts, prefaces -- liminal because they are both on the threshold of the novel and on the border between fiction and non-fiction. A writer like Vladimir Nabokov makes it difficult, however, to ignore the question of "the author" -- inside, outside, and on the threshold of the text.

Through a vast corpus of multi-media interviews (orchestrated, compiled, and edited by Nabokov himself), published letters and lectures, an autobiography, a biography, criticism, Nabokov constructed a public persona as artful, fictive, and powerful, in its own way, as his novels. Because of both this persona and Nabokov's complex assertions of his presence within his novels, the interpretation of Nabokov's work has been especially susceptible to authorial manipulation. Nabokov exerts his authority also through a substantial collection of liminal texts -- his (in)famous Forewords.

Most discussions of Nabokov's prefatory texts have dealt with the forewords added to the Russian novels when they were translated into English, forewords written by Nabokov *as* "Vladimir Nabokov." *Lolita*'s Afterword is much like these Forewords, but *Lolita* is unique in Nabokov's oeuvre in also containing a fictive "editor's"

Foreword, written by Nabokov in an assumed "voice," that of "John Ray, Jr., Ph. D." Nabokov's Afterword, although it follows the novel and Ray's Foreword, still fulfills many typical prefatory functions, such as "explaining" the novel's genesis, methods, and significance. Stylistically and thematically, the Afterword is much like those Forewords written by Nabokov *as* Nabokov, and much like his interviews and letters. In this paper, I will read these two essentially prefatory texts with and against both each other and the rest of Nabokov's "meta-text," including other forewords, interviews, and lectures on literature. Through this analysis, I hope to illuminate the complexities of both Nabokovian authorship and of authorial influences more generally on texts, readers, and interpretation. As I will argue, Nabokov's work demonstrates that authors are neither "dead" (or irrelevant for interpretation) nor authoritative (or capable of determining interpretation).

GOGOLIAN SYNTACTIC TACTICS IN NABOKOV'S PROSE

by Samuel Schuman

(Abstract of a paper delivered at the Annual MLA Convention, Chicago, December 1995)

In his work on Nicolai Gogol, Nabokov dwells at some length on an analysis of a "remarkable phenomenon" in Gogol's prose: a syntactic tactic in which V.N. finds "mere forms of speech directly giving rise to live creatures." Sentences and paragraphs take on a kind of organic energy, where similes and metaphors spin off little stories of their own. These utterances (like a Knight's move in chess) veer off into entirely unexpected directions in mid-flight. It is obvious from the

delight which Nabokov takes in describing and illustrating the device that it is one of particular appeal to him. It is little surprise, therefore, that we find very similar constructions in Nabokov's own prose works.

In *Pnin*, for example, I find several of these "Gogolian" sentences: sentences which start off in one narrative direction, and, in the midst of an innocent figure of speech, burst off in wild new directions. For example: "Technically speaking, the narrator's art of integrating telephone conversations still lags far behind that of rendering dialogues conducted from room to room, or from window to window across some narrow blue alley in an ancient town with water so precious, and the misery of donkeys, and rugs for sale, and minarets, and foreigners and mellons, and the vibrant morning echoes (31)." As in Gogol's works, but perhaps more self-consciously, these fantastic sentences reveal the convolutions and preoccupations of the minds which imagine them. The discovery, unravelling and comprehending of these foliating expressions is one of the most charming delights of reading Nabokov.

READING DOUBLE IN VLADIMIR NABOKOV

by Corinne Laura Scheiner

(Abstract of a paper delivered at the Annual MLA Convention, Chicago, December 1995)

I propose to examine the bilingual self-translating author as a locus through which to study the intersection of literature, language, culture and identity. The bilingual author's unique position manifests itself on several levels. First, on a personal level, the bilingual author

must address issues of identification for s/he has attachments to more than one language and culture and possesses a seemingly contradictory status as both member of a given society and as foreigner.

Second, the bilingual author produces a double corpus, composing works in both languages and occupying a place in two literary traditions. Each text is intended for a different audience --according to the language of composition--and may be said to reflect the author's relation to that audience. The physical manifestation of the bilingual corpus is most vivid in the act of self-translation. As Susan Bassnett points out in *Translation Studies*, translation may be seen as a process of literary manipulation in which texts are rewritten across linguistic boundaries within a clearly inscribed cultural and historical context. The self-translated text provides a perfect illustration of the inherently "refractive" nature of translation.

Last, one may analyze themes common to bilingual writers, specifically that of a search for identity. Since language serves as a means of communication and cannot be examined separately from culture, a thematic analysis must account for the difficulties faced by the bilingual writer who is required to function in more than one culture. I will examine the theme of the double, as employed by Vladimir Nabokov, as a means for bilingual writers to come to terms with their position relative to the multiple cultures in which they find themselves. The use of the double allows the author to enact the interaction of the self--member of the society--, with the other--the outsider, the foreigner. By the same token, self-translation provides a way to translate from one culture to another in a manner reflecting the author's different relationship to the source and target cultures.

KAMERA OBSKURA AND NABOKOV'S POETICS OF VISION

by Thomas Seifrid

(Abstract of a paper delivered at the Annual MLA Convention, Chicago, December 1995)

As so many of its details attest, Nabokov's *Kamera obskura* (1933) is in part a self-conscious and ironic reworking of Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*. If this is obvious enough on the level of plot it is less so on that of the two works' subtle but important forays into epistemology. Tolstoy's novel offers itself as a manifesto for post-Renaissance perspective: throughout the work Tolstoy exercises his commitment to the notions that vision and truth are essentially linked, and that the only philosophically authentic way of coming to terms with the world is to gaze on it, as a solitary observer, through an aperture or frame--i.e., he asserts the epistemology of the 18th-century device of the *camera obscura*.

Nabokov turns out to be uncannily responsive to this thematic line in Tolstoy, but he rearranges the theme's emphases in significant ways. For example, the cinema, a central metaphor in Nabokov's novel, serves as a cultural updating of the Tolstoyan metaphor of the 'magic lantern' (elsewhere promoted by Nabokov as well), which in turn transmits the allegory of Plato's cave--both the movie house in which Kretschmar meets Magda and the movie world she dreams of entering turn out to be domains of mere appearance and deceit, and this line finds its logical endpoint in Kretschmar's literal blindness. But Nabokov's most significant reworking of Tosltoy has to do with issues of authorship. For Tolstoy an intimate connection exists between the *camera obscura* and the theater of vision that is realized through the act of writing (the author's eye both projecting and

gazing on a screen-like sheet of paper). Nabokov adopts this model but subjects it to ambiguity. On the one hand he exaggerates and burlesques the position of authorial superiority Tolstoy allows himself, specifically by attempting to assume a position outside of or above his own "theater" of fictional events, and from this stance to watch others in their blindness. This gesture is marked as a form of evil in the novel, but neither author nor reader remains innocent of it. It is already problematic because in a sense it represents a flight from the conventional arrangements of fiction; but it is also troubled by (very Nabokovian) anticipations of the opposite possibility, namely, that while attempting to project or view one is oneself also *seen*--an anxiety alluded to in the name of the novel's cinema ("Argus"), in Magda's nude posing for artists, in her expositionist debut as an actress which turns into public embarrassment, and in the tale of expulsion from Eden which underlies these and related examples in the novel.

This, in essence, is what Nabaokov is doing in *Kamera obskura*. The question with which the novel grapples is "Where, if anywhere, can the writer confidently situate himself within the post-Renaissance paradigm of vision?" In this it registers Nabokov's response, at once peculiar to him and typically modernist, to an account of the epistemology of authorship offered half a century earlier by Tolstoy.

REFLECTIONS ON MODERNISM: *LOLITA* AND POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT, OR, HOW THE LEFT AND THE RIGHT BOTH HAVE IT WRONG

by Sarah Herbold

(Abstract of a paper delivered at the Annual MLA Convention, Chicago, December 1995)

Literary modernism has been described as both a retreat from the catastrophic world of politics into ivory-tower aestheticism and as a "historically explosive paradigm" (Astradur Eysteinsson) that uses radical defamiliarization to contest the social status quo. Does modernism retreat into fairyland, or is it the "conscience of a scientific age" (Harry Levin)?

I take *Lolita* as a case in point. Nabokov repeatedly claimed that *Lolita* "has no moral in tow." He suggested that he saw his art as a defiant escape from domination by vulgar real-world concerns and petty ideological struggles. "Reality," he declared, "is neither the subject nor the object of true art, which creates its own special reality which has nothing to do with the average 'reality' perceived by the communal eye" (*Pale Fire*).

But *Lolita* is nothing if not socially provocative. Indeed, Nabokov throws down the gauntlet by choosing the seduction of an All-American teenager by a mature and nefarious foreigner as his subject. I argue that *Lolita* is a particularly distinguished, defiant, and duplicitous struggle with this issue of aesthetics versus politics. It is revolutionary because it seduces and then compels the reader to become an emotional and intellectual battleground for its exacerbated oppositions: between conscience and pleasure, the law and defiance, masculine and feminine. *Lolita* compels the reader to recognize that he/she has been caught up in the text's staged warfare and to recognize his/her implication in it

and complicity with it. Through the reader, the text's internal strife thus engages the world.

DANCING ON ONE'S HANDS: METAPHORIC GYMNASTICS IN *ADA*

by Robert Alpert

(Abstract of a paper to be delivered at the Annual MLA Convention, Washington DC, December 1996)

This paper argues that readers' impatience with *Ada* has its roots in a desire to domesticate Nabokov's literary project, to transform him from rigorous formalist to insightful satirical observer. Without slighting Nabokov's great satirical powers, I argue that such a vision of literature was always vexing to Nabokov. More broadly, this paper argues that Nabokov came to realize that satire is simply a subspecies of narrative, a literary form which at least slights or at worst is inimical to trope which for Nabokov represents the soul of literature, its great consolation, the one feature of art that could create a momentary triumph over "the ardis of time."

"Dancing on One's Hands: Metaphoric Gymnastics in *Ada*" explores Nabokov's evolving attitude toward the relationship between trope and narrative. In earlier novels Nabokov felt that figure and narrative could exist symbiotically or contrapuntally. This paper considers *Lolita*'s great metaphor of Quilty rising from the shock of Humbert's bullets "like old gray mad Nijinski" as an exemplary case of earlier Nabokovian metaphor, a grand metaphor of performance that could exist happily within a narrative that had identical concerns. Nabokov, this paper argues, finally came to believe that figure, however elaborate and skillfully fashioned, would, absent

certain "excessive" measures, always be absorbed and domesticated by narrative; consequently in *Ada* his project is to write a novel based literally on these excessive measures i.e. to write a novel which would - to use Robert Frost's phrase -"make metaphor the whole of thinking."

This paper in attempting to explore that project uses the novel's own metaphorical definition of the force of figure, Van's gymnastic prowess, to define and to examine the evolution of Nabokov's thoughts on the power of figure. It argues that Nabokov proclaims--like his protagonist--that troping metaphor, in Van Veen's phrase, "standing it on its head" intensifies conceits and allows them to resist more powerfully the entropy of narrative, the Frostian "drift of things." The paper concludes with an examination of two conceits from the novel: the first, the comparison of Dan Veen's erotic life to a top coat and the second Van and Ada's comparison of a sunset to the stare of a stranger. In both cases the effect of the metaphors or the worldlets of the metaphors is to shatter the continuity of narrative, to cause us to pause and attend to the smallest movements and gestures of language, to reveal the rhapsody of figure behind the illusion of narrative, to understand that with Ada ,as Nabokov said about "Hamlet," "the metaphor's the thing."

RESISTING NARRATIVES: INCEST NARRATIVE STRUCTURE IN *LOLITA*

by Jen Shelton

(Abstract of a paper to be delivered at the Annual MLA Convention, Washington DC, December 1996)

Improper relations between a female child and an adult man are plainly central to the thematic

concerns of Nabokov's *Lolita*. Humbert Humbert, acting as Dolly's father, clearly sees their relationship as incestuous. But "incest" in *Lolita* is more than a theme or an obsession. "Incest" also names a narrative structure in which control and chaos struggle with one another.

Incestuous relations between an adult and a child involve a narrative component in addition to the obvious physical elements. That is, incest generates narrative: forbidden by culture, incest requires explanation by those who are engaged in it. Fathers who commit incest on their daughters must create narratives to explain their relations with their daughters and to obviate the potential of onlookers to grow suspicious. They must also arrange narratives for their daughters so that daughters are more likely to keep the secret than to reveal it: narratives that blame the daughter rather than the father for the incestuous contact, for instance. Daughters, meanwhile, are propelled to a different kind of narrative by their experience of incest. Because children's power is different from adults', children's best hope of ending abuse is to engage an adult's assistance by telling what is happening. Thus, within incestuous relations, children's power is principally narrative: if the incest is revealed, mechanisms of social order will halt it because incest is officially banned. Of course, a child's task of conveying such information is complicated by society's horror of incest, which prevents it from believing that such things can occur and which prefers to believe children are lying than that ordinary-seeming fathers could commit such acts.

Within texts, narratives that combine competing discursive intents display the qualities of incest storytelling. In particular, narratives in which one voice attempts to overmaster other voices, but which is always thwarted by the insistence of the other voices, are structured like incest narratives. *Lolita* clearly falls into this category. As Humbert Humbert tells the story of

his desire for Dolores Haze and his relations with her, his story enacts a battle of mastery and chaos like the conflict of incest storytelling. Their trip across the United States, for instance, combines the chaos of unplanned ricocheting from one tourist site to another with Humbert's control of Dolly. Similarly, the text's prose merges Humbert's careful manipulation of storytelling elements with the lush proliferation of literary device at the sentence level, a proliferation that is always just beyond control, analogous to Lolita's existence beyond Humbert's real control.

Incest within *Lolita*, then, is more pervasive than the plot-level obsession of the protagonist with his stepdaughter. It informs narrative itself within the book, urging a style of suppression mixed with resistance, a mixture with implications for gendered and generational power structures. That is, the chaotic, experimental, rule-breaking energy of the text is associated with the counter-authoritative voice of the object of incest, while the mastering, controlling, containing energy in the text is connected to the authoritative voice of the father, whose cultural position dictates that he uphold taboos, including the one on incest, and govern his daughter's unruliness. That the father's sexual desire for the daughter is already disruptive of his controlling function indicates why an incestuous narrative structure accompanies an incest thematic in this text.

THE MIRRORED SELF: INCESTUOUS FICTIONS IN NABOKOV'S *ADA*

by Claudia Rattazi Papka

(Abstract of a paper to be delivered at the Annual MLA Convention, Washington DC, December 1996)

Vladimir Nabokov's *Ada, or Ardor: A Family Chronicle* takes place around the turn of the century in a world called Antiterra, a planet resembling our own as an mirrored image does. Reflection is indeed one of the central images of the novel, most simply explicable as a metaphor for the incestuous love of Van and Ada Veen which the novel recounts. If one examines more closely the mirrorings, doublings, anagrams, and allusions which permeate the novel, however, it becomes possible to argue that the incestuous relationship itself is but a reflection, and a metaphor, in turn, for the fiction-writing process.

The Veen family tree, presented in epic fashion at the novel's beginning, conceals Van and Ada's true, shared parentage, but reveals a suspicious mirroring in the names and birthdates of their putative parents, which has led one critic to suggest that the two sets of parents are simply one set "seen from different perspectives." That this creation of two from one may be the central modus operandi of the "sibling planet" casts doubt upon Antiterra's own reality, and thus upon the reliability, and sanity, of the narrator himself, Van Veen. Led by this doubt, I examine the scene of Van and Ada's adolescent consummation and find in its reflections and doublings, including the narrative doubling in which Van and Ada debate "in the margins" about Van's recreation of their shared past, the foundation for another doubt: Does Ada herself really exist, or is she but a creation of Van's mirroring mind?

The answers to these questions are found in the madness that runs through the impossible mirrorings of Van's family tree; in the echoes of Van's first summer with Ada in his second, where several scenes are replayed with the crucial substitution of his real cousin, Lucette, for Ada; and in the mirroring Antiterran parodies of literary works by Paul Verlaine and Guy de Maupassant, as elucidated by the anagrammatic alter ego of Nabokov himself in *Notes to Ada by Vivian Darkbloom*. The clues are scattered throughout Van's memoir, and lead me to conclude that the metatextual analogy Van uses to describe his youthful maniambulation act is indeed an accurate description of the nature of Ada's existence--as *Ada*:

The essence of the satisfaction belonged rather to the same order as the one he later derived from self-imposed, extravagantly difficult, seemingly absurd tasks when V.V. sought to express something, which until expressed had only a twilight existence (or even none at all--nothing but the illusion of the backward shadow of its immanent impression. Van has had a incestuous encounter with his cousin, Lucette, and this transgression has led not only to her suicide, but also to Van's madness. This madness inspires the rewriting of Van's life, his family, and his world through a series of doublings which create Antiterra, Van's antifamily (which includes his sister and double, Ada), and, finally, the novel itself.

"'VILE SCRIPTS': ENFRAMING GAMES IN NABOKOV'S 'THE ASSISTANT PRODUCER'"

by Christian Moraru

Drawing on Erwing Goffman's "frame analysis" and on theories of fictionality (Thomas Pavel) and make-believe (Kendall Walton), my paper discusses the playful rearticulation of the borders between fiction and reality in Vladimir Nabokov's short story "The Assistant Producer." In fact, as I argue, the story can be viewed as a true watershed in the author's career, a moment at which various biographic and autobiographic, linguistic, political, cultural, and aesthetic boundaries are being renegotiated. While focusing primarily on the aesthetic dimension of this process, my intervention also acknowledges that Nabokov's ludic fictionalizing of reality and "naturalization" of fiction carry important political implications.

What interests me here most, though, is the playful enframing of actual facts and facts deliberately presented as figments. In my view, this mutual, recurrent enframing foretells the more explicit and daring "postmodern" games Nabokov will play with his readers in *Lolita* (1955) and *Pale Fire* (1962), novels in which critics like Brian McHale have located the "crossover" from modernist to postmodernist fiction. On the one hand, "The Assistant Producer" does incorporate a "true episode from the life of the Russian singer Plevitskaya; on the other hand, it displaces biographical mimesis by enacting life as a scenario, more precisely, as a performative (dramatic, operatic, filmic) discourse. Yet if life spins off literature as its "impersonation," this can happen insofar as the former has already taken on a performative structure able to engender the latter. Life "produces" fiction as an "assistant producer" produces--etymologically, "brings forward"--a movie, as any fictional mechanisms give rise to fiction. Thus, the frontiers keeping apart "life" and its "double" are being abolished--which is both the theme *and* the outcome of the performative act (text) titled "The Assistant Producer."

My paper basically dwells on the major scenes and tropes of performance Nabokov employs to

thematize and concretely overreach the borders between facts and images of facts. Among these episodes, allusions, and symbols, the cinematic references and figures play the most significant role in the intermingling of fiction and reality (history). A consequence of this intertwining and overlapping of divergent ontological realms, Nabokov's multilayered, disorienting narrative swiftly moves back and forth between Russian history-based, Hollywood-produced movies (which the text outlines and mocks simultaneously) and movielike, cinematically reconstituted history. To our confusion, the subject matter of these two modes of representation is the same, that is, "la Slavska's" career as a singer and spy. Which is more, narrative representation, whether covering "real" events or just summarizing the filmic reworking of these events, adopts motion picture as its unique model. Finally, characters and situations in the narrated movies intriguingly cross over into the territory of the real, "denaturalizing" its reality very much like "actual people" (Russian émigrés) are hired by German film companies to represent "'real' audiences in pictures." Consequently, the reader gets entangled in a narrative maze announcing, as I contend, Nabokov's later ontological and aesthetic games of enframing.