

THE NABOKOVIAN

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

Editor: Stephen Jan Parker

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

Subscriptions: individuals, \$11.00 per year; institutions, \$14.00 per year. For surface postage outside the USA add \$4.00. For airmail postage to Europe, add \$8.00; to Australia, India, Israel, New Zealand, Japan add \$9.00. Back issues: #31 with 15-year index is \$9.00 for individuals and \$11.00 for institutions; other issues are \$7.00 each for individuals and \$9.00 each for institutions; add \$4.50 for airmail. Issues #1, 5, 7, 11, 14 are available only in photocopy; #32 is out of print. Checks should be made payable to the Vladimir Nabokov Society.

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

The Nabokovian
Slavic Languages & Literatures
The University of Kansas
Lawrence, Kansas 66045

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Number 37

Fall 1996

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News

by Stephen Jan Parker

The tempo is accelerating as we approach the Nabokov centennial year. Three current items:

1. The Library of America released its three-volume collection of Nabokov's writings, edited and annotated by Brian Boyd, on October 28. Volume I, Novels and Memoirs 1941-1951, includes *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*, *Bend Sinister*, *Speak*, *Memory*, a 32-page chronology, a 4-page note on the texts, listing variants, and 33 pages of notes. Volume II, Novels 1955-1962, includes *Lolita*, *Invitation to a Beheading*, *Pale Fire*, *Lolita: A Screenplay*, with the same apparatus and 32 pages of notes. Volume III, Novels 1969-1974, includes *Ada*, *Transparent Things*, *Look at the Harlequins!*, has the same apparatus and 38 pages of notes. These are handsome volumes in gilt-stamped forest-green cloth, and the texts in them now become the authoritative editions because they correct long-standing errors found in other editions and incorporate VN's own corrections to his copies of his works.

2. The Mercantile Library of New York ran a weekly series of events, "The Enchanter - The Work and Life of Vladimir Nabokov," October 9 through November 20. A full report on this festival, which was co-sponsored by *The Nabokovian*, will be featured in our spring issue; in this issue we present the complete text of Dmitri Nabokov's remarks. The coincidental timing of the Mercantile program with the release of the Library of America volumes and the staging of a number of well-publicized public readings of Nabokov's works turned Manhattan's October and November into Nabokov months.

3. Forty years after its publication *Lolita* is very much back in the news. The remake of the film, which is

now nearing completion, is eliciting the kind of sensational furor and international press attention that accompanied the first hurricane *Lolita*. A full report on the growing *Lolita* controversy will appear in the spring issue.

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Svetlana Polsky, a Swedish Slavist and author of several articles on Nabokov's short stories, has uncovered a long lost Nabokov story. She writes: "Both B. Boyd in *The Russian Years* (p. 231) and *The Garland Companion to V. Nabokov* (p. 644) mention a short story "Easter Rain" ("Paskhal'nyi dozhd") that was published in 1925 in *Russkoe ekho*. Both claim that no copies of this Berlin newspaper in which "Easter Rain" was published (on April 12, 1925) seem to have survived. Actually, one copy--at least--has survived: I was fascinated to see a copy of the story arriving after a long search on April 12, 1996. So the story re-appeared exactly 71 years after its first - and last - publication." Ms. Polsky is now preparing an article about the story.

*

The Nabokov Society will hold two sessions at the annual MLA meetings in Washington DC at the Sheraton Washington Hotel: "Family/Antifamily in Nabokov's Work" on Sunday, 29 December, at 8:30 am and "Open Topic Session" on Monday, 30 December, at 10:15 am. The AATSEEL session on Nabokov will be held in the Capital Hilton Hotel on 30 December at 1:00 pm. A full report on all sections and the annual business meeting will appear in the spring issue.

A Nabokov session was on the program of the annual convention of the Midwest Modern Language Association in November in Minneapolis. The session, "*Lolita*: Ethics and Aesthetics," chaired by Edward Maloney, had the papers: "*Lolita* and Baroque Modernism," Patti White; "Rita, Ethics, and Aesthetics

in *Lolita*," Marianne Cutugno; "The Privileging of Aesthetics: *Lolita* and Nabokov's Sense of Loss," Dustin Pascoe; "An Ethic of Aesthetics: Rethinking *Lolita*," Edward Maloney. Each paper had a discussant.

A Nabokov session was on the program of the annual convention of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies (AAASS) held in Boston in November. The session, "Double Worlds of Nabokov: Problems of Poetics and Intertextuality," chaired by Tatyana Tolstaya, had the papers: "Charles Darwin's Theory of Evolution in Nabokov's *Glory*," Maria Chernitskaya; "The Seamy Side of Life: 'Iznanka Bitia' (ob odnom tipe epiteta u Nabokova)," Evgenia Gavrilova; "This Side of Nabokov's Otherworld," Sergei Davydov; discussant, Alexander Dolinin. David Larmour gave his paper, "Displacement and Deferral in Nabokov's *Glory*," at another conference session.

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Some recent work previously overlooked by *The Nabokovian*:

- Simon Karlinsky notes that the second, much-expanded edition of his *The Nabokov-Wilson Letters, 1940-1971* appeared in German in 1995 as volume XXIII of the complete collected works of Nabokov, edited by Dieter E. Zimmer. The edition has 59 new letters and much new commentary that did not appear in the first edition.

- *Novyi zhurnal* (New York) published, in its 200th anniversary issue (1995), Gene Barabtarlo's translations of "That in Aleppo Once...", "A Forgotten Poet," "Time and Ebb," and "The Vane Sisters." The first two are reworked versions of the previous publication in *Strelets*; the last two are published for the first time.

- Of interest to Nabokovphiles is *Lewis Carroll in Russia: Translations of ALICE IN WONDERLAND 1879-1989*, by Fan Parker (New York: Russia House) 1994. It includes extensive discussion of VN's *Ania*, particularly in comparison with other Russian translations.

- Omitted from the 1994 Nabokov bibliography were two articles published in *For SK. In Celebration of the Life and Career of Simon Karlinsky*, edited by Michael S. Flier and Robert P. Hughes (Oakland, CA: Berkeley Slavic Specialties): "The Pleasures of Fate, or Why Free Will and Chance Are Incompatible with Nabokov's Artistic Form," by Vladimir Alexandrov, and "Nabokov's Russian Years Revisited" by Brian Boyd.

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Odds and Ends

-- Stacy Schiff writes: "For a book on Vera Evseevna Nabokov, to be published by Random House, I would appreciate hearing from anyone who may have memories, documents, or photos. I would especially appreciate hearing from those who may have information on the Slonim family, in its St. Petersburg, Berlin, or New York incarnations." Contact her at (212) 751-7830; fax, 212-838-9653; email, SMSchiff@aol.com.

-- A library of VN books, including first editions (e.g. *Olympia Lolita*, *Pale Fire*) and scholarship, is being offered for sale by a retired professor, in toto or separately. Requests for the list should be forwarded to Gene Barabtarlo at gragb@showme.missouri.edu or by fax at 573-884-8456.

-- A videotape of "Nabokov on Kafka: Understanding 'The Metamorphosis'," with Christopher Plummer impersonating VN, can be obtained from Facets

Multimedia, 1517 W. Fullertown Ave., Chicago, IL 60614; phone (312) 281-9075.

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Please Note: Several hundred back issues of *The Nabokovian* were destroyed in last June's floods. As a result, the number of issues available in photocopy only has grown and, for the first time, one issue (#32, Spring 1994) is no longer available in any form. The stocks of several other issues are severely depleted and once exhausted they too will be out-of-print.

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Our thanks to Ms. Paula Courtney for her continuing, irreplaceable assistance in the preparation of this issue of *The Nabokovian*.

THE *LOLITA* LEGACY: LIFE WITH NABOKOV'S ART
by Dmitri Nabokov

An address delivered October 30, 1996 at the
Mercantile Library of New York.

Ladies and gentlemen, first of all, I have three
announcements to make.

First, I hope everyone appreciates my taking
precious time off from overseeing the Nabokov mafia's
child prostitution rings in Bangkok, Brussels, and
Lausanne, encouraging sex offenses in general, and
policing hostile publications.

Second, the Nabokov mafia has awarded its booby
prizes for 1996. Second prize goes to an Englishman
named Oddie and *The Daily Mail*, for which he writes.
First prize goes to a Senator named Hatch and
the chambers where he performs--for he is a clown.
Details in a moment.

Third, the title of this talk has been changed to
"Sex, Lies, and Measuring Tape". And I'm afraid I'm
not Dmitri, son of Vladimir. You will very soon see
why, on all counts. No, no, don't leave, Ma'am. You
will get only the facts.

Early one evening ten or so years ago, at a hotel by
the shore of a lake known at its northern end as Lake
Geneva but whose true name is Lac Léman, not to be
confused with the French town of Le Mans, well known
for its round-the-clock horseless-carriage race, I was
being nourished by a simple dinner and a fascinating
story from her youth out of the boundless, enchanting
repertoire of the person I had come to consider my
principal mother.

For, as I learned, only toward the end of my forties,
my late father had had not one, not two, but at least
three wives, and an only child, a petite female upon
whom he performed unspeakable acts and based an
unspeakable book, ascribing it to an imaginary wretch
named . . . Kinbote Kinbote or something like that. My
father, incorrigible conjuror that he was, taught me a
truly cunning stunt, which proves, in a sense, that
mass sightings of U.F.O.'s and Madonna tears are true,

true, true! The trick allows me to make all of you
think--all except, perhaps, for some . . . doubting
Tommaso . . . in the back of the room who ought to be
imprisoned for astigmatism and opaqueness--to make
most of you think, I was saying, that I have a six-foot-
five, two-hundred-forty-pound body with a bass voice
and plenty of male hormones. But no--as a magic tape
measure would reveal, I am that slender girl of modest
height, with the . . original. . name of . . . Laurita.
Although, I guess nothing is much of a shocker when
one has admired RuPaul in heels or Dennis Rodman
doing his--uh--thing, which seemed mainly an
impersonation of RuPaul, beneath our common
publisher's effigy of fellow-author Nabokov. Nabokov,
ardent sportsman that he was, and I, who played some
b-ball in my youth, heartily concur: more power to the
literary power forward!

Even Umberto Eco took a hitchhike on the magic
comforter with a little parody called "Nonita." The
Italian for Granny is *Nonna*, and you can imagine the
rest. More gracious a transposition, anyway, than
some other recent efforts, Mr. Eco's piece is perhaps
radicated in a sublimation of a paradox in the Judaeo-
Christian ethic: how is our sanctimonious
protectiveness of the recently-born, predicated on the
innocence with which they presumably arrive, to be
reconciled with that other biblical passport--that of
original sin? Of course this all leads to that post-
modernist subtext of the automotive subculture: the
baby-on-board syndrome. If *any* life is to be treated
more gingerly than another, why should it be the
highly uncertain future of a child and not a virtuous
oldster's baggage of sagacity and suffering, with, say, a
holocaust or a Gulag in the résumé? Of course we are,
or should be, fiercely protective of our own kids. Of
course all of us love all kids. . . . No, I think I'll be less
emphatic there. When I see the baby-on-board sticker,
I accelerate. More about holocausts in a minute.

Rewind. Why did I call that suspicious doubting
loner "Tommaso"? Because of the Italian echo of this
whole cautionary episode, since it was in the culture
section of *Il Radiocorriere Tivu*, the equivalent of our

TV Guide, that I read the stunning tale of my multiple mothers and true gender--unwitting mistakes of an underread reportorial lady taking at face value the Vladimir-in-the-looking-glass of *Look at the Harlequins!*, which hadn't yet been translated into Italian (I hope to tackle it next year). The poor showoff shamefacedly retracted the sex and the lies, but the videotape remained uncorrected to haunt the eve of father's death for years on the *Rai* evening news.

I was going to develop this for you into an elaborate, Italianate tale, a diary from the *Profondeurs* of the feminist ethos, whatever that is. But a mock title like the *Story of Lo* or *The Diary of La* . . . (for *Laurita*) . . . might bring down on me the wrath of a Chinese author, the biographer of one of the principal pretenders of the new throne of Hong Kong. The biography is entitled *The Diary of Lo--of* candidate, Lo Tak-Shing, that is--an existing gentleman. As for the chronicler, named Peroso-Ming if my memory does not fail me, the poor chap has been offended enough for another reason, in a country where they sometimes hurl rotten pears at poor performers as they throw tomatoes at bad tenors in the Bel-Canto belt of Italy. It's hard enough to choose one's Chinese from the multiple flavors, let alone come up with properly Chinesed Pushkin. But the fact remains that biographer Ming has been painfully chastised for the worst translation into any known tongue of Pushkin's *Evgeniy Oneghin*, once playfully called *Eugene One-Gin* by Vladimir Nabokov, but in this version more like wan-ton soup.

But do let us stick to the facts. Nabokov did base *Lolita* on his child, ingeniously sublimating a long history of pederastic child abuse of which I am the psychologically stunted, criminally inclined victim. And it's a natural thing, postmodern analysts of literature have justly pointed out, for one with a suspicious homosexual presence lurking in his family tree to protest to such excess that he sounds at times like a homophobe, whatever that is and bite your tongue. It's also true, of course, that Nabokov's Oedipus Complex, later to develop into terminal narcissism

with cancerous consequences, inspired the use, highly original in Russian, of the diminutive . . . "Lolita". . . to address, in letters from college, his mother Elena.

We are a little less sure on this point, though, since the premise, though very plausible, is based on an incorrect count of ghostly characters, deleted for publication out of shame of course, not gentlemanly reserve as some would have it. There is no doubt, on the other hand, that the Russian revolutions took place in 1916, not 1917 as history has idiosyncratically maintained.

Now let's really get back to the facts. Among the more recent amazing revelations: we have learned that Vladimir Nabokov was one of several distinguished authors who chose, or were obliged, to indulge in self-publication. Dead on. "Sirin" and "Cantaboff" were of course not his only pseudonyms--the least known but perhaps most significant was "Maurice Girodias." An excellent choice, for does not "Maurice" have only one letter less than "Vladimir" and "Girodias" only one more than "Nabokov"? Then again, one can always spell it "Nabokoff," with two "F's" as émigré Russians once did and pretentious ones still do--increasing the count to parity, a clincher when one factors in the corresponding locus of the first "O". Worse still, it was not a first offense. Did not the teen-age Nabokov's parents finance his initial volume of juvenile verse, making him an accessory to the fact?

We learn that Nabokov, and not the protagonist of a poem of his, made a clandestine journey to Bolshevik Russia.

We unexpectedly learn, too, that Nabokov lived for a time in a certain New York hotel and found his inspiration among its boozy denizens, who put more energy into discussing than creating. It all fits, for we know, do we not, what a heavy drinker he was. I, for one, know, for he might even unashamedly consume a glass of Pinot Noir at dinner in front of his impressionable child of thirty or forty, in spite of the shrieking reproaches of his Harpy Wife (now I'll reveal her true nature, as described in a British obit, in a

German obit, and by a special lady to whom we'll soon git), who ruled the house with an iron hand and received publishers in her leathers, whip close at hand. What little he achieved was at her merciless prodding throughout their miserable marriage. What a price to pay! The Brit obit, snuck in during the editor's absence and hurriedly retracted for some reason upon his return, was by a journalistic adventuress with a dubious past.

As for the harpy wife, one might say her leather skirt was a Freudian slip, for, more than anything else, it reawakened Nabokov's adolescent motorcycle fantasy, a kind of imperial Hell's Angels thing. She did, however, know the limits, and when poor VN asked at least to drive an automobile, her answer was a categorical no, for that would have been a dangerous extension of an already problematic male organ. Easily explained, hence, the prolonged four-wheel frustration fantasy in that unspeakable book, which is really about motorcycles and cars, not professors and little girls. And of course now we can also see why VN's offspring, whatever the gender, compensates for the father's privations, and for the offspring's own, with a bevy of Ferraris, Vipers, and powerboats--like old Hemingway playing macho with his fish-and-bull stuff.

As I was saying, this. . . mother . . . and I were beginning dinner on the top floor of the *Cygne*, or "Swan," built before the turn of the century and later absorbed by the Palace Hotel, to which it is joined by an umbilical porter's lodge and restaurant. Suddenly there was a knock on our dining-room door, and a maid ushered in a young man all in denim who announced, in Russian, "I am Glinka." We were expecting no Glinka, or anyone for that matter. One of the great plusses of the Palace had always been the buffer of the concierge. I was about to accept, for the moment, the idea of an apparition or a joker, and say I had just been working on one of his songs, which was true. To make it short, he *was* Glinka--a descendant of the composer, and the first student to major in Nabokov at the University of Petersburg with the

advent of glasnost'. The maid, surmising he was Russian--when such birds were still rare--had thought "family" and cheerfully shown him up. . . . It became suddenly evident that he was but a harbinger of future hordes and that some urgent reprogramming was in order.

I did talk with him downstairs after dinner. He turned out to be amiable and intelligent. He passed through again some days later, having visited Paris, and I learned a strange thing. Either a well meaning fool or a malevolent saboteur had recommended that the only two people he consult on Nabokov in Paris be one Nikita Struve and one Zinaïda Shakhovskoy. A vague aura of authority may have been conferred by their generically paraliterary Russianness. . . But they were, respectively, the most poisonous and perhaps the most fatuous individuals poor Glinka could have found, even if one searched vigorously.

Struve had a strange academic tic--Struve had strenuously striven--for years--to demonstrate that, in the thirties, it was Nabokov who had written Levi-Agheyev's pretty bad, Moscow-based *Novel with Cocaine*. When the whole Levi-Agheyev story was unraveled, down to personal acquaintances of his patroness and his tomb in Istanbul--with a few ex-Soviet hacks throwing in their two-rubles' worth to muddy the soup and your usual ex-Soviet publisher grabbing *his* ruble by printing Nabokov in one volume with Agheyev--after all that, Struve beat a flaccid retreat into vaguer hypotheses before riding into oblivion on Solzhenitsyn's coattails--for, without coattails, such academics are *Nichtozhnye Lyudi*--people of no value.

As for Mme.--some, but not all, say "Princess"--Shakhovskoy, things are a bit worse. And I do regret having to belabor an elderly lady, *en plus* the sister of a more genuine princess and aunt in whose apartment we spent our first New York months, the late mother of my dear cousin and Harvard roommate Ivan who is now a publisher in Paris. The venomous Zinaïda, while continuing to pose as a family friend in the 30s, began saying and writing clandestine filth about

Nabokov ever since he emerged as a free-thinking Russian writer in the emigration and taken a Jewish wife, and went on so publicly with a thinly veiled short story and an even nastier biography. The latter, she confided to Nabokov's biographer Brian Boyd, was not about Nabokov at all but--I quote--"against his wife." Who knows, perhaps *Miz* Shakhovskoy, who kept her virulent racism in the closet for years, never did forgive Nabokov for marrying a Jewess and not becoming an icon-and-samovar traditionalist. Perhaps little Struve, another old believer, never did either. So much for certain old friends. Somehow, Edmund Wilson's memoirs from the 50s come to mind as well. I shall say one more interesting thing about *Miz* princess at the end, which is not too far.

Let us return for a moment to sex in a much more compelling context--for there's more hearing than horsing at the heart of what I'll say next.

I must retreat to a slight distance to get my bearings, and premise what I am going to say. . . By mentioning a book *not* written by Christine Bouvart, Professor of English Literature in Bordeaux, Nabokov specialist, and participant in the Nabokov *Pléiade*, which, in spite of the internecine tensions of the French literary establishment, may yield a first volume by the millenium, or even by Nabokov's centennial in 1999. Mme. Bouvart's book, unwritten because she was prevented from a getting a research grant by the same sort of Gallic infighting, was to trace the abuse of "Lolita" the word, not Lolita the girl. I hope she or someone else does it one day. It makes a sad and fascinating study.

After a succession of sloppy-scrambled, *à la coque*, and hard-boiled porn, regiments of Fausses-Masseuses and so forth, Lolita-the-name has made its debut on the internet. Out of curiosity unlaced alas, by prurience, I checked something called *Swiss online*. It took a while to get through to the pervert subchapter of the "exotic" section, which it turns out, Switzerland leases from Germany, perhaps to pay off some old debt. And what did codename Lolita elicit? A panoply, in less-than-living color, of plump Hausfraus in

costumes suggesting, mainly, variations and fugues on the S&M theme, with not a bobby-soxer in the lot. This is not to say that child-prostitution and kiddie porn do not exist. They certainly do.

It is hard to touch on everything. So let us forego for tonight certain supply-and-demand, morality-be-damned considerations, and not pose agonizing questions. For instance, is the culprit the *supply* of, say, a drug whose production sustains most of a national economy, the demand in a distant metropolis, or the corrupt go-between? Moving back a bit in history, how does one apportion the guilt among plantation-owners, white slave-traders, or the African village chiefs who cruelly herded their best buys to the beaches and ports? And how about Siam, which gave its name to a genetic malformation--the subject, quite incidentally, of one of Nabokov's various studies of aberration--Siam, now known as Thailand, which has become synonymous in some quarters with child prostitution, often eagerly promoted by needy parents, with a government that protests a lot but apparently rakes in its hefty share from travel agencies and pimps?

On the other side of the world more than that of the coin we have Belgium. Soon after an influx of pan-European bureaucrats, and in order to counteract an already pretty dull national image, that country started buying CNN ads portraying it as an appetizing pie-like morsel yclept "the surprise package of Europe." Surprise indeed--child murder and prostitution scandals have turned out to be but a tip of a whole iceberg of Belgian corruption. On the nightly news one sees hordes of infuriated protesters, to whom child molestation represents only a part of the crumbling self-righteous whole. And, like their brethren reaching as far south as Ecuador, they themselves verge on the dangerous boundary of the lynch mob. Meanwhile Spain is about to censor the internet, and our own senator Orrin Hatch, not known as an expert on the finest nuances of the arts, has hatched and railroaded into year's end passage a law whereby even an adult, even one of those

superannuated hausfrau, whose appearance might suggest she is underage could cause a film or netsite to be banned--something that pleases neither those who believe in our constitution nor, specifically, Mr. Adrian Lyne, who was surgically careful--I am a witness--to use a body double of legal age for Lolita in any remotely questionable scene, to have Dominique Swain's mother present at all shots of her daughter, and to observe every comma of the child-labor laws, even to the extent of hiring an additional stand-in for scenes where Lolita is addressed but not seen, so as not to overwork Dominique. Lyne steadfastly denies the widely trumpeted pre-Brussels news that he is having U.S. distribution problems--a logical denial, since shooting of the Riviera sequences has only recently been completed, the score is being composed, and the whole film is still in the cutting room. I hope to see it soon. What I was shown in a Louisiana town some months ago seemed promising. I hope the promise is kept. I do believe one should have the courage to leave certain things to the viewer's imagination as Nabokov does to the reader's. As an act of cinematic courage, not prudery, why not forego the cliché of coital details, and see the giggling girl-child, Sunday comics in hand, make the transition into pre-orgasmic girl-woman by watching her superbly expressive eyes--as I hope Lyne may do? My opinion of sexexplicit scenes stands, for artistic, nor Congressional or current-events reasons. Who knows--in this case, by a strange twist, climate and Congress may even help, keeping in check such clichés as knees-up, against-the-wall sexual congress. Although it might be fun to sentence the good senator to that attitude for life, for it's one of the most uncomfortable positions in anybody's Kamasutra.

I certainly shall not explore the psychiatric maze, except to mention that, in the opinion of criminologist-psychologists like Mimi Silbert, medical-psychology professors like John Money, family-research specialists like Sol Gordon, aggression researchers like Seymour Feshback, feminist publishers like Nancy Borman, and of countless panels and polls, erotic material in general,

apparently present in an amazing number of households and certainly not a male monopoly, may, when it is not a source of joint entertainment, offer solitary sublimation that can only relieve menacing tensions; outright pornography can be a stage prop but is unlikely to be a cause of anything; and censorship of . . . art . . . that happens to deal with aspects of sex "unorthodox" in the Western world not only renders them more tempting, but makes as much sense as forbidding the revelation of a woman's face or putting a price on Salmon Rushdie's head in the world of Islam; prohibiting travel on the Sabbath; impeding research that might put the last nail in the North American Indian's claim to first-residency status; or, as I am happy to see former New York Mayor Koch also feels, regulating by ethnic considerations rather than actual qualifications and proportions that oft-repeated life cycle: the I.Q. and aptitude tests, the educational acceptances, the job opportunities . . . and the jail sentence. Or else something I had to check my calendar about to make sure it wasn't April first--charging six-and-seven-year olds with sexual harassment with a straight face for an affectionate peck on a classmate's cheek. They're innocent victims, not perpetrators, you idiot schoolmarms--after all, they may have seen that black-and-white 1962 *bête noire Lolita*, which ran at a reasonable hour, very recently on TNT.

Novelist Dean Koontz, in a recent interview, addresses a question posed at last week's lecture, which I regret I missed, as to why Nabokov--these days echoed by numerous psychologists--had less than total respect for Freud. Koontz puts it well and I quote him: "Vladimir Nabokov said the two great evils of the 20th century were Marx and Freud. He was absolutely correct. Freud has saturated our culture. People operate on Freudian theory in almost everything they do and they're completely unaware of it. . . . The basic assumption of Freud is that none of us is responsible for what we are: what we are is a consequence of what our parents did to us, the injustices we've suffered. So, in essence, we're victims." Nabokov could have said

more, but I'll stop here, except to quote from a recent book called *The Prehistory of Sex*: "Early agriculturalist sex was voyeuristic, repressive, homophobic [ever since animals were domesticated]. . ." Good God. As for another question--that about driving--my non-parodic answer is that, having indeed always wanted a motorcycle, and having, at 12, driven a family car into a ditch on the estate, father regularly announced his intention to get his U.S. license, and asked mother to teach him. She took him, at last, to an Ithaca shopping center, deserted on Sunday except for one forlorn vehicle. He aimed straight for it. Perhaps it had a "Freud" license plate.

Incidentally, it's a good thing for me today's standards did not apply in 1939 France, where my hasty departure from kindergarten was not unrelated to pestering girl fellow-students under the tables, or in Wellesley where, on April 16, 1943, I got a distinct buzz that I still recall with pleasure from pulling the brownish braids of a bicycle sweetheart called Deborah.

Having said that mouthful, let me say this: if I were the parent of a child of any sex mangled by a maniac of any sex, my immediate instinct would be to go for the maniac's jugular. If I had some violent chromosomes--and I admit I do--I would slaughter, I would shoot. If I were more Machiavellian, I would condemn the monster to a prolonged agony of thwarted desire followed by imprisoned remorse of such intensity that his brain, in the end, could not bear it, and would explode on its own--the subject, of course, must be sufficiently sensitive to savor such a procedure. The subtle ones are, of course, the worst: they have a conscience to deal with, and it is they who merit the torment.

Those, I understand, are precisely the sentences the author of a book entitled . . . uh . . . *Lolita* inflicts, the former punishment on pedophile Claire Quilty, a clever twit and a man of the theatre but fundamentally a crude lout, the latter on one Humbert Humbert, a murderer and pedophile whose redundant . . . names may be intended to cancel each other out leaving a

moral zero, but who is endowed with enough artistic subtlety to deserve the details of his end.

The book, I understand, does possess redeeming values such as poetry, comedy and tragedy. I'm told by another obscure writer, named Amis, that "style is Nabokov's arrow." And that arrow is the most trenchant condemnation of pedophilia one could ask for.

I'm not much good at doing redneck hayseeds, but here goes. . .

Wouldn't know mah-self, fr'ah don' read them controvershee-al pieces a'trash. Ah jes' figure where there's smoke there's jes' gotta be fire--like that chap Oddie says in the Brit paper they shown me--daily mail or somethin'--y'know, like our *Daily Enquirer*?--that thar famous ek-dizza-ast--ah mean ecclesiast--anyway some kinda ast--though durned if ah didn't see an oddie in the odd-couple column of that thar *Thunderbolt* magazine in the big city one time. Anyway ah'm sure *he* didn't need to read the book. Says ol'Humbert killed his wife Charlotte, but ah recall sure as shootin' she got hit by a car in the moo-vie--course ah didn't see that nee-ther. Says the re--make's gotta be stopped too, and ah sure don't blame 'im. If they ever finish that movie an' ol' Eckdisiast Oddie ever sees it, he's *gotta* turn out to be right, I jes know it. . You can feel them things in your bones. Says this whole Lo-li-ta fire-of-my-loins business is an incitement to arson, in the first place. Says that that, and jazz, and them Beatles, and that thar *Playboy* mag-a-zine gone and changed our so-ciety, made it permissive. Arson my arson, parson, with all due respect. . . . 'course some folks do say reason the reverend don't read no books is he bl'eeves in old British ree-ligion an' its pre- Loo-lee-ta traditions. Folks say he's too busy to read books 'cause he spends 'is time in a closet smellin' 'is choirboys' *un-dee-shorts*.

So what is this here Lo-lee-ta legacy, this fire-of-my-loins thing? Many things. Keeping the publishing humming, preparing the Nabokov foundation, straightening out Russia, permissions, the five

documentaries in four languages I worked on this year, dealing with the Oddies and the oddities.....

--Wait, here's one coming off the internet right now, from one Sirin, courtesy of Donald Barton Johnson: "Has anyone ever come across any instance in which VN has exhibited self-doubt? I consider this to be both an aesthetic and a personal question. In the first instance, I think of Dostoevski, whose themes of self-disgust VN never really understood (enough for argument right here, I think); in the second, I think of the very well-established dynamic (a picturesque one, traditionally involving drink, drugs, women--bad prose, etc.) of self-love/doubt that has afflicted so many writers incapable of dealing with the "angelic" status that their creativity has afforded them. I guess another way of asking this is, does anyone have anything to say about how disgustingly capable he seemed to be in dealing with this really quite troublesome fact of existence? For it is the precise lack of this incapability, as far as I can tell, that dictates his simultaneous profundity and inhumanity. Like a statue."

Those of us who have dipped a toe into the personal and professional history of Vladimir Nabokov could enlighten the gentleman.

I refer, of course to Nabokov's early, gloriously graphic study of Andrey Bely's mathematically precise formulae for prosodic stresses and substresses, and his frustration to find that his own youthful verse did not conform; to his agonizing switch of literary language; to his attempts to reduce misunderstood manuscript *Lolita*, under her original name of Juanita Dark, to a modern Jeanne D'Arc on the pyre of an Ithaca incinerator--and much else.

All artists have doubts. Those doubts have even been written about by some who, like all of us, ought to read more Nabokov. My poor friend, what kind of original sin is it to be a creative artist, that one is condemned to drink, drugs, and loose women? Cannot one create and be happy, moral, hit a good tennis ball and have a good laugh? Or must the Dostoevskian condition prevail for all? Were, say, Verdi, Rossini,

Pushkin, or Shakespeare hellishly tormented souls? I can assure you, my good fellow (and I guess it's touching you call yourself Sirin), that father was no bust as a human, although he will be a statue for his centennial, as well he should be.

Which reminds me that there are various kinds of fans and scholars. There are those who would like to know more, and should--for example that Nabokov studied and knew more Dostoyevski than they ever will; that he did not reject all of Dostoevski, or, say, all of Pasternak out of hand; that much of Dostoevski is sentimental and second-rate; that his Russian was incredibly sloppy, and prettified by translators who believed the translation should--quote--read well, whether the original does or not. That the library I inherited from my father contains a whole shelf on psychiatry in general and Freud in particular--for Nabokov's scientific mind would not have allowed him to poke fun without studying his subject first. . . . Then there are the Nabokovians with agendas--it usually boils down to getting published and promoted at any price, including that of hitching their dumpster to a star. Finally there are those--often gifted and promising--whom Nabokov would have called "Little Nabokov's" as he did letterwriters who demanded no autograph and gave no return address.

Getting back to my list, besides the struggle of the French Pléiade, there's the celebration of an American one which the bizarre spiral of history placed in the Russian consulate. . . . But probably father's glory would survive undiminished if one did little or nothing.

Defending the goodness of my parents and sometimes resorting to parody to do so. . . And, in a way, *Lolita* was based on me, if one considers the teenage slang, her tennis, more graceful than mine, other details. So was *Bend Sinister*, for it was the loss of his child to a butcher that terrified father. So, more specifically, was "Lance," which made me realize, in cosmic transposition, how my parents worried while awaiting me at the base of a mountain they had encouraged me to climb. . . .

In the pleasant company of Michael Tolan, reading *The Enchanter* for those of you who wish to come. Encountering good friends and hearing them speak--Stacy Schiff, who is finally doing biographic justice to mother, Brian Boyd, who has done that and much else for father. The pleasure of meeting and chatting with all of you tonight. Approving or rejecting film scripts and translations--currently, among the former, a remake *Laughter in the Dark* is in the works, and amid the latter, there's the big problem of who'll do a new Italian translation of *Ada*--why didn't the lady get what Nabokov meant by "Squitteroo"--there is a solution in the French version after all. My own translations in the company of my parents' phantoms. . . . Feeling cosily melded with my father when, as at a charming Italian restaurant the other night, and as occurs ever more often these days, the sense of generation dissolves and I am asked if I'm the famous author. Dealing with interviews such as the following brief virgin I have reserved for you, complete with the putative interviewer's occasional infelicities in English:

1) Mr. Nabokov, at the recent Manhattan Theatre Club evening with Jeremy Irons, you spoke of "faux righteousness and aberrant correctness." It seemed to me at the time that you were alluding to the religious right and to the ideologized left, both of whom might have axes to grind with the novel *Lolita* and the upcoming film. Could you elaborate on your statement?

1. Yes, I was alluding, although the inverse is not uncommon: the Left can be faux-righteous and the Right's correctness can be in left field. I guess I just don't like fundamentalism or hints of fascism, which come in many stripes and colors. I share my father's distaste for heads of state whose images exceed postage-stamp size, and I don't think a citizen's dialogue with his deities or organs is the government's affair. Speaking of stamps, I wonder if whatever powers be think Nabokov himself might merit one for

his 1999 centenary, to put him on a cultural par with, for example, Elvis.

The disdain for Bolshevism and its offshoots that fueled my camaraderie with some exponents of the political right--and I certainly do not speak here of the enlightened and free-thinking William F. Buckley, Jr.--has lost some of its impetus now that Bolshevism has imploded and the subtleties of the fallout make it a less recognizable common enemy. Unless one is a party-liner, what remains on the Right is now sometimes harder to share: the kind of notion, for instance, that it is infanticide to question even the gleam in a prospective father's eye, or that condoming the one-in-billions chance of a Beethoven is less moral than condemning to famine or vile disease a million equally potential Puccinis. Or the hope that the denizens of Zambia or Zurich or Podunk will switch to mass abstinence when even many members of the clergy cannot resist the temptation of young boys.

While shopworn celebrities peddle psychic friendship next to the Abs people, a paradoxical obscurantism that has always pervaded parts of America flaunts fishy evangelists adjacent to music videos complete with their own brand of nod to pedophilia (the wide-eyed youngster emulating the orgasmic gyrations of its elders amid obese rappers and laudably sexy girls). But what is truly incongruous in a free country is the conviction of some that books and films should be banned or cleansed, often even on the basis of pure hearsay. Here we merge to the gray-shirt lane leading into the censorship of the left: certain language cannot be used on the campus or in the workplace, and the written word must be purged when it calls a spade a spade. By the way, I use that locution without the least nuance of racial slur but, if you wish, as an example of something a zealous editor might excise for the putative double-entendre, just as one subordinate revisionist briefly sneaked the linguistically ludicrous "he or she" into an early printing of the recently collected *Stories of Vladimir Nabokov*. It is in the context of such crossfire that one

begins to hear a renewed grinding of axes against *Lolita*, as buzz-saws chop children with impunity on our everyday screens.

2) What are the dangers--or let's say--the pitfalls of trying to capture *Lolita* on film? On the last occasion, Kubrick's version, virtually all of the language of the novel was lost, and it seems to me this would be the great challenge of a cinematic rendering of *Lolita*, to somehow capture the beauty and profundity of the language. Do you think such a thing is possible?

2. The media have echoed the credits: the screenplay of the original (Kubrick) *Lolita* was the work of Vladimir Nabokov. Wrong. It is true that Nabokov's contract did include the task. After months of honing he submitted a version that was greeted with enthusiasm, only to undergo the classic Hollywood fate: a committee rewrite. As you point out, the language of the novel was lost, except, I'd say, for an occasional speech of James Mason's--to my mind's ear, the high points of the film. It is trite but true that a mediocre book, like *Gone with the Wind* or *Zhivago*, is often remembered for the film or soundtrack it generates, while the stylistic originality of a great book is easily lost on the screen. Nabokov loved the cinema. When I was small, he and I would share countless laughs over Charlie Chan movies in Harvard Square or the Three Stooges at Boston's South Station cinema. Further back in time, he appeared as an extra in *Berlin* (film so far untraced, but one scholar recently said it must be *Dr. Mabuse*). Some of his works--the novel *Laughter in the Dark*, the story "The Potato Elf"--are ready-made movies. As for the first *Lolita*, he generously praised the talent of those involved but said, in a note to his screenplay (currently being issued by Vintage International) that the film had little to do with his book. I hope Adrian Lyne, with whom I have cordial relations, was criticizing Kubrick's script, not Nabokov's, in a recent strongly worded interview. I hope his film wins at least an Oscar nomination in some category, as Nabokov did for his screenplay.

I believe one *can* capture the language of a great stylist, not only in dialogue and voiceover, but through subtle transfiguration into the visual medium. In order to convince myself that the tricks I imagine are feasible, I should probably give them a try. In fact, in my rare spare time I am working on just such a script.

3) Why do you think this book has once again captured the imagination of a film-maker? What do you think accounts for its enduring appeal? You mentioned that you will be quite busy on the lecture circuit as a full-scale appreciation of your father's work unfolds. What is it about his work that has remained so fresh, so vivid to us, that has managed to rise above the ideological squabbles of its time and our time?

3a. It has never ceased capturing--from the retired CPA on the Coast who, oblivious to everything, mused, a few years ago, that "it might be a good idea to make a film of my dad's book," to a Russian from another planet who recently had the same stroke of genius, to the late Swifty Lazar, who had been agent for the original film and who called me one day to suggest a sequel posited on *Lolita*'s child's surviving after all. But this was before a bright lawyer discovered that a loophole for a remake had, after all, remained open.

3b. The enduring appeal in general? Nabokov Sr. once explained that had he not known more than he said, he would have been unable to say what he did. As I translate him into various tongues, or simply reread him, I discover new thoughts and new details, and feel myself moving closer, perhaps, to that domain of the unsaid. Other timeless writers may have an analogous aura. Other sensitive readers may feel the same thrill. Perhaps what Nabokov meant was a kind of draft out of the past into his favorite tense: the Future Perfect.

3c. As for the rest of your question--yes, thanks in large part to the organizational efforts of the Mercantile Library in New York, to a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, The New

York Council for the Humanities, Gertrude Whitney Conner, *The Nabokovian*, to the simultaneous launch of the Library of America Nabokov collection, and to the new *Lolita* film, there will be a lot going on, in what already begins to sound like clarinets and balalaikas approaching from the middle ground to herald Nabokov's fin-de-siècle jubilee.

4) How did your father handle ideological charges from the Left and Right? He must have had his share of confrontations over the years.

3d/4: Must art live in fear of ideological squabbles? Do we value *Hamlet* less because we are unsure of Will Shakespeare's identity, and don't know whether or not he would have taken part in protest marches? Perhaps a handful of us do--the same correctness freaks who would fig-leaf art, declaw language, bowdlerize the world. They've been around for a while, since long before a publisher suggested, fifty years ago, that *Lolita* would be printable if she were transformed, God only knows why, into a young boy. From time to time the literary establishment, if there is such a thing, goes into convulsions of reassessment, perhaps because there is nothing much new that merits initial assessment. The more amusing reviews of *Stories* quite overlooked the fact that some English locutions they were praising as VN's came from posthumous translations and were entirely mine. A self-appointed Russian "biographer" of Nabokov named Nosik--also among the most abysmal of the pirate translators--is accurate only where he plagiarizes Brian Boyd, while committing even greater crimes against the Russian tongue itself. A "princess" of dubious authenticity in Paris--whom I promised to mention again--once considered a friend by my parents, vents her vitriol presumably because Nabokov "*s'est enjoui*vé [enjewished himself] since his marriage. Yet a gentleman named Begley, in all ill-fated draft introduction to a British edition of *Speak Memory*, rudely reproached Nabokov for not having attacked Hitler in political tracts, forgetting that Nabokov's

wife lived in increasing danger in Nazi Berlin, that his brother died, for other reasons, in a concentration camp, that the world has seen other holocausts besides Hitler's, and that Nabokov detested all of them. Friend Begley may do some reading one day, and discover that *Bend Sinister* is a horror story partly engendered by thoughts of what might have happened to Nabokov's son in a state much like Hitler's; that *Invitation to a Beheading* is a condemnation of all despotism; that the story "Cloud, Castle, Lake" targets Nazi-era German bullying specifically. Some current commentators, happening upon a re-exhumed barb of Edmund Wilson's, suggest Nabokov "humiliated" his characters, without giving Nabokov equal time to demonstrate that they are 180° off course: he depicted the cruelty of Man and Fate so vividly because he detested it. But the arrows of Nabokov's style, and the specter of his substance, fly high above such squalid squabbles.

5) In your opinion, is *Lolita* vulnerable to any moral or ethical charge whatsoever?

5. As Martin Amis has also said, "It is strange to be defending *Lolita* on moral grounds, but we live in strange times." I recall the first Swedish publisher, who expurgated all but what he considered the naughtier parts of *Lolita*. I'd say the brutal brew of realities and onscreen fictions of our time might cause nightmares somewhat more traumatic than the damp dream that might, for some, be a by-product of romantic, poetic, comic, tragic *Lolita*. If one cannot resist scratching a sociopolitical itch, *Lolita* is a condemnation of pedophilia on all counts. I would expunge from literature the *poshlost*--such items as "my life was a constant orgasmic throb"--to quote a current volume.

Great romances of fiction--those of Shakespeare and Dante among others--have involved pubescent and prepubescent girls. So have, and do, the sometimes primitive mores of certain real societies. Child molestation is in a different category. Cruelty--

most of all cruelty toward the helpless --is something my parents and I have always despised with a vengeance. We never set foot in such vile places as Thailand.

Child prostitution, whether in brutal or presumably civilized locales, is getting big press these days, but is representative of a repugnant side of human nature that has always existed. Past taboos have limited the discussion, not the perpetration. To attribute even a shadow of guilt to a novel is tantamount, say, to ascribing to the bicycle--as some moralists did once upon a time--"lubricious excitement" and "inevitable nymphomania." A recent Swiss newspaper article about the laudable campaign to protect butterflies from the onslaught of chemicals featured a photograph of Valdimir Nabokov, net in hand--simply because he is famous, because he was, among other things, an entomologist, and because an archive shot was handy. Had Franz Weber, Switzerland's prime ecomaniac, glimpsed my father in real life capturing a special specimen destined for the splendid Nabokov collection that now resides at the Lausanne Museum, he might well have claimed Father was responsible for destroying the environment (such a half-assessment was, in fact, proposed not long ago by a revisionist with little to do but write silly letters to the *Trib*). The spirit is the same (to cite one more instance) as that of a Geneva duo, lawyer and professor, who, until they were laughed into silence even by the sober Swiss, campaigned for the installation of 75 mile-per-hour governors on all Ferraris imported into Switzerland, on the premise that even the catalyzed exhaust of a Ferrari traveling at 85 poisons the trees. A lot can be said about such disingenuous reasoning, while the trees of the former Nabokov estates in uncatalyzed Russia remain as green as their descriptions in *Speak, Memory*. I have strayed from *Lolita*, but not far: it is just as absurd to "blame"--for anything--Father's invented girl and his fictional monster (whom many a middle-American matron has told me she and friends find pretty sexy).

I wonder how many of the self-righteous bigots in Britain, Belgium, and points west who are assaulting *Lolita* in the wake of the Marcinelle child-prostitution scandal have read the novel. I wonder how those who have can, even remotely, equate a tragic, obsessive, fictional, love with the sordid reality of pandering to pedophilia. I wonder if all novels with an ounce of comprehension for a murderer should not be forbidden. Before we crown Nabokov Monster of Marcinelle, your Majesties, I propose banning the biggest seller of all time, which, when perceptively read in unexpurgated form, delves into most of the aberrations known to man, woman, and beast, from the incest of Adam and Eve on down.

PHANTOM IN JERUSALEM,
or the History of an Unrealized Visit

by Yuri Zavyalov-Leving

"He began to imagine that this trip, thrust upon him by a feminine Fate in a low-cut gown, this trip which he had accepted so reluctantly, would bring him some wonderful, tremulous happiness."

"Cloud, Castle, Lake"

Vladimir Nabokov took an exceptional stand in everything: he did not recognize authorities, literary canons, or ideological dogmas. His feeling of being an exception may have played a role in his attitude towards Jews. Much has already been written on the latter subject. At the beginning of the 1970s Nabokov sent money to the Union of Russian Jews, which had helped him emigrate to America, supported with the cheques the League for the Abolition of Religious Coercion in Israel and the Israel Defense Fund. In fact, the study of the "Jewish connection" of Nabokov's biography is incomplete without closer attention to his unrealized link with Israel.

Israel, especially Jerusalem, would inevitably attract Nabokov: the city of three religions, museum in the open air, different kinds of butterflies, freedom-loving inhabitants, unique museum and library collections. Incidentally, the National Library of Jerusalem contains a rare copy of the volume of poems "Gorniy Put' ". The book must have come here from a Jewish Berlin Library. Its title page has a stamp in Yiddish: "Berlin, Eastern Student Society".

The first official invitation to Nabokov to visit Israel was made by Israeli ambassador Arie Levavi in December 1970. Nabokov had to reject this invitation because of much literary activity, though in 1971 he contemplated a visit to S. Rozoff, his schoolmate, living in Israel.

Later, in 1974, Nabokov got a letter from Teddy Kollek, Mayor of Jerusalem. This letter started a somewhat dramatic correspondence, that continued almost till the writer's death. By that time Kollek had already met one of the Nabokovs--he was rather a close friend of Nicolas Nabokov, Vladimir's cousin. Nicolas and his wife Dominique, a French photographer, had visited Israel a number of times. In 1988 in New York Dominique had an exhibition of her pictures: "Israel: A Personal View."

V. Nabokov never visited Jerusalem, though a visit seemed close to be realised. Dmitri Nabokov recalled that at one point they all had been looking forward to it. (Dmitri Nabokov to YZ, January 31, 1996). They were invited to stay in "Mishkenot Sha'ananim", a guest house situated in Yemin Moshe, close to the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem. This is a quiet quarter, with cobbled narrow streets reminiscent of provincial Holland rather than of a Middle Eastern city. "Yemin Moshe" was constructed by Europeans at the end of the 19th century. When Sir Moses Montefiore established the first Jewish neighborhood outside the Old City walls, he thought the windmill would attract industry. Today this neighborhood contains beautiful homes and galleries, especially picturesque at twilight. The old windmill is standing at its entrance. From that neighborhood one can see mountains and the Jordan valley, stretching down to the Dead Sea, and looking like a hopeless landscape mistake in the atmosphere of a quite European festiveness.

The guest house was reconstructed in 1973 by the Jerusalem City Hall. Since that time many famous people have visited Mishkenot Sha'ananim, among them Sir Peter Brook, the Dalai Lama, Saul Bellow, and Umberto Eco.

The subject of Nabokov's planned visit was touched upon by Brian Boyd in *Vladimir Nabokov: The American Years* (hence VNAY). In fact, the situation was complicated. In light of additional information found in Israel, it is now possible to specify some circumstances pertaining to the last period of Nabokov's life.

Teddy Kollek wrote his rather long letter of invitation to V. Nabokov on September 16, 1974. The idea of the invitation had originated with Nicolas Nabokov. Kollek and N. Nabokov used to meet not only in Jerusalem, but also in Europe, sometimes in the company of I. Berlin. (YZ interview with T. Kollek, January 1, 1996). Nicolas was interested in the cultural life of Israel and in problems of the absorption of new immigrants. A copy of the first invitation letter to Vladimir Nabokov was sent to Nicolas, who thanked Kollek for doing that in his letter of October 24, 1974.

In this first letter Kollek told the story of the Mishkenot Sha'ananim centre, where Nabokov was invited to stay.

Nabokov's answer was rather cold. Sent on October 3, 1974, it started officially with "Dear Sir", was typed on Montreux-Palace hotel paper (that was not to happen again), and was approximately three times shorter than Kollek's September message.

Nabokov thanked Kollek for the invitation and said that he had no doubt that the company in the Mishkenot Sha'ananim would really be a pleasant one, implicitly chaffing about Kollek's attempt to interest him in other guests. Indeed, Kollek's self-confident phrase "we hope too that our guests will enjoy meeting one another" sounded like an unwitting parody of the odious collective jolliness described by Nabokov in "Cloud, Castle, Lake", 30 years previously.

Nevertheless, in the second part of his brief letter, Nabokov--as if by way of excuse--mentioned that he was "an old man, very private in all habits of life," who preferred "fruitful isolation in Switzerland to the stimulating, but distracting atmosphere of America". Hence the logical conclusion that at the age of 75 the trip to a hot unknown country was an absurd venture. The letter ended with a round phrase--"Gratefully and regretfully". By this diplomatic turn Nabokov suggested that he did not expect further persuasion.

In accordance with the biographical materials such an answer seems quite reasonable. Overloaded with meetings, literary translations and new creative work, Nabokov valued his own art too much to afford distraction by informal trips with their inevitable "informal" dinners and meetings. He cut down on his rest as well, only allowing himself to hunt butterflies from time to time. And yet...

Why does Nabokov suddenly and without any obvious reason change his mind and accept Kollek's repeated invitation almost with joy?

Here it is necessary to dwell on the second letter from the Mayor of Jerusalem, sent three weeks later. It was unobtrusive and polite: "Please let me assure you," wrote T. Kollek on October 23, 1974, "that there is no place more tranquil than Mishkenot Sha'ananim (lit. "Peaceful Dwellings"), overlooking Mount Zion and the Hills of Moab. And you could surely have all the privacy you would want--your acceptance of our invitation in no ways obligates you to anything." Kollek added a personal touch, saying that several years before he had been at the Montreux Palace, where the Nabokovs lived and he could assure them that the Mishkenot was more tranquil than its Swiss counterpart. (Kollek had really been in the Montreux-Palace Hotel, around 1948, at the unofficial meeting between Israeli delegates and Palestinian Arabs).

Nabokov's answer, in January 1975, appeared to be a turning point in the correspondence. At the time he refused to go to the United States to receive the National Medal for Literature personally, sending Dmitri instead. At the end of December 1974 he worked strenuously, correcting the French translation of "Ada"--getting up at six in order to switch over to "Details of a Sunset" in the afternoon.

Strange as it may seem, on January 15, 1975 Nabokov writes to "Dear Mr. Kollek" about his decision to accept the "charming invitation" with

thanks for the "nice and friendly letter". Yet despite this change of tone he mentions that "life--laborious, literary life--has been most complicated" that winter and that he is still not sure when he can come to Israel.

Nevertheless, Nabokov writes that "the very name of the place is so enticing", and that he will "not only admire, but certainly visit for butterfly hunting the Moab Hills".

Characteristically of Nabokov, a WORD becomes a factor. "Peaceful Dwellings" is a beautiful translation from Hebrew, but... not an accurate one. "Mishkenot", means "dwellings" all right, while "Sha'ananim" (pl.) or "Sha'anani" (sing.), says an English-Hebrew-English dictionary, means "serene". The sound of the latter word reminds one, but for the stress, of Nabokov's Russian pseudonym--Sirin. It seems that in the evening of the writer's life Fate itself was inclined to play puns with Nabokov, offering to turn "Serene Dwellings" into "Dwellings of Sirin"! It is hard to say whether Nabokov made use of the Hebrew dictionary, which is not mentioned in the list of his home library. However, V. Khodasevich said once that there was nothing that Sirin could not be acquainted with. In any case, "the very name of the place" must indeed had been "enticing..."

At the end of his letter Nabokov asks Kollek's permission to sojourn for a few months at the Mishkenot Sha'ananim with his wife, but leaves the date of his arrival open.

Among the more practical reasons, which could influence Nabokov's change of mind, is the Tel-Aviv National Opera invitation to Dmitri Nabokov, an opera basso. The invitation was discussed at that time and mentioned in the same letter to T. Kollek.

The stories of the unrealized visits of the father and the son developed in parallel, till at some stage they converged. (The first sign that V. Nabokov knows about the preparing contract of Dmitri is in his letter to T. Kollek, January 15, 1975). On June 10, 1974 on

his own initiative Dmitri Nabokov wrote to Tel-Aviv National Opera that while he was working in America he learned that there were openings for bass singers in Tel-Aviv. Israeli Opera held quite a firm position in the world of music at the time. Placido Domingo started his career there.

"I have always wanted very much to sing in Israel, and perhaps this might be the right moment", says Dmitri in his letter to de Fillippe, the Tel-Aviv Opera director, enclosing a list of his bass roles on the world stages and a great number of reviews from all over the world. In a capsule personal history he says that he was born of emigre Russian parents in Berlin, has U.S. citizenship, is a graduate of Harvard University, and has served in the U.S. Army. His past activities include translation of his father's and others' works from Russian into English, a leading role in an Italian mystery film, and serious engagement in several sports.

In his letter to Madame de Fillippe, Dmitri informed her of the three addresses where she could find him, among them his father's in Montreux, which he recommended be used because the mails in Italy, where he lived, were "in a disastrous state". On the 23rd of June 1974 Dmitri got a letter from Nora Cohen, the Tel-Aviv Opera secretary, which was sent to Monza, his Italian address. The letter asked him to send a tape with some leading arias and his personal data and to inform them if he was ready for a one-year contract. At the beginning of August Dmitri sent the tape of arias as agreed, but did not get any reply for a long time. On September 28 1974 he sent another letter to the Tel-Aviv Opera secretary, wondering if the tape he had sent ever reached the addressee.

It was approximately at that time, on September 16 1974, that Teddy Kollek sent Vladimir Nabokov his first invitation to visit Jerusalem. It is likely that when Nabokov refused Kollek's invitation on October 3 1974, he was not aware of his son's possible one-year contract in Tel-Aviv. Otherwise he might have become interested in the possibility of being together with his son for a while.

Meanwhile, Dmitri's engagement looked more and more feasible, and on November 4 he got a letter from Tel-Aviv, in which N. Cohen asked him from which date he was ready to start a contract.

Dmitri answered on the spot: he would like to start as quickly as possible, but it is too late to cancel the engagements he has accepted for January and February 1974. He is ready to start about March 10 provided he gets a release in April and July. He asks which roles he would sing and how long the season is to last. He is also interested in some financial details of the contract. Among the roles he would like to play Dmitri mentions Mefisto and Don Basilio.

At the end of the letter Dmitri assures the Tel-Aviv Opera administration that he will "do everything possible to arrange things in such a way as to meet [their] needs", as he is "delighted at the prospect of singing in Tel-Aviv" and hopes to hear from them in the nearest future. He asks them to use the Swiss address (Palace Hotel, Montreux) after December 1.

Hence from December 1974 Dmitri's correspondence was to be directed to his father's Swiss address. As Dmitri was in the USA in December 1974 he could learn the content of the letters sent to him by phone. So V. Nabokov could be aware of his son's plans. It was on January 15, 1975 that V. Nabokov wrote a letter to the mayor of Jerusalem with his consent to visit Israel.

The last letter of those found in the archives concerning Dmitri's engagement is dated December 19, 1975. Dmitri writes to the Opera's director that he could sign the agreement from September 30 for six months, "renewable by mutual consent for another six months or perhaps longer". Unfortunately, this visit did not come to pass. After careful consideration Dmitri reluctantly declined the Opera proposal for professional and personal reasons.

However, Dmitri sang in Jerusalem 10 years later, in January 1987, as bass soloist in the Dvorak *REQUIEM* under the direction of the conductor Aronovich. (D. Nabokov to Y.Z., April 6, 1996).

Mrs. Givton, an episodic figure, writes to Nabokov on March 10, 1975, introducing herself as the new Director of the Mishkenot Sha'ananim centre. She also encloses a summary of the resolutions of the last meetings concerning Nabokov's visit and apologizes for the delay in sending them, complaining of the absence of secretarial help. She says that most of the letters of invitation have already been written over T. Kollek's signature.

Three months later Nabokov confirms his intention to visit the Mishkenot Sha'ananim in "a not distant future": "The present year was a very difficult one for me, and there is still a number of things waiting to be wound up before I can think of a real leisurely vacation in Israel." (Nabokov to H. Givton, letter of June 11, 1975).

A week after writing to Mrs. Givton, the Nabokovs could afford to take a long-awaited vacation at Davos. The first half of 1975 was devoted to many things: the revision of the French translation of "Ada"; negotiating with the "Viking" publishing house, which worked on the writer's problematic biography by A. Field; interviews, including the one to the French TV programme "Apostrophes", on the occasion of the publication of "Ada ou l'ardeur" in France. He finished checking his French translation in February and was planning to start translating "Ada" into Russian in April. At the end of July, at the age of 76, Nabokov stumbled while butterfly hunting and was taken to the hospital. In October he was operated on in Lausanne and on December 10, 1975, despite his bad condition after the operation he started his last novel.

It is in that situation of instability, when it has become clear that every day of creative activity free from pain is precious, Nabokov gets a new letter from his Jerusalem correspondents.

After an almost half-year's silence, it is Peter Halban who writes to Nabokov this time. He is the new Director of the Mishkenot Sha'ananim, a man close to Kollek--intelligent and highly educated, with good

relations and perfect knowledge of languages. In the letter of 23 December 1975 Halban's aim is to make the dates of the visit more exact; and he goes about it diplomatically. In the opening sentence Halban refers to George Weidenfeld, the English publisher of Nabokov's books, a person, who no doubt is an authority for the author: "I was talking to Sir George Weidenfeld, who was in Israel last week, about a number of people who have been invited to Mishkenot Sha'ananim and he rightly asked me to write to encourage you to come to Jerusalem and Mishkenot Sha'ananim when your schedule would permit." Boyd characterizes the relations between Nabokov and G. Weidenfeld in 1959 as follows: "Over the next three decades he would continue to publish almost every Nabokov work he could, whether freshly written or newly revived. During the 1960s and 1970s, Nabokov's most loyal publisher and Weidenfeld's best author would become firm friends." (VNAY, 381). Halban's reference to such a respectable mediator together with his description of the Mishkenot Sha'ananim may have influenced Nabokov: "This is an ideal place, in our opinion, for a writer to continue his work and, at the same time, to travel and to meet people in Jerusalem and throughout the country."

There were indeed people to meet. One can recall, for instance, that Samuel Rozoff, Nabokov's old friend and class-mate in Tenishev School still lived in Haifa, a city two and a half hours away from Jerusalem. They maintained regular correspondence and on January 31, 1976 Nabokov thanked Rosoff for sending him fruit: "We are heartily enjoying your sunny grapefruit, which arrived safe and sound the other day." (*Vladimir Nabokov: Selected Letters 1940-1977*, 554).

Whether owing to Rozoff's grapefruit, Halban's elegance or other factors, Nabokov for the first time mentioned a more or less exact date for his journey--Spring, 1977. In a letter of March 5, 1976 he warmly thanked Halban for his message and added: "Few things could tempt me more than a trip to Israel, especially in the conditions that you so kindly offer."

Nabokov wrote that he and Vera planned their visit to Israel in April, 1977, noting prudently that he would be "unhappy" if, after asking Halban to reserve an apartment for them, he were later "to discover that something or other in my complicated literary life upset a carefully calculated plan." Nabokov promised to get in touch with Halban closer to Spring 1977.

Nabokov's letter did not reach the addressee, who was away on holiday, but Halban's assistant, Annie Ohayon, informed the prospective guests that an apartment was reserved for them for April 1977. (A. Ohayon to V. Nabokov, March 16, 1976).

Nabokov is so much absorbed in his new novel (on April he reports to the publishing house McGraw-Hill that he had passed the hundred printed page mark of his new book *The Original of Laura* (VAY, 654)), that he has no time to reply to the Mishkenot Sha'ananim, and asks his wife to do it for him. On April 2, 1976 Vera Nabokov thanks Miss Ohayon for her letter and says that in spite of the overcrowded schedule they are still "looking forward to visiting Israel".

After the dates were tentatively determined there came an almost seven-month break before the renewal of correspondence in December. The main reason was Vladimir Nabokov's illness.

The new novel, finished in his mind but not yet recorded on paper, had to be postponed. Early in May an ambulance took him to the hospital in Lausanne after Nabokov had fallen in his bath and hurt his head. Then in July he was hospitalized in Nestle with an infection and from September 7 he and Vera had a rehabilitation period in Glion, in an expensive hospital with a panoramic view of Lake Geneva and the Savoy Alps.

As soon as Nabokov felt better, he wrote to Teddy Kollek. Nabokov was to live about half a year; nevertheless the letters of that period are full of energy and optimism, and he discusses the details of the coming visit with growing pleasure.

On December 10, 1976, exactly a year after his last effort on the unfinished novel, Nabokov says that he is delighted to learn from his cousin Nicolas that Kollek still wants him to come to Israel. "I have been eager for quite a time to make this journey"--says Nabokov and describes his recent illness.

It seems that Nabokov's wish to reach Jerusalem increases in inverse proportion to his chances of getting there.

However, he continues to plan this trip, informing Kollek that he wants to come to Israel with his wife in the second week of May "for a month or so". He fears he will not be as stimulating a guest as Nicolas, but is looking forward to making Kollek's acquaintance "after hearing so much about [his] superb activities". (Up to that time T. Kollek had been Mayor of Jerusalem for more than 10 years. He had written *The Pilgrims to the Holy Land* (1970), had a rich collection of the ancient maps of Jerusalem and Palestine). And then Nabokov briskly jokes: "I am also looking forward to the museums and libraries, and, of course, to some butterfly collecting (in the company of an experienced and robust male guide)".

Before receiving Kollek's answer, Nabokov hears from P. Halban. In the letter of December 20 the Director of the Mishkenot Sha'ananim centre happily reports that there is an apartment waiting for Mr and Mrs Nabokov at Mishkenot from 8th May until the end of June. "If you would like to stay longer, we do have room in July"--adds Halban.

In July Vladimir Nabokov would not need any room at all.

In a separate paragraph Halban assures the writer that there would be no problem finding a suitable guide to accompany his guest on butterfly collecting. "We do hope to make your stay with us relaxful and stimulating..."

Nabokov answers immediately. On December 24, 1976, on Christmas eve, Nabokov repeats that they are "very much thrilled by that delightful prospect" to see Jerusalem and confirms that they intend to stay at the

Mishkenot Sha'ananim from May 8 till the end of June.

It is quite possible that that very Spring in Israel, in a different atmosphere, Nabokov intended to finish writing his last novel in tranquility and peace of mind. Nabokov adds in the same letter to Halban: "I hope you will not find it presumptuous if I add that we are used to having each his own room: I often write in the middle of the night."

Halban makes a detailed description of the apartment meant for the Nabokov's visit: "Please do not worry about the room situation; each apartment consists of two bedrooms, a small study with a second bathroom, a living room and a kitchen." (P. Halban to Nabokov, January 5, 1977). Halban also asks him not to hesitate to get in touch with them if there is anything that they can do for Nabokov prior to his arrival.

Four days before the New Year T. Kollek answered the same letter that Halban had already answered resolving the last details: "I was delighted to receive your letter and to learn that you are planning to visit here in May together with your wife. It will be our honor and pleasure to have you with us at that time. We will be happy to make any arrangements you would like--from butterfly collecting to museums." The Mayor of Jerusalem said he was sorry to learn that Nabokov had not been well that year, wished the couple a good holiday season and expressed the hope that "the new year would be one of good health throughout." (Kollek to Nabokov, December 26, 1976). This wish was not to come true.

Nicolas Nabokov, who had started the whole story, probably intended to spend April-May of 1977 in Jerusalem too. There is a document in the archives that testifies to the negotiations between the Tel-Aviv Music Academy and Jerusalem Music Centre concerning N. Nabokov's three to six weeks long seminar. The Jerusalem Music Centre, where the seminar was to be held, is a minute's walk from the Mishkenot Sha'ananim guest house.

Thus, but for the tragedy--the Spring of 1977 could have been the time of the unprecedented Nabokov family reunion in the Holy Land.

On March 26, 1977, just three months before his death, Nabokov sends the last letter to his Jerusalem addressee whom he would never meet. The letter is written in hospital, a week after his checking in there. The trembling letters of Nabokov's signature suggest that it was made in bed by a very weak hand. A comparison of Nabokov's signatures during all the period of correspondence shows that the closer to the fatal date the more unsteady Nabokov's handwriting becomes, as if life were fighting with death in him. In contrast to his handwriting, the messages are full of hope and plans.

That last letter gives a hint of Nabokov's attitude to this visit, to its importance after two and a half years of expectation: "It seems that some kind of unlucky spell has fallen on our lives and our most cherished plans." Nabokov writes that at the moment when it seemed that the hard times were over and he was on the way to recovery and a long awaited trip was close as never before--pneumonia put him into the hospital again, "in a room that is a mirror image of last summer's." This phrase from Nabokov's letter to Kollek is a repetition of the record from his own diary made several days before.

The doctors forbade any discussion of travelling during the coming weeks. (Nabokov to Kollek, March 26, 1977). He has "again [to] forego a trip to which we had long looked forward". But the dream of seeing Jerusalem does not leave him. The use of the word "again" suggests that he meant that the visit should not be canceled but only put off.

Kollek was on a trip abroad when the letter from Europe came. He found it on his table on returning home. Teddy answered that he was most disappointed to learn that the visit had to be postponed, most of all because of the cause--Nabokov's illness. "I do hope

that your recovery will be a rapid one and it will not be long before you return home--and before you visit Jerusalem." (Kollek to Nabokov, April 18, 1977). Kollek was wrong once again. On July 2 Nabokov's heart stopped beating.

The Mishkenot Sha'ananim still exists. Most of the apartments have been divided into smaller units and prices have considerably grown. Since its founding in 1972 the guest house has been visited by Czeslaw Miloz, Jacques Derrida, Andrzej Wajda, Norman Podhoretz, Yuri Lubimov, Krzysztof Kielowski and Steven Weinberg among others. One can see their pictures in the Centre's corridors. In the hall there is a shining black grand piano and huge bookcases with old volumes under glass. Here we walk past stone vaulted walls and look at the pictures--among which he could have been found. We look at the closed doors of apartments, in one of which he could have lived, at the arm-chairs in a quiet hall, where he could have sat.

But Nabokov was not here and these are the curves of Fate. That very fanciful Fate, whose sudden moves he liked to trace. That is the way he will stay for us--elusive, alluring, and promising.*

*I would like to thank the following persons for their comments and suggestions during the preparation of the present essay:

Dmitri Nabokov, Teddy Kollek, Prof. G. Barabtarlo (Missouri), Prof. B. Boyd (New Zealand), Dr. V. Zavyalova (Haifa University), and the assistants of the Archives of T. Kollek in the Israeli Museum (Jerusalem), of the Archives of the Mishkenot Sha'ananim Centre and of the Tel-Aviv Opera Archives in the Central Library of Tel-Aviv University.

My special gratitude is due to Professor Leona Toker (Hebrew University) who read the manuscript and made a number of invaluable remarks.

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 (573) 884-8456, or by e-mail at gragh@showme.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.]

WILLIAM T. STEAD'S PAPER CRIMES

In Chapter Nine of *Speak, Memory*, VN mentions his father's collected articles on criminal law, *Sbornik statey po ugolovnomu pravu* (St Petersburg, 1904; see Boyd II, 483), and singles out one paper, "Carnel Crimes", where his "father discusses, rather prophetically in a certain odd sense, cases (in London) 'of little girls à l'âge le plus tendre. . . being sacrificed to lechers. . .'" (SM 178; Boyd's assessment in I, 54). While reading Grace Eckley's "A Paradigm for the Fall of Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker" (*Journal of Modern Literature* 12, 1985, 61-76), I was immediately reminded of the above-cited intriguing passage from *SM*.

Now, I do not know the contents of VDN's article, nor the specific cases he discussed, but it is very likely that his article was inspired by either Stead's own

writings on the same subject or by newspaper reports of the latter's case which I am about to unfold. I feel strengthened in my claim by VDN's use of the verb "sacrifice", and by the fact that Stead's pamphlets had already toured most of Europe by the time VDN wrote his piece. As we shall see, Stead's case has a critical event that proves "Carnal Crimes" to be prophetic in more than one sense.

Leaving aside *Finnegans Wake* and Eckley's arguments, the following story--by no means without gaps and mysteries--can be extracted from her essay (for further details, see also her supplemental article in *JML* 13, 1986, 339-44).

William T. Stead (1849-1912), the assistant editor of London's *Pall Mall Gazette*, started on July 6, 1885 a series of articles on child prostitution which led to his own trial and incarceration for abduction and indecent assault. The whole affair originated in a bill to raise the consent age for girls from thirteen to sixteen. Having passed in the House of Lords in 1883, the bill did not pass in the House of Commons in 1885, and was bound to founder. That year, Benjamin Scott, a campaigner against vice, appealed to Stead's remarkable, journalistic talents to urge passage of the Criminal Law Amendment Bill. As a result Stead set up his own "Secret Commission" to interview brothel keepers, procurers, pimps and prostitutes, rescue workers, jail chaplains, and former police officials. On June 3, 1885, Stead tested his information by arranging that a reformed prostitute, Rebecca Jarrett, purchase a thirteen-year-old girl named Eliza Armstrong, for whom he paid her mother five pounds (cf. *Lolita's* disturbing chapter 6). Next, Eckley quotes from Raymond L. Schults's *Crusader in Babylon: W. T. Stead & the PMG* (Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1972, 131) which reconstructs the ensuing incident, that adumbrates the pivotal scenes from *The Enchanter* and *Lolita*, as follows:

Eliza was taken to a midwife and known abortionist, Louise Mourez, who examined her, attested to her virginity, and sold Stead a bottle of chloroform to make the supposed seduction easier;

after which she was taken to a room in a brothel, which she believed was a hotel, and given a whiff of chloroform. Half an hour later Stead entered the room, and when Eliza, who was still awake, cried out in alarm, he immediately left her. The following morning a Salvation Army worker arranged for Eliza to be taken to France and given a position there (Eckley 64).

In the *PMG* of July 4, 1885, Stead announced a report on sexual criminality and warned the squeamish not to read the *Gazette*. "The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon" began with an account of maids of Athens being sacrificed to London's perverted rich men. Stead attacked respectable businessmen and statesmen whose lusts seemed insatiable and among whom was a retired doctor who required three virgins every fortnight. The first article ended with the story he claimed he had heard of the purchase of a 13-year-old girl named Lily for 5 pounds. It was ascertained that Lily was Eliza, despite Stead's tenacious denials. Members of the House of Commons wanted to prosecute the *PMG* for violating the laws against obscene publications, and many individuals accused Stead of corrupting young girls through indecent literature which consisted of reports of rape, incest, and violence against young girls. Sir Richard F. Burton eloquently stated: "This false and filthy scandal could not but infect the very children with the contagion of vice. The little gutter-girls and street-lasses of East London looked at men passing-by as if assured that their pucelages were or would become vendible at £ 3 to £ 5" (Eckley 65). Stead, "sex-obsessed", according to Havelock Ellis, sprinkled the reports with sensational crossheads such as "The Violation of Virgins", "Procuress in the West End", "How Annie was Procured" and "The Demon Child". The City Solicitor banned the *PMG* from sale in the city; and on July 9 a violent crowd of avid readers again damaged the *PMG* office building, located fatidically on Northumberland Street. It is, perhaps, of no mean significance that Lewis Carroll wrote a letter denouncing "the popular outcry" about Stead

and his crusade. Meanwhile, Stead brought out the "Maiden Tribute" series in pamphlets that sold in America and in most of Europe, including Russia. Stead advanced a proposal in which the consent law should be raised only to sixteen, not eighteen as some advocated, because if higher it "would cut off the means of livelihood for girls over sixteen without offering them compensation", thus apparently condoning prostitution.

In September Rebecca Jarrett was charged with abduction and assault, and Stead cabled from Switzerland that he alone was responsible for the Eliza Armstrong incident. What brought about the abduction charge against Stead was Eliza's mother having reported her daughter missing to the police on July 11. Stead was sentenced to three months jail and served little more than two months and was released on January 18, 1886.

--A. Bouazza, the Netherlands.

WHY DARWIN SLID INTO THE DITCH:
AN EMBEDDED TEXT IN *GLORY*

In Nabokov's rather puzzling early novel *Glory*, Martin Edelweiss grows up under the influence of fairytales and medieval romances, eventually creating a mythical and cruel country of his own, Zoorland, into which he disappears; however, Zoorland is also a parody of Soviet Russia, and apparently in "real life" Martin is shot while trying to cross the Latvian border. Among other features which critics have attempted to unravel is the ending, as Martin's friend Darwin pauses along a forest path, apparently communing with something or someone--possibly Martin himself--about which or whom the reader can only guess. The path itself resembles the one in a painting hung above Martin's childhood bed.

I wish to focus on an apparently unimportant detail that begins this last scene:

"Higher up in the mountains there was an odor of damp snow, and water dripped from the trees because of the sudden thaw that had followed the first frosts. The car he had hired brought him quickly to the village, skidded on a curve and overturned in the ditch. Darwin scrambled out, shook the wet snow off his overcoat and asked a villager how far it was to Henry Edelweiss's place. He was shown the shortest way--a footpath through a fir forest."

Nobody has ever commented on Darwin's car sliding into the ditch, and indeed, if any critic were asked why that car overturned, the answer would probably be, in order to place Darwin on the forest path. However, if one were to compare this unimportant scene to another unimportant scene, this time in Pushkin's *Ruslan and Lindmila*, one might be surprised by similarities. I apologize in advance for my poor translation. In this scene the cowardly knight Farlaf flees from another knight and ends up in the ditch:

"At the site of the splendid escape
turbid Spring streams
of late-melting snow were running
and digging into the damp heaps of earth.
The ardent charger rushed at a ditch,
tossed tail and white mane,
champed the bit of steel,
and vaulted the ditch;
But the timid knight fell hard
head over heels into the muddy ditch,
saw ground as sky
and prepared to accept death.
. . .The embarrassed knight crawling
willy-nilly left the muddy ditch;
looking shyly around the vicinity,
reviving, he sighed and said:
'Well, thank God, I'm all right!'"

Curious, one might say. Immediately after this event, Farlaf, shaken, abandons the quest on the advice of an old witch. And now Pushkin suddenly focuses on Farlaf's inner self, in one of those odd moments which are presumably part of Nabokov's reason for cherishing him:

"Impatiently
our prudent hero
set off for home immediately,
having heartily forgotten about glory
and even about the young princess;
and the slightest sound in the stand of oaks,
the flight of a titmouse, the murmur of
water kept him hot and sweaty."

Or, since I'm not much of a translator, let's try Walter Arndt's rhymed version of the same lines. No matter what Nabokov said about Arndt's rhymed *Eugene Onegin*, I can use the repetition here:

"Our knight, judicious man he was,
Set off for home without a pause,
Forgotten dreams of hardihood,
And those of love at least withstood;
The slightest murmur in the wood,
A babbling brook, a bluetit's rustle,
Sufficed to make him sweat and hustle." (Arndt 29)

Now let us look at Nabokov again, after Darwin walks down the path, as we end *Glory*:

"... a little later the wicket he had not closed properly creaked in a gust of damp wind and violently swung open. Then a titmouse alighted on it, uttered a *tsi-tsi-tsi* and *incha-incha*, and flew over to the branch of a fir. Everything was very wet and dim. An hour elapsed. Darwin emerged from the brown depths of the melancholy garden, closed the wicket behind him (it promptly opened again), and started back along the path through the woods. There he paused to light his pipe. . . . It was quiet in the woods, all one could

hear was a faint gurgle: water was running somewhere under the wet gray snow. Darwin listened and for no perceptible reason shook his head. His pipe, which had gone out, emitted a helpless sucking sound. He said something under his breath, rubbed his cheek pensively, and walked on. The air was dingy, here and there tree roots traversed the trail, black fir needles now and then brushed against his shoulder, the dark path passed between the tree trunks in picturesque and mysterious windings."

I have no doubt that the picture of Darwin at the end of *Glory*, with its echoing details of the fall in the ditch, the water running under the snow, the titmouse singing and flitting, all leading to a kind of mysterious epiphany, is intended to echo the passage in *Ruslan and Liudmila*. And I hope the readers of the *Nabokovian* agree with me.

But in what way is this embedded text significant? *Ruslan and Liudmila* is a mock-medieval romance, full of magic, farlytale elements, and high humor, blending wit and emotion in a way that English literature might call Byronic but that in Russian is Pushkinian. It is also the exuberant work of a very young man, Pushkin at 20--in fact, Pushkin at Martin's age. On the other hand, Pushkin's poem and the minor character Farlaf have almost nothing in common with Nabokov's novel and the character of Darwin. Farlaf is a coward who quits the knightly quest but later stabs the sleeping Ruslan and takes credit for bringing Liudmila back home. Once Ruslan recovers from his wounds, rescues the city of Kiev from barbarians, and releases Liudmila from a magic spell, he pardons the traitorous Farlaf--showing, no doubt, that Ruslan is a better man than I am. Darwin, on the other hand, is no coward, and has no other obvious connection with Farlaf. So, I conclude, the *Ruslan* reference has no significance at the level of plot. Basically, it is a kind of reference game, but it does have a different kind of significance, at a different level of reading: the knighthood level. And there, the

last chapter of *Glory* refers back to its very first chapter:

"Martin's first books were in English. . . Thus in early childhood Martin failed to become familiar with something that subsequently, through the prismatic wave of memory, might have added an extra enchantment to his life. However, he had no lack of enchantments, and no cause to regret that it was not the Russian knight-errant Ruslan but Ruslan's occidental brother that had awakened his imagination in childhood. But then what does it matter when comes the gentle nudge that jars the soul into motion and sets it rolling, doomed never again to stop?"

Here, prominently placed, is the novel's only overt reference to Pushkin's *Ruslan and Lindmila*--a reference that explicitly refers to the elements of knight-errantry in Malory and Pushkin. It had occurred to me that if I was correct about the importance of knightly elements, then there should be something in *Ruslan* that would be reflected in Nabokov's text. And indeed, a close reading of Pushkin's poem produced the embedded passage I have discussed. Yet the passage is itself so unexpectedly obscure in Pushkin that I wonder how Nabokov expected anyone to locate the reference--unless that person were, like me, looking for it in the first place.

My own interpretation of the ending of *Glory*, an interpretation which I have held for a long time, is that at novel's ending, Darwin is inspired by Martin's spirit, and we are witnessing the rebirth of Darwin's artistry. Prior to this, Darwin had become a complacent journalist engaged to a rather dull girl, having apparently forgotten the brilliant little essays of his youth. In other words, the apparently pointless exploit of Martin Edelweiss, an exploit that leads to his death, has a point after all: it liberates Darwin's artistry.

Does the embedded passage from *Ruslan* support my long-standing interpretation? If so, then the mention of *Ruslan* at the end of the first chapter should have something to do with the hypothetical transformation at the end of the last chapter, when Martin--or Martin's ghost, or Nabokov--inspires Darwin to take up his pen. That is, if Martin is a Russian inspired by English tales of knighthood, then perhaps symmetrically Martin might be an Englishman eventually inspired by Russian tales of knighthood--or rather by that very specific Pushkin poem.

--Charles Nicol, Indiana State University

HERMANN LANDE'S POSSIBLE PROTOTYPES IN *THE GIFT*

Hermann Lande is mentioned in the novel at the very end of Chapter 3, when Fedor meets the prospective publisher of his *Life of Chernyshevski*. Fedor recalls that the publisher's list is "small, but remarkably eclectic." He notes, however, that "among this trash there were two or three genuine books, such as, for example, the wonderful *Stairway to the Clouds* by Hermann Lande and also his *Metamorphoses of Thought*" (*The Gift* 210-11).

Who could serve as the prototype for this writer of whom Fedor speaks with such praise? One possible candidate is Grigorii Adol'fovich Landau (1877-1943?), a philosopher, emigre critic, essayist, "a man whose mind Nabokov greatly respected" (Boyd, *The Russian Years* 255), and whose first and last name initials--G. L.--are identical with Lande's in the Russian original (German Liande). He was the son of A. F. Landau, the renowned St. Petersburg Jewish writer and publisher, and the cousin of A. I. Kaminka, a leader of the Constitutional Democratic (Kadet) party, co-editor of the party newspaper *Rech'*, business

manager of the Berlin emigre daily *Rul'*, and a close friend of V. D. Nabokov. G. A. Landau collaborated in *Rul'* and after V. D. Nabokov's tragic death in the Spring of 1922 assumed his position as the newspaper's editorial writer (*Evrei v kul'ture Russkogo Zarubezh'ia* 2: 534; Boyd, *The Russian Years* 255). Among G. A. Landau's publications are "Epigraphs" ("Epigrafy," *Chisla* 2-3, 1930: 201-4), a collection of maxims, the form reminiscent of Lande's second book title, as well as "Theses Against Dostoevskii" ("Tezisy protiv Dostoevskogo," *Chisla* 6, 1932: 145-63), the essay whose negative stance on the author of *The Brothers Karamazov* is very congenial with Nabokov's. (When discussing this possible prototype with Omry Ronen, I was pleased to learn that he was of the same opinion.)

Another possible prototype for Hermann Lande is Mark Aleksandrovich Landau (1886-1957), the writer and critic, better known under his nom de plume Mark Aldanov. Lande's *Metamorphoses of Thought* evokes Aldanov's philosophical prose, and the epithet "wonderful," used to describe Lande's works, perhaps reflects Nabokov's opinion on those of his friend who later played such a fatidic role in his coming to the United States.

Yet another candidate for the composite prototype of this fleeting character in Nabokov's last Russian novel is Aleksandr Solomonovich Lande (1872-1935) who wrote under the pen name Izgoev. The original phrase, in which Lande is mentioned, "prekrasnaia `Lestnitsa v Oblakakh' Germana Liande i ego zhe `Metamorfozy Mysli'" (*Dar* 237), contains his anagrammatized first name, father's name and pseudonym--Aleksandr Solomon(ovich) Izgoev, together with his slightly altered last name. (In the English translation, as we recall, Nabokov employs Izgoev's real surname--Lande.)

In prerevolutionary Russia, Izgoev, who had been a member of the Kadet party Central Committee between 1906 and 1918, regularly published his essays in *Rech'*. His article "Ob intelligentnoi molodezhi" ("On the

Intelligentsia Youth") appeared in the famous collection *Viekhi* (1909).

In 1918, Izgoev participated in the collection *Iz glubiny* (publ. 1967) with the essay, "Sotsializm, kul'tura i bol'shevizm" ("Socialism, Culture and Bolshevism"), in which he vehemently criticized the new regime. Set in print in the Fall of 1918, the collection was forbidden for publication by the censors. And its unauthorized publication by typesetters three years later was confiscated by the Bolshevik government (*Iz glubiny* X).

In the Fall of 1922, Izgoev among a large group of intelligentsia was expelled from Russia and arrived in Berlin (Struve, *Russkaia literatura v izgnanii* 18) where he collaborated in *Rul'*. In addition, Izgoev the publicist also contributed to other emigre periodicals, such as the Riga newspaper *Segodnia* (*Evrei v kul'ture Russkogo Zarubezh'ia* 2: 237). *Segodnia* is apparently implied in *The Gift* shortly before Lande's mention, in the episode in which Busch shows Fedor "a pitiful little review" of his play "which had appeared in the Rigan emigre newspaper" (*The Gift* 209).

Fedor's favorable reference to Lande's works can be seen, perhaps, as Nabokov's distinctive tribute to the memory of the recently deceased man who for many years had been his father's fellow Kadet party leader and newspaper collaborator.

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Correction: In the last issue (Spring 1996) on page 21 there was a dropped line in Gerard de Vries annotation. The text should read: ". . . that the Proustian theme originates in Scott and subsequently in Wordsworth. The train of associations stops at Wordsworth because he was digging dung in his garden while composing his "Ode."