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NEWS

by Stephen Jan Parker

From the Editor

Please note the new membership/subscription rates that are posted on the inside cover of this issue. The changes reflect the increases in U.S. postal rates, particularly as regards mailings abroad, both surface and airmail, as well as increased publication costs. Please also note the updated listing of the availability of back issues.

NOTE: The Zembla Website has urgent need for monetary support. To insure the continuation of this essential dimension of the Society, we encourage all Society members to please add at least $1 to their annual dues payment which will be earmarked for Zembla.

Readers are also urged to renew their memberships/ subscriptions now in order that we may save on the costs of mailing reminders to those who have not done so.

As a last matter, I remind readers that *The Nabokovian*, now in its twenty-fourth year, serves the members of this organization, and that it is its members who provide its content. I encourage you all to submit items for publication (annotations, essays, news of interest, special bibliographies, special pieces, and so forth).

Nabokov Society News

Charles Nicol, Indiana State University, current Vice-President of the Society, will assume the position of President for the two year term, 2002-2003. Priscilla Meyer, Wesleyan University, has been newly elected Vice-President for the 2002-2003 term.

The Society sponsored a session, "Nabokov and Time," chaired by Susan Elizabeth Sweeney, at the American Literature Association convention, May 25, in Long Beach, California. Papers read were: "Nabokov on Tolstoy's Chronology in *Anna Karenin* and the Narrative Time of *Pnin*, Ljuba Tarvi; "Let Visitors Time-Trip with Vladimir, Humbert, and Van," Charles Nicol; "'Vanish Like a Ghost': The Persistence of History in Nabokov's *Pale Fire*," Sally Bachner.

A session, "Vladimir Nabokov's *The Gift*," chaired by Kristen Welsh, was held at the AAASS National Convention, November 16, in Arlington, Virginia. Papers read were: "Filial Feelings and Paternal Patterns: Shakespeare in *The Gift*, Polina Barskova; "Straws of Orpheus: The Gift of Memory and Desire," David H.J. Larmour; "*The Gift* as a Work of Queer Studies," Eric Naiman. Discussant, Thomas Seifrid. At another panel, "Writers and Things," Richard Chandler Borden presented the paper, "Nabokov's Nonnons and Other Things."

The annual meetings of the Nabokov Society will be held this year in New Orleans. The MLA sections are: (1) Sunday, December 30, Charles Nicol, will chair the session entitled "Nabokov Imitating, Imitating Nabokov." Papers to be presented: "Lolita by Lamplight: *Lo's Diary* revisited, Ernst Machen; "Revisiting Lo for the Global Age: Lee Seigel's *Love in a Dead Language*," Christian Moraru; "'Nabokov' as Both String and Hole in the Postmodern Net of *Flaubert's Parrot*," Timothy L. Walters.

Respondent, Ellen Pifer. (2) The "Open Topic" session will be chaired by Zoran Kuzmanovich. The AATSEEL panel will be chaired by Galya Diment, on December 28. Papers to be read: "The 'Right' versus the 'Wrong' Child: Shades of Pain in *Bend Sinister*," Elena Sommers; "Doubles in Conrad and Nabokov," Ludmilla Voitkovska; "Vladimir Nabokov and Arthur Schopenhauer," Savely Senderovich and Yelena Shvarts.

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Odds and Ends

— The original Russian text of "Father's Butterflies: Second Addendum to *The Gift*" has been published: "Vtoroe Dobavlenie k Daru," *Zvezda*, no 1 (2001), foreword by Brian Boyd, notes by Alexander Dolinin.

— Ten years after the contract was signed, the first volume of Brian Boyd's monumental biography of Nabokov has been published in Russia. *Vladimir Nabokov: Russkie Gody, 1899-1940*, tr. Galina Lapina (St. Petersburg: Symposium) includes new material not published in the English edition, particularly material relating to Nabokov's St. Petersburg years that had been inaccessible when the original research was done in the early 1980s. It provides the original text of all Nabokov's Russian materials, including otherwise unpublished materials which Slavic scholars will need for citation purposes.

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Some Recent Books

Gennady Barabtarlo, ed. *Byl' i ubyl'*. Moscow: Amphora. Includes translations of all of Nabokov's English stories.

Brian Boyd. *Ada: The Place of Consciousness* in a second, expanded edition [new preface, four additional chapters, two indexes] from cybereditions.com.

Brian Boyd. *Pale Fire: The Magic of Artistic Discovery* (Princeton), now available in paperback.

Brian Boyd and Robert Michael Pyle, eds. *Nabokov's Butterflies* (Penguin) now available in paperback.

Grigorii Khasin. *Teatr lichnoi tainy*. Russkie romany V. Nabokova. Moscow: Letnii Sad.

Vladimir Korablin. *Zashchita Vladimira Nabokova. Analiticheskie issledovaniia romana LOLITA*. St. Petersburg: Korablin V.A.

Ephim Kurganov. *LOLITA i ADA*. St. Petersburg: Zvezda.

G.G. Martynov. *V.V. Nabokov: Bibliographicheskii ukazatel'*. St. Petersburg: Folio. Covers Russian language publications in the USSR, Russia, states of the CIS, and Baltic states.

Vladimir Nabokov. The complete, five-volume *Collected Russian Language Works* (St. Petersburg: Symposium) is now available.

Vladimir Nabokov. *Staroe literaturnoe obozrenie*, no.1 (Moscow). A special issue devoted to Nabokov.

Horst Tappe. *Nabokov*. Basel: Christoph Merian Verlag. A collection of photographs of VN in and around Montreux.

Dieter Zimmer. *Nabokovs Berlin*. Berlin: Nicolai.

A. Zlochevskaia. *Roman V. Nabokova Ada v kontekste russkoi literaturnoi traditsii*. Moscow: Vestnik Moskovskogo universiteta. Ser.9. Filologiia.

Alexei Zverev. *Nabokov*. Moscow: Molodaia Gvardiia.

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Readers have brought to our attention several errors and omissions in the 1999 Nabokov bibliography.

Correction:

All of the articles and essays attributed to *Neva*, no. 4 should be corrected to *Zvezda*, no. 4.

Additions:

Vladimir Nabokov. Special issue. *Vyshgorod* (Tallinn).
Vladimir Nabokov. Special issue. *The Rising Generation*, November (Japan). Contents:
Hidehiro Nakao, "Nabokov as the Writer's Writer: An Interview with Brian Boyd: 2-7.
Yoshiyuki Fujikawa, "What Kind of a Writer Nabokov Was": 8-10.
Yuichi Isahaya, "Nabokov and Gogol: Something in the Darkness": 11-13.
Izumi Matoba, "Representation of the United States as Noises: Lolita and Pnin": 17-19
Akiko Nakata, "Concealed Death: *Transparent Things* and Other Works": 20-22.
Keiko Nishiyama, "From Memory to Creation: Beyond Nostalgia": 23-15.
Tadashi Wakashima, "Nabokov's Multi-level Thinking: A Reading of 'Spring in Fialta'":14-16.
Yuichi Isahaya. Review of M. Shrayer's *The World of Nabokov's Short Stories*: 8-9.
Nakao, Hidehiro. "An Interview with Brian Boyd." *Krug* (Japan)1, no. 1: 14-15.
Nakata, Akito. "Nabokov's Conclusive Evidence, Chapter 16." Krug (Japan) 1, no. 1: 10-13.

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Thanks, as always, (and still counting) to Ms. Paula Courtney for her enthusiastic, competent, and irreplaceable assistance in the production of this publication.

D'O YOU GET THE JOKE?

by Brian Boyd

Nabokov allows us inexhaustible discoveries as we reread, but from the first he offers humor that stays funny *even as* we reread. When the two combine, so that we discover after many rereadings a joke that had been staring us in the face, and that at the same time links with other discoveries we have already made, we can almost imagine we see him twinkling with pleasure at the pleasure he was hiding for us to find.

In the first chapter of *Speak, Memory*, Nabokov links humor and human thought: "the first creatures on earth to become aware of time were also the first creatures to smile" (22). In the last chapter, he suggests that "the closest reproduction of the mind's birth obtainable," the closest to answering "the riddle of the initial blossoming of man's mind," is "the stab of wonder that accompanies the precise moment when, gazing at a tangle of twigs and leaves, one suddenly realizes that what had seemed a natural component of that tangle is a marvelously disguised insect or bird" (298), and at the end of the chapter he and Véra lead Dmitri down to the harbor of St. Nazaire waiting for his gasp of surprise and laugh of joy when he can at last "Find What the Sailor Has Hidden." Nabokov prepares for us the same surprise, which can mean keeping a joke hidden until we at last find something we "cannot unsee once it has been seen."

As a boy Nabokov avidly appreciated conjurors and wanted to become one, and as a writer one of his favorite tricks for keeping something hidden is to wave it in our face or to distract us with the apparent obviousness of what he is doing. On the first page of *Ada* he introduces the twins Aqua and Marina, and draws attention to the dubiety of such an obvious joke: "an older ancestral strain of whimsical, and not seldom deplorable, taste, well reflected, for instance, in the names she gave her daughters: Aqua and Marina"—which he follows up with

one joke much more obscure (" 'Why not Tofana?' ": after Tofana, the Sicilian poisoner who in the seventeenth century killed hundreds with her *aqua tofana*), another partly obvious, partly obscure ("wondered the good and sur-royally antlered general"), and another immediately comical glimpse of character ("with a controlled belly laugh, followed by a small closing cough of feigned detachment—he dreaded his wife's flares") that becomes still funnier when we realize this is the *only* time in the whole novel we see this character in action.

The next paragraph compounds the Aqua-Marina reflection in a different way, by introducing their two husbands, with apparently identical names, Walter D. Veen and Walter D. Veen: if the twins names *almost* match, their husband's names seem quite indistinguishable. Probably it is only later that we see another joke there, that the two "Walters" also carry on the "water" joke in *Aqua* and *Marina* (*Walter* and *water* were complete homophones in early modern English: see Brian Boyd, "Annotations to *Ada*, I," *Nabokovian* 30, 4.16-20n.)

The first of the Walter D. Veens to mingle his fluids with the first of the "water"-wenches is Demon, with Marina playing in a stage travesty of *Eugene Onegin* as the young countrywoman (Pushkin's Tatiana, this play's Lara) in precipitous love with the play's Onegin, Baron d'O. In this absurd version of Pushkin's poem, Nabokov adds the joke of evoking but distorting and Frenchifying the hero's name, although this on another level reflects Nabokov's insistence on the strong influence on Pushkin of *French* versions of Byron in constructing his somewhat Byronic hero. Behind the joke of the grotesquely improbable French version of the name is the additional joke and surprise of the unlikely truth: that "d'O" is indeed a genuine Norman noble name.

(A small textual note: "Baron O." at 12.07 should be "Baron d'O.," as at 11.05 and 12.17, despite Nabokov's own confusion in introducing successive corrections in the German and French versions of the novel: see Brian Boyd, "Even Homais Nods: Nabokov's Fallibility, Or, How

to Revise *Lolita*," *Nabokov Studies* 2 [1995], 62-86, pp. 69-70).

The jokes in the transformation of Onegin's name into "d'O" are compounded again by Demon's meeting, and identifying as the lover he has suspected Marina has acquired, a Baron d'Onsky. Just as Demon as it were stepped into the stage version of *Eugene Onegin* to possess Marina "between two scenes (Chapter Three and Four of the martyred novel)" (10-11), he now finds himself confronting someone whose name combines Onegin and Lensky, lover and suspected rival, and soon opponents in a deadly duel, in Pushkin's story, as Demon and d'Onsky too fight a duel, which leads, too, to d'Onsky's death.

Demon meets d'Onsky to confirm that a drawing he has discovered is indeed by Parmigianino, a drawing that for Demon has

> the additional appeal of recalling Marina when, rung out of a hotel bathroom by the phone, and perched on the arm of a chair, she muffled the receiver while asking her lover something that he could not make out because the bath's voice drowned her whisper. Baron d'Onsky had only to cast one glance at that raised shoulder and at certain vermiculated effects of delicate vegetation to confirm Demon's guess. D'Onsky had the reputation of not showing one sign of esthetic emotion in the presence of the loveliest masterpiece; this time, nonetheless, he laid his magnifier aside as he would a mask, and allowed his undisguised gaze to caress the velvety apple and the nude's dimpled and mossed parts with a smile of bemused pleasure. Would Mr. Veen consider selling it to him there and then, Mr. Veen, please? Mr. Veen would not. Skonky (a one-way nickname) must content himself with the proud thought that, as of today, he and the lucky owner were the sole people to have ever admired it *en connaissance de cause*. Back it went into its special integument; but after finishing his fourth cup of

cognac, d'O. pleaded for one last peep. Both men were a little drunk, and Demon secretly wondered if the rather banal resemblance of that Edenic girl to a young actress, whom his visitor had no doubt seen on the stage in "Eugene and Lara" . . . , should be, or would be, commented upon. It was not: such nymphs were really very much alike because of their elemental limpidity since the similarities of young bodies of water are but murmurs of natural innocence and double-talk mirrors, that's my hat, his is older, but we have the same London hatter. (13)

Note that "d'Onsky" becomes "d'O." to Demon as his own drunkenness rises, and note the strange lush liquidity of the final sentence above. As we delve further into the novel, we discover the strange resonances connecting Marina on the telephone, just called from her shower, and Aqua, who suffers from Demon's infidelities once *he* marries *her*, and who, in the mental strain that that induces, thinks that she hears speech in water—an echoing prefigured already in their names, and again in the final sentence above ("the similarities of young bodies of water are but murmurs of natural innocence and double-talk mirrors"). As we delve still deeper, we discover that that comic prominence to "water" in their names, and Aqua's less comic conviction that messages can come through water, in turn prefigure the death of Lucette, driven to suicide, as Aqua is, because of the entanglement of her fate with *her* sister's, and the messages that dead Lucette seems to send from her watery grave.

I had realised all of this for many years before I saw the extra joke in d'O's name: *d'eau*, "of water." Nabokov plays with the pun in the final sloshed sentence of the paragraph quoted above, but the insistence on water there—or even my having written of "water, the element in which Lucette drowns" as "the element which holds Antiterra together" (Boyd 1985/2001:278)—still did not alert me to a joke present in d'O's name from the start.

But I have excuses: there were so many jokes and links already in d'O's name (the distortion of "Onegin," the reflection of a real if improbable French noble name, the slippage between the stage Baron d'O and the real-life Baron d'Onsky, with its Onegin-Lensky blur, the anticipation in d'O on stage and d'Onsky off of the Don in *Don Juan's Last Fling*) that I had thought there was no need to notice more; and the water pattern in the novel, from Aqua's and Marina's names and the hydrophones and other hydraulic surrogates for banned electricity are so immediately part of *Ada*'s world that we soon take them for granted—until, of course, we connect them with Lucette's death, and connect the "L disaster" (17) that leads to the banning of electricity with the disaster that befalls her.

Once we do see the joke, though, we also see a strengthened connection between d'O and d'Onsky in I.2 and Lucette's death in III.5. Demon's role in "cuckolding" the d'O of the stage play by sweeping Marina off her feet leads to a weird, ontologically displaced, revenge when d'Onsky in turn "cuckolds" him, and both events anticipate *Don Juan's Last Fling*, with its "Stone Cuckold's Revenge" (490) and its strange interplay between the on-screen Ada and Van in the theater that matches the interplay between the on-stage Marina and Demon in the theater. Ada on screen in her few brief scenes "[b]y some stroke of art, by some enchantment of chance . . . formed a perfect compendium of her 1884 and 1888 and 1892 looks" (489), but in so doing also forms a compendium of images of Lucette too interfused with the patterns of Ada's past to be separated out (see Brian Boyd, *Nabokov's* Ada*: The Place of Consciousness*, 1985/2001: 129-45): once again, as it were, "such nymphs were really very much alike because of their elemental limpidity since the similarities of young bodies of water are but murmurs of natural innocence and double-talk mirrors." Van lurches from the *Tobakoff*'s cinema, abandoning Lucette, who remains out of politeness to "old bores of the family" (475); when she calls him afterwards, he says he is not

alone, and she prepares for death, trying to "think up something amusing, harmless, and scintillating to say in a suicide note. But she had planned everything except that note, so she tore her blank life in two and disposed of the pieces in the W.C.; she poured herself a glass of dead water from a moored decanter, gulped down one by one four green pills" (492) and then jumps into the Atlantic. The empty message in the water of the toilet bowl, the dead water with which she washes down her pills, and the water she jumps into form a pattern that sweeps her relentlessly to her death.

And that pattern started with a mistranslation from Rimbaud's "Mémoire" criticized by Ada: the translator offering not the correct "marsh marigold" but "care of the water" for *souci d'eau*, in a scene that implicates Lucette and the tragic ironies of her fate: her sexual initiation too early, but her failure to have Van "deflower" her, and her herself eventually becoming the "care of the water" as a result (see Boyd 1985/2001: 53-59; Boyd, "Annotations to *Ada* 10: Part 1 Chapter 10," *Nabokovian* 39 [Fall 1997]).

Some readers appear to flinch at what they suppose the obviousness and the irrelevant indulgence of the joke in naming Aqua and Marina, or of much of the humor in *Ada*. But for Nabokov one obvious joke merely leads to many, many more, to patterns, overt or covert, immediately visible or invisible even if right under our eyes, to patterns comic and tragic, which we may not see for a long time but cannot unsee once seen. He can even pack joke within joke within joke within joke within a poignant tragic pattern within a single two-letter word.

NOTES AND BRIEF COMMENTARIES

by Gennady Barabtarlo

PLEASE NOTE NEW NOTES/COMMENTARIES EDITOR AND INSTRUCTIONS

[Submissions should be forwarded to Priscilla Meyer at pmeyer@wesleyan.edu. E-mail submission preferred. If using a PC, please send attachments in .doc format; if by fax send to (860) 645-3465; if by mail, to Russian Department, 215 Fisk Hall, Wesleyan University, Middleton CT 06457. • 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. • 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.]

A NOTE ON HOUSMAN IN *PALE FIRE*

In a long article on the variants in *Pale Fire* (*The Nabokovian* 45 and 46), a brief reference was made to Kinbote's note to Line 920. The reference was part of the article's treatment of the themes of shaving and poetic inspiration which occur in Canto Four of Shade's poem and in Kinbote's commentary, and itself requires some elaboration. In the poem (lines 915-920), it is the sensation produced by "inspiration and its icy blaze,/The sudden image, the immediate phrase" that makes "the little hairs all stand on end." Kinbote comments that A.E.

Housman "says somewhere (in a foreword?) exactly the opposite: the bristling of thrilled little hairs obstructed *his* barbering." (p. 269) Kinbote is recalling imprecisely a source with which Shade is familiar as well; this point, moreover, has been already subtly made in the commentary. The source also contains a profound secondary relevance to Shade's poem.

This is what Housman says — not in a foreword, but in "The Name and Nature of Poetry," a lecture delivered at Cambridge in 1933 — by way of describing the symptoms provoked in him by poetry: "Experience has taught me, when I am shaving of a morning, to keep watch over my thoughts, because, if a line of poetry strays into my memory, my skin bristles so that the razor ceases to act. This particular symptom is accompanied by a shiver down the spine." (p. 46) The first sentence explains Kinbote's oblique comment on shaving. The second establishes the connection to Shade, who had adapted its imagery in a conversation recorded by Kinbote and recounted earlier in the commentary: "[T]rain the freshman to shiver...to read with his spine and not with his skull." (p.155)

On now to the secondary relevance I mentioned. Housman proceeds directly from the above-cited paragraph to close out his lecture with some words about the creation of poetry, specifically, two methods of composition:

> In short I think that the production of poetry, in it first stage, is less an active than a passive and involuntary process....I have seldom written poetry unless I was rather out of health, and the experience, though pleasurable, was generally agitating and exhausting....I will give some account of the process....I would go out for a walk of two or three hours. As I went along, thinking of nothing in particular...there would flow into my mind...sometimes a line or two of verse, sometimes a whole stanza at once, accompanied, not preceded, by a vague notion of the poem which they were destined to form part of....When I got home I wrote them down, leaving gaps, and hoping that further inspiration might be forthcoming another day. Sometimes it was, if I took my walks in a receptive and expectant frame of mind; but sometimes the poem had to be taken in hand and completed by the brain, which was apt to be a matter of trouble and anxiety, involving trial and disappointment, and sometimes ending in failure. I happen to remember distinctly the genesis of the piece which stands last in my first volume. Two of the stanzas...came into my head, just as they are printed, while I was crossing the corner of Hampstead Heath between the Spaniard's Inn and the footpath to Temple Fortune. A third stanza came with a little coaxing after tea. One more was needed, but it did not come: I had to turn to and compose it myself, and that was a laborious business. I wrote it thirteen times, and it was more than a twelvemonth before I got it right. (P.4-50)

These remarks, seen in the context of the previous article, deepen the pattern of ineffable coincidence therein traced; namely, that of the disparate elements and mysterious promptings that converge to inspire Shade and, with the additional aid of his spirit, to influence the commentary. Kinbote, once again an unwitting guide, leads us by means of an adventitious remark to the twin themes in Housman which with uncanny aptness overlap in Canto Four of "Pale Fire."

— Anthony Fazio, Chicago, Illinois

ANOTHER NABOKOV REFERENCE IN *PALE FIRE*

On July 6, 1959, angered by his not being invited to Shade's birthday party on the previous evening, Kinbote

confronts Sybil with a birthday present for her husband and claims that the two men share the same birthdate – July 5: "it was my birthday too – small difference of sixteen years, that's all" (161). But Kinbote (or Nabokov?) makes a curious error here. There is ample evidence in the book that King Charles II of Zembla is born in 1915 (74, 306), so presumably Kinbote would be born in the same year. But if so, the "small difference" of age between the two men is not sixteen, but seventeen years, Shade being born in 1898 (13) and just having celebrated his 61st birthday. Is this Nabokov's error, and thus subject to possible emendation? Or are we to think that Kinbote was born in 1914, which *would* make him sixteen years younger than Shade, but one year older than his fantasy self, King Charles? Other evidence in the book indicates that the "sixteen" is *not* Nabokov's error, for Kinbote makes essentially the same mistake twice more in the novel. In his first comment on Canto 2, Kinbote notes that Shade began the Canto on his "sixtieth birthday," but then immediately adds: "My slip – change to sixty-first" (148). He makes the identical mistake, this time without making the correction, in a later comment on a passage from Canto 2 in which Shade describes Sybil: "the fact remains that sixty-year old Shade is lending here a well-conserved coeval [Sybil] the ethereal and eternal aspect she retains, or should retain" (207). Shade is, of course, sixty-one when he writes the lines in question. Clearly there is a pattern of errors here on Kinbote's part, and the explanation lies not in Kinbote's believing that he is a year older than King Charles, but in erroneously believing, at some points in his commentary, that Shade is a year younger than he actually is.

What is the point of this pattern of errors about Shade's birthyear? If Shade were sixty on July 5, 1959, he would have been born in 1899 – and thus in the same year as Nabokov himself, who was sixty years old in July 1959. Three times in the novel, Kinbote unwittingly makes a slippage, confusing Shade's age in the "real" world of Appalachia that the two men inhabit with their

creator's age in the "real" world that Nabokov and his readers inhabit. As with the sound of the horseshoes whose source neither Shade nor Kinbote can identify, Kinbote in his errors about Shade's age seems unconsciously aware of but at the same time influenced by another level of reality, one that is indeed creating him, which causes him momentarily and with no sense of why he is doing what he is doing to identify Shade with Nabokov.

—Ward Swinson, Colorado State University

POEM, PROBLEM, PRANK

Among the hallmarks of Nabokov's stellar image are his metatextuality, literary gamesmanship, and multiple boundary-straddling—linguistic (Russian/English), generic (prose/poetry/non-fiction), and other. The problem in question involves all three.

1.

Chapter Eleven of Nabokov's autobiographical text (*Conclusive Evidence*, 1951; *Speak, Memory*, 1967), narrating the creation of his first poem at age 15, is absent from the 1954 authorial Russian version, *Drugie berega* [Other shores]. But the post-Soviet discovery of Nabokov has finally supplied Russian readers with translations of the missing chapter (one by M. Malikova, followed by an insightful commentary, in *Nabokov Pro et Contra*, 1997: 741-71, another by S. Il'in, in the 1999 Simpozium edition). In that chapter, the memoirist portrays the gestation of his maiden verses with condescending/forgiving irony as he launches into a detailed formal analysis (which resulted in the piece's rejection by the *New Yorker* in 1948; Boyd, II: 686) of their slavish dependence on the 19th-century Russian poetic tradi-

tion. The theme of juvenile imitativeness is echoed by several other motifs.

> Various sounds reached me in my various situations. It might be the dinner gong or something less usual, such as the foul music of a barrel organ. Somewhere near the stables the old tramp would grind, and on the strength of more direct impressions imbibed in earlier years, I would see him mentally from my perch. Painted on the front of his instrument were Balkan peasants of sorts dancing among palmoid willows. Every now and then he shifted the crank from one hand to the other. I saw the jersey and skirt of his little bald female monkey, her collar, the raw sore on her neck, the chain which she kept plucking at every time the man pulled it hurting her badly [...]
>
> The family phonograph, which the advent of the evening set in action, was another musical machine I could hear through my verse [... I]t emitted from its brass mouthpiece the so-called *tsiganskie romansi* beloved of my generation. These were more or less anonymous imitations of gypsy songs—or imitations of such imitations [...] When silence returned, my first poem was ready. (1967: 223-4)

The barrel organ, the monkey, the phonograph, the gypsy songs are all served up as explicit variations on the «aping» theme. As usual, however, there is more to Nabokov's self-disclosing game than meets the eye, especially that of the English-language reader, although some clues are, of course, planted in the text. The central conceit of the barrel-organ paragraph is the paradox of seeing/non-seeing: the avowedly non-retinal gaze («I would see mentally») yields a detailed—«Proustian»—close-up visualization («I saw») of the scene based on earlier impressions. These may well have been «direct» or, for that matter, second-hand, borrowings from the 1907 poem «With a Monkey» by Ivan Bunin, whose poetry Nabokov acknowledges (in Chapter Fourteen) having

loved since childhood. Another likely source is «The Monkey» (1918) by Vladislav Khodasevich (see G. Amelin and V. Morderer, *The Worlds and Confrontations of Osip Mandel'shtam,* Moscow, 2001), featuring a similar set of characters, but culminating in the persona's portentous handshake with the monkey. Khodasevich's poem was clearly not available to the budding poet, but very much so to the seasoned memoirist: the ties between the two major émigré writers in the 1920s and 1930s are a matter of record.

The affinities of Nabokov's «first poem» with Khodasevich's «Monkey» do not stop there. The opening paragraph of Chapter Eleven begins with the intention «to reconstruct the summer of 1914» (the year Nabokov turned 15), which in the second sentence is narrowed down to July. The historical relevance of the timing is sketched in at the end of the same long paragraph by the mention of «such jottings as: [...] "Down with Austria!"» on the door of the country house «pavilion», the teen-age versifier's favorite venue (215-6). History then disappears from the narrative (except for the offhand reference to the Balkans in the description of the barrel organ) to resurface at the very end.

> I carried [the poem] homeward, still unwritten, but so complete that even its punctuation marks were impressed on my brain [...] The possibility of [my mother's] being much too engrossed, that particular night, in other events to listen to verse did not enter my mind at all [Ö] A white telephone gleamed on the glass-topped table near her. Late as it was, she still kept expecting my father to call from St. Petersburg where he was being detained by the tension of approaching war. (225-6)

Now, war against Russia was declared on July 19/ August 1—«on the very day,» as the punch line of Khodasevich's poem has it, of that poet's memorable rendezvous with a monkey. The setting of Khodasevich's

poem is a *dacha* near Moscow, that of Nabokov's "first poem," one near St. Petersburg. Thus the time and, in a sense, the place coincide, as does the monkey-cum-barrel-organ motif—the latter in both cases probably on loan from Bunin (Bunin has a Croatian barrel organist; Khodasevich, a Serb; Nabokov averages the two into generic "Balkan peasants"). Further parallels are, however, not traceable, since Nabokov's poem appears to have stayed "unwritten." The alleged first publication of his poetry (1914) has either disappeared or never existed (Malikova, 769), while none of the extant early collections (imitative, to be sure) contain a poem answering the description provided by the memoirist (rhymed iambs; the phrases *poeta gorestnye gryozi* [the poet's melancholy daydreams] and *vospominan'ia zhalo* [memory's sting], and a reference to "the old-world charm of the distant barrel organ" [221, 225]). All that has been netted by Nabokov scholars are some similarities in the early poem «Dozhd' proletel» [The rain had flown], 1917 (Boyd, I: 108, Malikova: 769-70), to which one can add a monkey and a caged animal (*tushkanchik* [jerboa]) appearing in the poems «Obez'ianu v sarafane...» (A monkey in a sarafan...), and «V zverintse» (At the Zoo) respectively, both published already in emigration, in 1923.

In all likelihood, we are faced not just with a twist of "fictitiousness" in autobiographical writing (much discussed in Nabokov criticism, e. g. in John Burt Foster's book) but with a fully blown mystification: a covert appropriation—aping—of a fellow poet's work, and a "Monkey" at that. Chapter Eleven as a whole would then forfeit its claim to a documentary account of a first creative experience, ending up instead as an archly fictionalized tall tale (somewhat similar to Isaak Babel's *Spravka/Moi pervyi gonorar* [Answer to inquiry/My first fee], 1928/1937, where "aping" a friendly senior's work—in that case, Maxim Gorky's *Childhood*—also looms large). In fact, Chapter Eleven was originally published as a short story («First Poem», *Partisan Review*, September 1949).

2.

As if one appropriation were not enough, Nabokov works into his narrative yet another secret borrowing—to underscore the conventionality of his juvenile poetic exertions and further test the readers' literary competence. Played in the paragraph leading up to the reciting of the finished poem to his mother, this intertextual game helps both to enhance, on the surface, the episode's emotional intensity, and, at a deeper—literary connoisseurs'—level, ironically to deflate it.

> My nerves were on edge because of the darkness of the earth, which I had not noticed muffling itself up, and the nakedness of the firmament, the disrobing of which I had not noticed earlier. Overhead [...] the night sky was pale with stars. In those years, that marvelous mess of constellations, nebulae, interstellar gaps and all the rest of the awesome show provoked in me an indescribable sense of nausea, of utter panic, as if I were hanging from earth upside down on the brink of infinite space, with terrestrial gravity still holding me by the heels but about to release me at any moment. (225-6)

The episode reads (certainly in view of «The Monkey» business) as a disguised—English—prose rendering of an 1857 poem by Afanasii Fet, well-known to educated Russians:

Upon a haystack one southern night/ I lay facing the firmament,/ and the choir of stars, live and harmonious,/ was spread around trembling.// The earth, mute as a vague dream,/ was mysteriously racing away/ And I, like the denizen of paradise/ alone beheld the night face to face. // Was I racing towards the midnight abyss,/ or were the hosts of stars racing towards me?/ It seemed as if I were held in a mighty hand/ suspended above the abyss.// And with trepidation and bewilderment/ I

spanned with my gaze the depth/ into which with every moment/ I am sinking ever more irrevocably.

Fet, along with Tiutchev, is mentioned in Chapter Eleven as a major player in the tradition's hypnotizing spell, and a strong influence of both is quite evident in Nabokov's early poems, among them «noch', ia tvoi» [Oh, night, I am yours...], 1918, which features the persona's nocturnal sailing/swimming across the firmament, a motif shared by the two 19th-century greats.

Thus, Nabokov not only datelines his «poem» à la Khodasevich, but also walks the talk of Fet.

3.

The appropriation pulled on Khodasevich is especially noteworthy in the context of *Dar* [The Gift], 1936, with its doubles relationship between Fedor Godunov-Cherdyntsev (a fictionalized alter ego of Nabokov-Sirin) and Koncheev (a «Khodasevich»). In his Foreword to *Speak, Memory,* Nabokov claimed that the reason for omitting Chapter Eleven from *Other Shores* was «the psychological difficulty of replaying a theme elaborated in my *Dar*» (12). The author's reference to a common pool of motifs being carefully distributed between *Speak, Memory* and *The Gift* explicitly erases the boundary separating his fiction and non-fiction; it echoes Nabokov's other statements to the same effect, e. g. his programmatic decision to write not a pure autobiography but «rather a new hybrid between that and a novel» (Nabokov, *Selected Letters*, 69; quoted by Foster, 179, and Malikova, 763).

The Gift does, indeed, exhibit numerous parallels to Chapter Eleven: an imitative elegy written by Fedor at 15; the banal versifying by his other *Doppelgänger*—Yasha Chernyshevsky (who plays Lensky to Fedor's Onegin); comments on the dated poetic tradition and the protagonist's indebtedness to Fet, involving a mention of his «Babochka» [A Butterfly] (butterfly poems by Fet and Bunin are quoted and praised in the lepidopterological

Chapter Six of *Speak, Memory*)—but not of Fet's «Upon a Haystack...» or, for that matter, of a barrel organist with his monkey! That pair was to make its appearance only in 1949, and then in an English-language publication, in America—at a safe distance from both its donors: ten years after the death of Khodasevich and far away from Bunin (still living in France). Apparently, the parallel existence of two versions of his creative beginnings—autobiographical and novelistic (the authorized English translation of *The Gift* came out in 1963)—did not bother Nabokov as long as it took place in a foreign idiom or across the language barrier. It was their meeting on Russian linguistic soil that gave him psychological pause and that he had successfully avoided—until his posthumous Russian comeback.

As for eluding Khodasevich's notice, the success of the appropriation was as complete as it was prompt. Just two years after his death and one year into Nabokov's American avatar, Nabokov published translations of several poems by Khodasevich, «The Monkey» among them! In other words, almost a decade before implicitly claiming that poem as his own in a fictitious non-fiction, he actually had penned it—in English. Here it is, his «first poem»—arguably, his first in his newly adopted literary medium:

The Monkey

The heat was fierce. Great forests were on fire./ Time dragged its feet in dust. A cock was crowing/ in an adjacent lot. As I pushed open/ my garden-gate I saw beside the road/ a wandering Serb asleep upon a bench/ his back against the palings. He was lean/ and very black, and down his half-bared breast/ there hung a heavy silver cross, diverting/ the trickling sweat. Upon the fence above him,/ clad in a crimson petticoat, his monkey/ sat munching greedily the dusty leaves/ of a syringa bush; a leathern collar/ drawn backwards by its heavy chain bit deep/ into her throat. Hearing me pass, the man/ stirred,

wiped his face and asked me for some water. / He took one sip to see whether the drink/ was not too cold, then placed a saucerful/ upon the bench, and, instantly, the monkey/ slipped down and clasped the saucer with both hands/ dipping her thumbs; then, on all fours, she drank,/ her elbows pressed against the bench, her chin / touching the boards, her backbone arching higher/ than her bald head. Thus, surely, did Darius/ bend to a puddle on the road when fleeing/ from Alexander's thundering phalanges./ When the last drop was sucked the monkey swept/ the saucer off the bench, and raised her head, / and offered me her black wet little hand./ Oh, I have pressed the fingers of great poets,/ leaders of men, fair women, but no hand/ had ever been so exquisitely shaped/ nor had touched mine with such a thrill of kinship, / and no man's eyes had peered into my soul/ with such deep wisdom Legends of lost ages/ awoke in me thanks to that dingy beast/ and suddenly I saw life in its fulness/ and with a rush of wind and wave and worlds/ the organ music of the universe/ boomed in my ears, as it had done before/ in immemorial woodlands. And the Serb/ Then went his way thumping his tambourine:/ on his left shoulder, like an Indian prince/ upon an elephant, his monkey swayed./ A huge incarnadine but sunless sun/ hung in a milky haze. The sultry summer/ flowed endlessly upon the wilting wheat./ /That day the war broke out, that very day.

As stated by Berkeley Professor Robert P. Hughes, who reprinted and prefaced this and two other poetic translations by Nabokov from Khodasevich, along with the writer's 1973 translation of his own 1939 laudatory obituary/essay on Khodasevich (*The Bitter Air of Exile: Russian Writers in the West, 1922-1972*, ed. by Simon Karlinsky and Alfred Appel, Jr., Berkeley: UC Press, 1977: 52-87; originally published as *Russian Literature and Culture in the West: 1922-1972*, Volumes 27 and 28 of *TriQuarterly*, Northwestern UP, 1973):

Nabokov's translations, published a year after his

arrival in America, appeared in James Laughlin's *New Directions 1941* (Norfolk, Conn., 1941), pp. 596-600. Professor Nabokov would distribute mimeographed copies of these translations to his students at Cornell University. It should be noted that these are verse renderings rather than the literal «ponies» Nabokov has insisted upon since undertaking and publishing his *Eugene Onegin* translation (67).

[According to Robert Hughes' e-mail communication to me [9/13/01], «It must have been Alfred Appel—who was Nabokov's student at Cornell—who supplied the information» about the distribution of mimeographed copies to students.—*A. Zh.*]

Remarkably, these translations, despite having appeared in print at least thrice (1941, 1973, 1977), have failed to attract proper attention. Boyd discusses the fictitiousness of the «first poem» (I, 108-9), lists *The Bitter Air of Exile* in his Bibliography, and mentions Nabokov's translations from Khodasevich in passing (II: 319), but never connects the three. The name of Professor Robert. P. Hughes, unlike that of Robert Hughes the art critic and Nabokov interviewer, does not appear in the Index (although it does make the Bibliography in a different connection).

4.

Nabokov is known to have liked playing games on unsuspecting readers and later taunting them with their lack of discernment. In the 1967 Foreword to *Speak, Memory*, he wrote:

> Reviewers read the first version more carelessly than they will this new edition: only one of them noticed my «vicious snap» at Freud in the first paragraph of Chapter Eight, section 2 [i. e. the «Sigismond Lejoyeux» bilingual pun, p. 156,—*A. Zh.*] and none discovered the name of a great cartoonist and a

tribute to him in the last sentence of section 2, Chapter Eleven [219; according to commentators, the reference is to Otto Soglow, 1900-1975; the rather desperate pun is in the words "so glowing"—*A. Zh.*]. It is most embarrassing for a writer to have to point out such things himself» (15).

«The writer himself» has not been as forthcoming with another of his put-ons: the intimation that

> [t]he first little throb of *Lolita* went through me late in 1939 or early in 1940, in Paris, [Ö p]rompted by a newspaper story about an ape in the Jardin des Plantes, who, after months of coaxing by a scientist, produced the first drawing ever charcoaled by an animal: this sketch showed the bars of the poor creature's cage («On a book entitled *Lolita*», *Lolita*, 1955: 313).

As a result, Nabokov scholars are still trying to track down the alleged press item, probably unaware that there is no trace of such a landmark case in the relevant area of expertise, i. e. the history of monkey painting (see, for instance, Thierry Lenain, *Monkey Painting.* With an Introduction by Desmond Morris. London: Redaktion Books Ltd., 1997 [original French edition, Paris, 1990].)

Be that as it may, on solving a couple more Nabokov charades, one is tempted to ask the otherworldly VN whether he himself has noticed that hiding in the scholarly name of his *Eupithecia Nabokovi* is a «good monkey», Gr. *eu-pithekos* (which, to an extent, is also true of the bluntly English label *Nabokov Pug*, as it is from Gr. *simos* [flat-nosed, pug-nosed] that Lat. *simia* [monkey, ape] is derived). He must have, for that particular butterfly, the act of labeling, and the image of aping all converge on the closure of the poem celebrating VN's most cherished lepidopteral catch:

Dark pictures, thrones, the stones that pilgrims kiss,/ poems that take a thousand years to die/ but ape the

immortality of this/ red label on a little butterfly («A Discovery», 1943; in reciting this poem, Nabokov especially stressed the word "ape").

Having joined the ranks of professional crackers of Nabokov's conundrums one also wonders whether a better tack would not have been to play on their arch composer the antithetical game of ignoring the challenge. After all, they are not age-old enigmas wrapped in mysteries of artistic creation, but rather, to continue paraphrasing the Churchillian description of Russia, hoaxes surrounded with riddles inside puzzles. Well-made, but man-made.

—Alexander Zholkovsky, University of Southern California

NAME STRINGS

Since they usually do not compose serious fiction themselves, many critics, no matter how sophisticated, are almost as naive in certain technical matters of writing as the next untrained reader. One such matter is the naming of characters: unless the noms are more or less parlants, the choice is taken for granted, sometimes after a far-fetched netting of precedent real-life namesakes or would-be significant derivatives. And yet this is an area so important that it begs to be studied in earnest; however, as far as Nabokov is concerned, such study has not even begun. Even crude data have not been collected into a referenced onomasticon; Professor Christine Rydel was working on one years ago, but it has not come out.

Nabokov's naming methods can be very subtle and often so private as to repel any approach from outside. He experimented with a difficult narration where *all* names (but one) are replaced by personal pronouns ("The Enchanter"), and in one novel (*Pnin*) installed so many personae that the reader has to deal, on average, with three *new* names on every two pages. And while it is not

always possible to draw the right conclusion from many such observations, one ought to persist in collecting and classifying them.

One interesting observation involves a device that can be called "Variant Namesake." It has to do with the occasional instance of Nabokov's distributing the same name among different characters, each time in a different form. It is difficult to say whether this connecting wire is live or not. Are the Soloveichiks of Minsk functionally linked with Dr Solov and Mrs Sol of Manhattan ("Signs and Symbols"), besides the general Jewish theme of the story (only perpetual graduate students without any sense of direction will deal here with "nightingales," "bay horses", "suns", and other dead ends)? Is this tapering row of uniradical names meaningful at all (we remember that the story's final phrase rides on another row of names arranged in the order of increasing acerbity)?

In my article on his English stories (in Professor Alexandrov's Compendium, also in *Aerial View*), I proposed that such occurrences may be r eminders of the fictionality of fiction, an expanded version of the classical stage name convention, in an art that does not allow for the cast, tired yet happy after the performance, to come out holding hands and bow to the audience, removing the tension and dispelling the illusion.

This, of course, would not explain the choice of a particular name, only its serial deployment. A good example of this latter can be found in "The Assistant Producer," in which the narrator, the former Russian priest, happens to be named Fr Fedor (his name, thus spelled, is mentioned for the first and last time just before the general's abduction), a name which gets emphasis at the beginning of the story when Chaliapin's same Christian name is given not only in a different transliteration (*Feodor*, which would be more appropriate for the priest, since Russian priestly names are pronounced in the Church Slavonic manner: *Fe-odor*, rather than the Russian *Fyodor*), but also in the affectionate version of "Fedyusha." Now, the abducted general's surname,

Fedchenko, comes from a similar endearment derivative of that name.

In this particular case we may be able to make a plausible supposition that the latter name had engendered the other two. During the Civil War the head of the clergy in the Army of Baron Wrangel was Bishop Benjamin (*Fedchenkov*, 1880-1961), who with the White armies went into emigration and whose name thus could not but be known to Nabokov.

My wife came upon a book of memoirs by this man, who oddly combines the biographical features of the narrating priest of "The Assistant Producer" with the surname of its elderly White general, kidnapped and murdered by Soviet assassins with the aid of General "Golubkov" and his wife. Its trite title is *Na rubezhe dvukh epokh* [Between Two Epokhs], published in Moscow in 1994. It is an expressly pro-Soviet book, written to order, as even the author of the perfectly matching introduction admits. Bishop Benjamin, who already in the 1930s had been under the state-controlled Moscow Church authorities, returned to the USSR in 1947 and was made Metropolitan. Here is his terse but curious account of the events described in Nabokov's story, in my translation and with brief comments in brackets:

> "After the death of General Wrangel [most Russian émigrés held that he was poisoned], General A. P. Kutepov became the head of the volunteers [Russian officers who had volunteered into the White Armies fighting the Bolsheviks in the Civil War]. After several years in charge of the Gallipolians [so named after the Gallipoli Peninsula where the remnants of the Russian armies were encamped after the evacuation from the Crimea], he also perished. Some organisation, under the guise of policemen, arrested him on the street, put him in an automobile, and he disappeared. What happened to him, nobody knew for sure [he was kidnapped by the Soviet agents, thoroughly chloroformed, and either killed on board ship or in the

Lubianka dungeon]. Of course, everybody pointed to the Bolsheviks. Well, this is logically admissible: à la guerre comme à la guerre. If the White emigration allowed terror against the "soviets", why should there not be terror used against the whites? Many Russians visited the general's wife to express condolences, but I did not go: if you mount a fight against the Soviets, you must accept also all the consequences of that fight, I thought. Besides, my position of loyalty towards the Russian [Moscow] Church dictated that I steer clear of that dark affair.

His place was taken by General Miller [i.e. "Fedchenko"], who was commander-in-chief of the anti-Soviet front in Archangel. He was a very correct, respectable, cultivated, and cautious man. Yet he, too, perished by way of a mysterious abduction. This case, however, involved a traitor, a recent general by the name of Kozmin [a strange aberration, it seems; "Golubkov"'s prototype was General Skoblin, whose operative name in the NKVD was "Farmer"]. When I was in the White Army, I saw him only once, at the regiment's dinner [perhaps the one so vividly described by Fr Fedor in the story]. And I did not like him even then: I sensed in him something deeply seated and dark. My intuition proved right. He vanished somehow. Some say, he eventually reached Soviet Russia [apparently, true]. His wife, a Russian singer, was convicted in court of complicity in the murder and ended her days in prison." (p.381).

Nabokov said that "The Assistant Producer" was his only story based entirely on "actual fact," and surely there is no other that carries such a load of actual facts and crossreferences, of which many become known only now.

—Gennady Barabtarlo

TEXTUAL NOTES ON *PALE FIRE*

From Ward Swinson:

In reference to Brian Boyd's call in the last issue for further suggested emendations in the text of *Pale Fire*:

1. Two more of Kinbote's cross references need to be rectified:
   165.18 90] 91
   219.11 550] 549
2. Two agreement errors could be corrected, but may be intentional:
   *14.11 imputations] imputation
   OR
   *14.15 is a malicious invention] are malicious inventions
   *153.10 their] its
3. One error in usage of the comparative is also possibly intentional:
   *92.2-3 larger and sadder] largest and saddest
4. The internal punctuation in the Franklin Lane quotation could be changed to conform to the original:
   *261.22 fingers,] fingers (but here Nabokov's punctuation is superior to the original)
   *261.25 Daedalian plan] 'Daedalian plan'[single quotation marks]

In reference to Boyd's proposal to emend the text's "loosing" to "losing" at 105.26, I think the original reading is stronger and should be kept. "Loosing" makes sense, and to my mind better sense, than the proposed emendation. The context is Kinbote's description of the glitter of the "fire of the sun" (another pale fire, of course) on Fleur's and Fifalda's earrings. In contrast to the obliviousness of the two teenage airheads (as we would now call them) to

everything but their immediate pleasure, the interplay of their earrings with the sunlight is described as having a design, an intention behind it: "catching and loosing," taking up and letting go, are intentional acts pointing to the textural patterning at work in Nature in the "trivial" plays of light and reflection. This intentionality is lost when the opposite of an intentional act – "losing" – is substituted for "loosing."

Finally I would like to suggest that one of the emendations Boyd has incorporated into the Library of America text could be improved. There he emends

268.24 visitor.)] visitor).

I would keep the original reading at 268.24 and instead emend as follows:

268.23 handsome"] handsome."

From Anthony Fazio:

1. 166.14: was not the least] was the least

2. 194.06-.09: Should there be an indication of the line break after "was said" and "the head"?

3. 269.23: little hairs stand on end] little hairs all stand on end

ANNOTATIONS TO *ADA*
18: Part 1 Chapter 18
by Brian Boyd

Note: henceforth references to Brian Boyd, *Nabokov's* Ada: *The Place of Consciousness* ("Boyd 1985/2001"), are to the second, enlarged edition, published as an e-book by cybereditions.com, 2001.

Forenote

From the first, we know Van and Ada will become lovers, although *they* think it impossible. We smile at their limited hopes and we look forward keenly to the consummation that will come to them as such a surprise. One final chapter before the big moment occurs defers the consummation itself still longer yet makes us still more eager—but only by breaking all the usual rules.

Although we have already glimpsed Van and Ada much later in life looking back fondly on their first falling in love, the Van and Ada of 1884 have approached intimacy steadily but gingerly, through casual fleeting touch, lingering forced contact, accidental intimacies, sustained proximity, a spontaneous first kiss and then "a not particularly healthy fortnight of long messy embraces" (102-03) that generates a raging, irrepressible itch. But in I.18 the narrative suddenly switches for a whole chapter from the viewpoint of 1884 to four years later, to Van and Ada recalling with delight their first summer together, and then within those shared recollections, to Ada's memories, even prior to Van, of her first naïve encounters with sex, a comic counterpart to Van's first taste of love and sex in I.4, before his first arrival at Ardis.

I.18's structure therefore is that of an inverted telescope or "an impeccably narrowing corridor" (110). We begin from a base and viewpoint at the end of July 1884, where the story has reached by I.17, and glance forward to the 1960s, to Van and Ada's "dot-dot-dotage," then