THE NABOKOVIAN

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NEWS

by Stephen Jan Parker

From the Editor

In the fall issue members were encouraged to add one or more dollars to their annual dues payment on behalf of the Zembla Website. The response has been most gratifying. Our thanks to the seventy-one respondents who have tendered contributions ranging from $1 to $80, for a total thus far of $313.

Unfortunately, our call for items for publication in *The Nabokovian* did not engender submissions. This issue appears thanks to the always present, continuing efforts of Brian Boyd and Priscilla Meyer, now replacing Gene Barabtarlo as editor of the annotations section. Without their active participation and direct solicitation of materials from others, there would be no issue #48.

Nabokov Society News

In 2001 the membership of the Vladimir Nabokov Society was 298: 209 members in the USA (137 individuals, 72 institutions) and 89 abroad (74 individuals, 15 institutions). Society income was $7,144, with expenses of $6,016 (printing, $4,291; postage $1,104; miscellaneous [e.g., supplies, phone], $621). The Society's account balance at the end of the year was $2,121.

As this issue goes to press, membership renewals in 2002 are down 16% (of particular note is the 30% drop in individual memberships abroad, which is due perhaps to the increased postal costs).

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Odds and Ends

— The Nabokov Museum in St. Petersburg is now under the able directorship of Tatyana Ponomareva. This summer the Museum will host an International Nabokov Symposium (July 15-19), the next edition of the Nabokov 101 summer course (late July), and a photography exhibit of Nabokov pictures taken by Horst Tappe.

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Some Recent Books

Jane Grayson, Arnold McMillin, Priscilla Meyer, eds. *Nabokov's World.* Basingstoke, England: Palgrave. Two volumes. The proceedings of two Nabokov centennial conferences: "Nabokov at the Crossroads" (Cambridge, July 1999) and "Pushkin, Nabokov and Intertextuality" (Wesleyan University, March 1999).

Simon Karlinsky, ed. *Dear Bunny, Dear Volodya.* Berkeley: University of California, now available in paperback.

Hana Pichova. *The Art of Memory in Exile: Vladimir Nabokov and Milan Kundera.* Carbondale: Southern Illinois.

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Thanks, as always, to Ms. Paula Courtney for her essential assistance in the production of this publication.

A SOURCE FOR THE TITLE OF *BEND SINISTER*?

by Brian Boyd

Bend Sinister has always seemed to me the novel with the most puzzling title in the Nabokov canon. Reasons for Nabokov's choosing the title, of course, can be adduced, although he himself could decide on it only with the help of a friend (see *VNAY* 113). Perhaps a private association may at least help explain why the title proposed itself to Nabokov in the first place.

The Russian National Library (Rossiiskaya Natsional'naya Biblioteka, formerly the M.E. Saltykov-Shchedrin State Public Library), St. Petersburg, has a few books marked with the V.D. Nabokov *ex libris*. Among them are several 16mo volumes of *The Temple Shakespeare*, including *Hamlet*, each in a maroon leather cover with a gold-embossed version of the Shakespeare coat of arms as the only marking on the front cover, and an etching of the same image repeated again on the front paste-down endpaper. For a photograph of five of these books, see *Nabokovskiy vestnik*, 1 (1998), pl. 5, and for a discussion, see the article there by T.F. Verizhnikova, "Vladimir Nabokov i iskusstvo knigi Anglii rubezha vekov: 'Khram Shekspira' v biblioteke V.D. Nabokova" ("Vladimir Nabokov and the Art of the Book in *Fin-de-siècle* England: The 'Temple Shakespeare' in the Library of V.D. Nabokov"), 201-08.

(A personal aside. On the publication of *Vladimir Nabokov: Russkie Gody* [St. Petersburg: Symposium and Moscow: Nezavisimaya gazeta, 2001], beautifully translated by Galina Lapina under my supervision, the Symposium publishers, Alexander Kononov and Alexandra Glebovskaya, kindly arranged for me to speak at the Rossiskaya Natsional'naya Bibliotheka. I spoke on the tribulations and triumphs of a Russian literary biographer, mentioning the helpfulness of a librarian of the Biblioteka Akaedmii Nauk [Academy of Sciences Library]

in St Petersburg in 1982, which after she had consulted with her superiors turned to white-faced denial that there were any Nabokov works in the library, although she had seen me working through the Nabokov items in their card catalogue. But before my talk at the RNB, the director of the library had shown me around *their* collections, and had even had pulled out for my inspection not only the card catalogue tray with Nabokov's books in it, but the tray with my own. The most interesting part of the tour, though, was seeing the materials from V.D. Nabokov's library, including the Temple Shakespeares.)

The Garter King-of-Arms confirmed in 1596 an application in the name of Shakespeare's father, John (although likely to have been made by the son), for a shield "Gould. on A Bend Sables. a Speare of the first steeled argent. And for his Creast or Cognizance a falcon. his winges displayed Argent. standing on a wrethe of his Coullors, supporting a Speare Gould. steeled as aforesaid sett uppon a helmett with mantelles & tasselles as hathe ben accustomed and dothe more playnely appeare depicted on this margent" (quoted from Samuel Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare: A Documentary Life*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1975, p. 167, a volume which, incidentally, Alfred Appel, Jr. gave Nabokov as a gift, and which Nabokov on examining declared exemplary as a biography).

If we have any automatic visual association with the name Shakespeare, it would for most of us be in terms of the Droeshout engraving in the First Folio, not in terms of his coat of arms. But for Nabokov that image of a heraldic bend, so dominant on the cover and inside the Shakespeare editions he could read in his father's library, seems likely to have played a part in his entitling his novel with the greatest concentration of Shakespeare allusions *Bend Sinister*. In the nightmare mirror-world of the novel, of course, the Shakespeare bend is reflected as a bend sinister. Note too that the chapter on *Hamlet* opens by echoing the crackpot Baconian Sir Edwin Durning-Lawrence (*Bacon Is Shake-speare* [London: Gay

& Hancock, 1910]) on the "shake-spear" that we usually overlook in the playwright's name but that is also prominently reflected in the design of the crest above the shield in the Shakespeare coat of arms and on the Temple Shakespeare editions.

Nabokov also seems to have stylized the Temple Shakespeare editions—not all of which V. D. Nabokov had had to abandon in St. Petersburg, and some of which his son kept with him long after fleeing Russia—in the red thirty-twomo edition of *Timon Afinsken* that Charles II takes with him as he flees Zembla.

NOTES AND BRIEF COMMENTARIES

by Priscilla Meyer

[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) 685-3465; if by mail, to Russian Department, 215 Fisk Hall, Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT 06459. 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 undergo some slight technical alterations. Kindly refrain from footnotes; all citations 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.]

ZINA'S DRESS: *MADE IN...*

Although an entire book has recently been published on "Zina's paradox," up to now no scholars have commented on why, after all, Fyodor is so mysteriously "hooked" by the charming dress of his landlord's daughter in the episode in which he rents the Berlin room in *The Gift*. This dress forces him to accept not only an inappropriate rental fee, but also the torturing presence of the repulsive philistine Shchyogolev. In fact, it is not only the aura of his future love that Fyodor feels in the gauze dress. In Nabokov's case the situation is additionally reinforced by the strong literary allusion, which Godunov-Cherdyntsev probably guesses, while still failing to realize clearly its true origin. The author, however, incorporates the hint, saying that such dresses were worn "then at dances" [*togda na balakh*]. Here is the passage:

> "Here is my daughter's room, here is ours," [Shchyogolev] said, pointing to two doors on the left and right. "And here's the dining room," and *opening a door in the depths*, he held it in that position for several seconds, as if taking a time exposure. Fyodor passed his eyes over the table, a *bowl* of nuts, a *sideboard*... By the far window, near a small bamboo table, stood a high-backed armchair: *across its arms there lay in airy repose a gauze dress, pale bluish* and very short (as was worn then at dances), and on the little table gleamed *a silvery flower* and a pair of scissors. (*The Gift*, 1963, 140. Italics mine)

The perspective which opens to the lodger's view turns out to focus on the enfilade of a Petersburg mansion of the 1830s from Gogol's "The Diary of a Madman" (the optical comparison, tossed in as if in passing, by the unidentified photo camera – represents an eye smuggled into the text as contraband). Fyodor himself as it were only tries on the setting, prior to resolutely entering this cramped apartment inhabited by the Russian classics, with *The Gift* tucked under his arm, in order there to occupy the space assigned him by Nabokov's writ.

> I should like to peek into the drawing room into which one only sometimes sees the *open door*, and through the drawing room into another room. Oh! What sumptuous furniture! Such *mirrors and porcelain*! I'd love to get a peek in there, into that half where Her Excellency lives – that's the place for me! Into her boudoir: there are so many little jars standing there, and *little bottles*, such *flowers* that one is afraid to breathe on them; see how *her dress lies thrown, and looks more like air than a dress*. I'd like to get a glimpse inside her bedroom ... what wonders, I feel, must be in there, such paradise, I feel, as doesn't even

exist in heaven. (*Arabesques*. Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1982, 244. Translated by A. Tulloch. Italics mine.)

And, no wonder, the page – which is the very end of the second chapter – concludes with: "The distance *from the old residence to the new* was about the same as, somewhere in Russia, that from Pushkin Avenue to *Gogol* Street."

THE WILLIAM TELL COMPLEX IN LITERATURE

It is common today among Nabokov scholars to quote the apocryphal line by Bunin, who allegedly exclaimed after reading Sirin's *The Defense*: "This kid has snatched a gun and done away with the whole older generation, myself included" (quoted in Lev Lyubimov, *Novy Mir*, 3, 1957; then re-introduced by Boyd, I, 343). However, the Chekhovian dramatic touch is false here. In his letter to N. N. Strakhov dated by May 28, 1870, Dostoevsky recalls that while he dropped in to see Kraevsky when *Vanity Fair* had just appeared in England, he said that perhaps Dickens would write something now and it could be translated into Russian by the New Year. But Kraevsky suddenly responded: "Who? Dickens? Dickens is done for! Thackeray has appeared there now; he's finished him off completely [*Dikens ubit! Teper' tam Tekkerei iavilsia, ubil napoval*]; nobody even reads Dickens now!" (Dostoevsky, F. *Complete Letters*. Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1990, Vol. III, 257. Transl. by D. Lowe). Who exactly invented Bunin's lamentation remains obscure, but it is unlikely that bitter I. A. could state that in the presence of a third person. Nevertheless, the literary source of this quote with its precise projection of the situation of rivalry between the two writers of different generations leaves no doubt.

"COME SERVE THE MUSE AND MERGE IN VERSE..."

In childhood Nabokov asked his drawing master to outline an express train for him and watched "his pencil ably evolve the cowcatcher and elaborate headlights of a locomotive that looked as if it had been acquired second-hand for the Trans-Siberian line after it had done duty at Promontory Point, Utah, in the sixties" ("The Library of America," Nabokov's *Novels and Memoirs*, 1996, 436; Cf. the excursus on the industrial history of machine-making in America of the 19th century that Nabokov unfolds in the commentary to part I on *Anna Karenina* in *Lectures on Russian Literature*). However, the five plain carriages that followed disappointed the future memoirist. Probably the very same locomotive appears for a moment in *Lolita* at the more trained painter's sketch displayed in the busy window of a Parisian art dealer: "a splendid, flamboyant, green, red, golden and inky blue, ancient American estampe – a locomotive with a gigantic smokestack, great baroque lamps and a tremendous cowcatcher, hauling its mauve coaches through the stormy prairie night and mixing a lot of spark-studded black smoke with the furry thunder clouds" (*Novels 1955-1962*, 1996, 23). In his American period Nabokov goes far beyond the simple depiction, using the picture as a flash to switch the narrative mode and to throw light upon the new plot perspective: "These [clouds] burst.." This "burst" appears to refer to the death of the *oncle d'Amérique*, who leaves Humbert the fortune worth a few thousand dollars.

In a novel packed with reminiscences from world literature one should look intently at the old American estampe. Thus it is no surprise that another examination shows that this is not just another of Nabokov's fantasies, but the next hypogram in turn: Walt Whitman's poem "To a Locomotive in Winter" from the celebrated *Leaves of Grass* (1891-92) retold in prose close to the original text

(Nabokov's uncle, K. D. Nabokov, had extensively translated Whitman into Russian):

> Thee for my recitative, / Thee in the driving storm even as now, the snow, the winter-day declining, / Thee in thy panoply, thy measur'd dual throbbing and thy beat convulsive, / Thy black cylindric body, golden brass and silvery steel, / Thy ponderous side-bars, parallel and connecting rods, gyrating, shuttling at thy sides, / Thy metrical, now swelling pant and roar, now tapering in the distance, / Thy great protruding head-light fix'd in front, / Thy long, pale, floating vapor-pennants, tinged with delicate purple, / The dense and murky clouds out-belching from thy smoke-stack, / Thy knitted frame, thy springs and valves, the tremulous twinkle of thy wheels, / Thy train of cars behind, obedient, merrily following, / Through gale or calm, now swift, now slack, yet steadily careering; / Type of the modern—emblem of motion and power—pulse of the continent, / For once come serve the Muse and merge in verse, even as here I see thee.

Following Whitman, who weaves the locomotion into the industrial fabric of his poetry ("Roll through my chant with all thy lawless music, thy swinging lamps at nightÖ"), Nabokov elucidates the text of *Lolita* by a strange word: the strong visual image gives a clue as to where to look for its initial artistic embodiment. In *Lolita* "*the stormy prairie night*" and "*the furry thunder clouds*," the transformation of Whitman's "*launch'd o'er prairies wide*" and "*storm and buffeting gusts of wind and falling snow*," prove the old locomotive's literary itinerary. In essence, Nabokov merely fulfils Whitman's programmatic imperative, laying the train's way into the lines of his English prose, continuing in that way to serve the eternal Muse.

THE DEAD CAN DANCE

The hero of *The Defense* fails to breathe life into the marionette machine on a railway platform the very day he has declared that "from Monday on he will be Luzhin":

> Finding himself alone on the station platform, Luzhin walked toward the glass case where five little dolls with pendent bare legs awaited the impact of a coin in order to come to life and revolve: but today their expectation was in vain for the machine turned out to be broken and the coin was wasted." (*The Defence*, Vintage, 1990, 20)

Nabokov as always is extremely precise in his description of the most marginal details, including the exact price, in the Russian version, a *grivennik* (a silver coin worth 10 kopecks). Compare this with the record of the memoirist of his age, P. A. Mansurov (1896-1983), an Avant-Garde artist who lived in Petersburg: «I composed *The Upmann* [ballet based on A. Lurie's music and stage design by Mansurov] in 1915 in ink for the music box, like the one I saw at the railway station in Pavlovsk near the chocolate kiosk. It was constructed of a mechanism and 'dolls' (*kukolki*), dressed in 18th century costumes – ladies as well as cavaliers. One would put into that casket (*shkatulka*) a *grivennik*, the music would begin to play, and the toys to dance very elegantly" (See Povelikhina, A. and Kovtun, E., *Russian Painted Shop Signs and Avant-Garde Artists*. Leningrad, 1991, 147).

SOME REASONS FOR PROF. PNIN TO HATE DR. BOGOLEPOV

G. Barabtarlo consistently draws attention to the urgent need for a referenced Nabokov onomasticon, since "this area [of naming of characters is] so important that it begs to be studied in earnest" ("Name strings," *The*

Nabokovian 47, 2001, 29). The present note points out one of several possible "strings" that resonate in the last name of Professor Pnin's unfaithful wife, Liza Bogolepova.

One may suspect that it is a deliberate hint by Nabokov when he establishes a connection to Soviet medicine via Pnin's definition of psychiatry as "a kind of microcosmos of communism" (*Novels 1955-1962*, 1996, 333) in the sarcastic portrayal of Liza's pseudo-scientific pursuits. Nabokov could have been perfectly aware of the existence of the reputed neuropathologist and Stalin Prize winner (1951), Dr. Nikolai Bogolepov (his name could be easily found in contemporary encyclopedias and, of course, in the psychiatric professional journals). Almost of Nabokov's age (b. in 1900), Bogolepov published some 140 works up to the 1950s and co-edited the Neuropathology section of "Large Medical Encyclopedia"; his name decorated the cover of the *Korsakov Journal of Neuropathology and Psychiatry*, where he served as a Dep. Ed. (One must also bear in mind that the writer's own maternal great-grandfather Nikolai Kozlov was the first president of the Russian Imperial Academy of Medicine and the florid titles of his scientific articles constantly fascinated Nabokov). It is in December 1951 that Chateau supplies his friend Pnin an issue of a journal of psychiatry with the article "Group Psychotherapy Applied to Marriage Counseling" by Dr. Eric Wind and Dr. Liza Wind. The title echoes the subject of some parallel research conducted by their real-life Soviet colleague, for instance, "Problems of Neuropsychiatric Outpatients Practice" in the late thirties. One of Bogolepov's late works, "Disorders of the Motor Functions in Vascular Lesions of the Brain" (1953), sends us to "Lolita" – where Valechka, an additional adulterous émigré character, is treated in a year-long experiment "deal[ing] with human and racial reactions to a diet of bananas and dates in a constant position on all fours" (*Novels 1955-1962*, 1996, 27).

[*I would like to thank Thomas Seifred for his valuable*

comments on these notes.]

—— Yuri Leving, University of Southern California

ROSE AND AQUAMARINE: LIZA IN *PNIN*

Very few readers will hesitate to define Liza as one of the terrible characters in *Pnin*. She causes so much of Pnin's disappointment and tears that she looks to be part of the evil pattern surrounding Pnin. When she marries Pnin, she loves not him, but the narrator who has left her, marrying for convenience to recover from the lost love. Though she leaves Pnin for Dr. Wind, she returns to him seven months pregnant only to take advantage of her married status in order to easily emigrate to the US. Then after many years of silence, she visits Pnin and asks him to support her son at an expensive private school. Pnin marries her, forgives her betrayal, plans eagerly to adopt and love her baby by Dr. Wind, and agrees to send a small sum to her son every month, although he recognizes what the narrator calls "her impure, dry sordid infantile soul" (58). As he has promised in a letter to Liza, he offers her everything he has, but what he receives in return is only betrayal and insult. Liza seems to have been conceived as a character who represents what Nabokov despises: she is a psychiatrist, the worst possible profession in Nabokov's world. It is also well known that Nabokov did not think much of most women writers, and Liza composes poems that are poor imitations of the early style of Anna Akhmatova and her minor followers. Liza is beautiful, but she is desperately shallow, selfish and snobbish. Her personality will never change even after death as Pnin worries about her lame soul coming to him in heaven.

On the other hand, we also find her among the favorable women who are related to Pnin through the motif of rose. The rose imagery is repeated several times in Pnin, and for those women except Liza, it suggests an

ideal, beautiful love or relationship, though never to be realized. When they first meet, Joan Clements begins to talk about a rose garden in Turkey, where they were staying in the same year. She says that they might have met there before Pnin interrupts her, but did not. The fact of not knowing if they met at the rose garden and Pnin interrupting her both suggest that they may have sympathy with each other, but they cannot reach true understanding. With the next rose imagery, Betty Bliss appears closer to Pnin. She is introduced as "a soft thorn in Pnin's aging flesh" (42). Sitting together discussing Turgenev's poem in prose "How fair, how fresh were the roses," she was so excited that she could not finish reading it (42). Unlike the case of Joan, the rose images here allude to romantic love, but also connect with the lost beautiful past and the impossible future. Pnin can imagine a serene married life with Betty but actually does not love her; their relationship will not progress. Pnin's true love, Mira, is not directly associated with roses, as if to be distanced from the other women. She is the only lover to die and the only "immortal" for Pnin in a unique way: she keeps dying in Pnin's imagination in various ways in a Nazi concentration camp. When she appears in Pnin's memory in spite of his prohibition, she blurs in a field of white tobacco blossoms. She is just once glimpsed with the rose motif: she wears a muff with a warm rose-red silk lining when they meet for the last time before they are separated by civil war.

Among the women Liza is ostentatiously connected with the motif of rose, and for her, roses suggest more than the possibility of an ideal relationship. When she is compared with Akhmatova in a literary column in an émigré magazine, "Liza burst into happy tears for all the world like little Miss Michigan or the Oregon Rose Queen" (45). Though we may see young Liza in her freshness and naïvité, as Pnin does, we cannot be unaware of the narrator's and Nabokov's scornful tone. Moreover, the narrator reveals the truth that the columnist was bribed by one of Liza's admirers to write about her. Besides,

partly because of the rose, Liza is seriously hurt by the narrator as a character. In the last chapter, the narrator tells about their past affair and quotes one of her poems: "No jewels, save my eyes, do I own, but I have a rose which is even softer than my rosy lips. And a quiet youth said: 'There is nothing softer than your heart.' And I lowered my gaze . . ." (181). When the narrator reads the poem for the first time, he severely criticizes it and suggests that she give up writing verse. Later, he seduces her by asking to let him reread the poem in a quieter place and she takes him to her apartment. There after the affair, he cruelly denounces it and Liza tries to commit suicide. As the narrator indicates, the erotic undercurrent and *cour d'amour* implications are in the poem, expressed in a rose, in keeping with the traditional rose image. The rose is related with her sexuality and writing in this episode, in both of which Liza is hurt, and with Pnin she becomes a co-sufferer of the narrator's oppression. Liza's roses are not emblematic of an impossible future or lost past with Pnin, but become a way to unite with Pnin in the present.

Strangely enough, Liza joins Victor in enabling Pnin to survive the last critical moment. In chapter ten, the aquamarine crystal bowl that Victor sends Pnin gives him strength to face losing his house and job. As has been discussed by many critics, the bowl is the focal point to which all the important motif—squirrel, Cinderella, water, glass and the theme of father and son—come together to prepare the climax, and it is an emblem of Pnin's victory over the narrator and his evil thematic design that the bowl remains intact. As the bowl functions as a magic talisman preserving Pnin from harm, after Pnin finds the bowl safe, he regains self-control and strength enough to overcome his new hardship (Julian W. Connolly, "Pnin: The Wonder of Recurrence and Transformation," eds. J.E. Rivers and Charles Nicol, *Nabokov's Fifth Arc: Nabokov and Others on His Life's Work*, Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1982, 207). The bowl is the symbol of the precious things Pnin possesses, especially Victor's love and admiration for him. Liza seems to have no relation

to the scene, but her existence is suggested. In her poem quoted above, Liza refers to her eyes as the only jewels she has, and we have been told about the jewels, aquamarine, in the second chapter when Liza is first described:

> There are some beloved women whose eyes, by a chance blend of brilliancy and shape, affect us not directly, not at the moment of shy perception, but in a delayed and cumulative burst of light when the heartless person is absent, and the magic agony abides, and its lenses and lamps are installed in the dark. Whatever eyes Liza Pnin, now Wind, had, they seemed to reveal their essence, their precious-stone water, only when you evoked them in thought, and then a blank, blind moist aquamarine blaze shivered and stared as if a spatter of sun and sea had got between your own eyelids. (43-44; italics added)

Liza's presence is suggested not only by her aquamarine eyes; the description of the bowl resembles that of Liza's eyes in the dissolution of different elements:

> The bowl that emerged was one of the those gifts whose first impact produces in the recipient's mind a colored image, a blazoned blur, reflecting with such emblematic force the sweet nature of the donor that the tangible attributes of the thing are dissolved, as it were, in this pure inner blaze, but suddenly and forever leap into brilliant being when praised by an outsider to whom the true glory of the object is unknown (153).

Spiritual and material elements are dissolved in the bowl, and from the dissolution emerges the secret power of "the true glory" of it. First Pnin cannot appreciate the bowl as an object, but perceives only the brilliance which reflects the sweet nature of Victor, although he recognizes its substantial beauty when it is pointed out by the others.

The description of Liza's eyes shares the belated, transferred appreciation, which makes the observer recognize its essence only in thought later, when she is absent, as the mixed brilliance of sun and sea. The bowl and Liza's eyes exist in a kind of spiritual dimension, which makes a miracle possible. In the actual world of Pnin, Liza's eyes are "blank, blind" to Pnin's virtue, and she mostly causes Pnin pain, but she also belongs to another world, which exists under the surface of events in the novel and helps Pnin to escape beyond them. Seeing Pnin driving off into the soft mist beyond the hills, the narrator thinks that any miracle might happen there. We know a small miracle has already happened to Pnin, in which Liza may take part without knowing it.

—Akiko Nakata, Nanzan Junior College, Japan

A DIRECT ANTECEDENT OF "THE GRAND-DAD"

The poem quoted below in a literal English translation was published in *Tsekh poetov* I (Berlin, 1922, pp. 67-68). Its author was Vsevolod Rozhdestvensky (1895-1977), member of the third Guild of Poets and a disciple of Nikolai Gumilev. In the original, it is in blank verse arranged in five-line strophes with feminine endings in four lines and a masculine closure of the final line in each strophe.

In those times the privileges of the nobility
were no longer respected by the sans-culottes.
Some cobblers and thieves
with rifle butts broke the doors of my bedroom
and carried me off to the Conciergerie.

For a twenty-two-year-old rake
it does not pay to become acquainted with a guillotine,
and I was already recollecting my "Pater Noster,"
but the jailer's daughter for five pieces of gold

and a kiss dropped me the key.

How my friends smuggled me through a guarded gate,
concealed in the cuirrassiers's hay,
semi-delirious, it is not worth telling,
and the bayonette of a national guardsman
had almost scratched my cheek.

Posing as a merchant, a veterinarian, and an abbot
I wandered around. I denounced in taverns
the haughtiness of Louis Capet,
I drank to the Republic as a friend of the Convent
(Mirabeau had not yet died then).

I wanted with a fellow-traveler to flee to the Vendée
but, as I loathed the rebels' outrage,
I chose the Spanish border
where one could bribe some contrabandists
and pass the frontier posts.

And then one day, having met a carriage
(what can be more exciting than the adventures,
which one reads as if in a book?)
I caught sight of... Thank you, grand-daughter,
what a superb wine!

(V te vremena dvorianskikh privilegii
Uzhe ne uvazhali sankiuloty.
Kakie-to sapozhniki i vory
Prikladom razdrobili dveri spal'ni
I uvezli menia v Kons'erzheri.

Dlia dvadtsatidvukhletnego povesy
Nevygodno znakomstvo s gil'otinoi,
I ia uzhe pripomnil "Pater Noster,"
No doch' tiuremshchika za piat' chervontsev
I potselui mne uronila kliuch.

Kak provezli druz'ia cherez zastavu

Zapriatannogo v kirasirskom sene,
V polubredu — rasskazyvat' ne stoit,
A shtyk natsional'nogo gvardeitsa
Edva ne otsarapal mne shcheki.

Kuptsom, veterinarom i abbatom
Ia stranstvoval. Nisprovergal v tavernakh
Vysokomerie Lui Kapeta,
Pil za respubliku, kak drug Konventa —
(Togda eshche ne umer Mirabo).

Khotel s poputchikom bezhat' v Vandeiu,
No — mne pretit miatezhnoe beschinstvo,
Ia predpochel ispanskuiu granitsu,
Gde mozhno podkupit' kontrabandistov
I minovat' kordonnye posty.

I vot odnazhdy, povstrechav karetu...
(Chto uvlekatel'nee prikliuchenii,
Kotorye chitaesh' slovno v knige?)
Uvidel ia... Blagodariu vas vnuchka,
Kakoe prevoskhodnoe vino!)

The obvious parallels between the poem and the play are in the framework of the story: after the Restauration a French aristocrat is telling, over a glass of wine, the story of his escape from the guillotine. Among his listeners there is a young girl.

Some details may also be juxtaposed: the protagonist's praise for the wine, in the original Russian (ekh, dushistoe kakoe), echoes the final line of the poem (kakoe prevoskhodnoe vino); the tone of his account of his wanderings at times resembles that of Rozhdestvensky's strophe IV, though the setting is different:

In dank and melancholy London I
gave lessons in the science of duelling. I
sojourned in Russia, playing the fiddle at
an opulent barbarian's abode... [...]

The sights I saw were many: I became
a deckhand, then a chef, a barber, a tailor,
then just a simple tramp.

In a typically Sirinesque switch, the plot of the play centers on the figure of "the Grand-Dad," the executioner, absent in the poem, and his effect upon the subsequent spiritual development of the aristocrat, whereas the plot of Rozhdestvensky's poem is a story of a charming rake, now a grandfather in his own right, as it turns out, and his adventures, stylized somewhat after Kuzmin's fashion.

The effect of Rozhdestvensky's last lines, which elegantly indicate the happy ending of the aristocratic rake's adventures by unexpectedly referring to his grand-daughter, who is pouring him more wine, is replaced in the finale of Nabokov's play by the young peasant girl's question as she sees the prostrate body of the former executioner: "What have you done to Granddad?..."

— Omry Ronen, Ann Arbor, Michigan

PINNING DOWN KROLIK

by Brian Boyd

The "Annotations to *Ada*" series was conceived of as provisional, as a way of inviting those who have discovered things in *Ada* that they notice someone else has overlooked to add what they have seen that others haven't.

With the help of Dieter E. Zimmer, as he prepared his invaluable *Guide to Nabokov's Butterflies and Moths* [Hamburg: privately printed, 2001], and Professor Konstantin Efetov, a lepidopterist at the Tauric University, Simferopol, and an authority on the family Zygaenidae (Forester and Burnet moths), I have been able to see a little more myself about something I have already annotated not once but twice.

Dr. Krolik, never present "on stage," never met by narrator Van Veen, is nevertheless an important minor character in *Ada*, Ada's collaborator in her lepidopteral and larvarium projects, and the keystone for a curious pattern of doctors with international leporine names: Krolik (Russian), Seitz (German, but a homophone of Russian *zayats*, "hare"), Lagosse (Greek *lagos*, despite his French name), Coniglietto (Italian), Kunikulinov (Latin *cuniculus*, despite his Russianness).

I have discussed Krolik in the annotations to both I.8 (*Nabokovian* 38, Spring 1997, 69, 81-88, in terms of Krolik's role in Ada's larvarium) and I.15 (*Nabokovian* 44, Spring 2000, 77-91, in terms of the *Playboy* club as a parallel to the Villa Venuses and the artificial Eden of Ardis).

I had put Zimmer in touch with Dr. Efetov, an expert, of course, on Crimean Lepidoptera. In answer to one of Zimmer's questions about one of Nabokov's Crimean catches, which Nabokov lists as *Euchloe belia* var. *uralensis*, Efetov identified it as *Euchloe ausonia volgensis* Krulikovsky, 1897.

Since Dr. Krolik features in Ada's life as a passionate lepidopterist, active in the 1880s, who has named numerous species of butterfly, and even tries to name a butterfly after Ada, "a very special orange-tip, . . . *Anthocharis ada* Krolik (1884)—as it was known until changed to *A. prittwitzi* Stümper (1883) by the inexorable law of taxonomic priority" (57), I asked Efetov if Krulikovsky was distinguished enough as a lepidopterist for Nabokov to have known of him, and for it to be likely that he was at least one basis for Krolik. I also pointed out how Krolik's name fitted into a pattern of doctors with international rabbit-names.

Professor Efetov agreed that Krolik must reflect Krulikovsky:

> Krulikovsky (=Krulikowsky), Leon (=Leonid) Konstantinovich (1864-1930) is a famous Russian lepidopterist. He lived in the town of Sarapul, Vyatka Province (Guberniya). He collected in the central and southern Urals, in the Kazan, Saratov and Ufa Provinces, in Central Asia and eastern Siberia. Krulikovsky was a member of the Russian Entomological Society since 1888. He published many papers about the Lepidoptera of different regions of Russia. Of course VN knew about him.
>
> "Krulikovsky" is a Polish surname.
>
> Krolik (in Russian) = krulik (in Polish) = rabbit (in English).

Butterflies and Bunnies

In the notes to I.15, I suggested a connection between the rabbit-doctor names in *Nabokovian* 44 (2000), 81-84. The two most important of the rabbit doctors, Krolik and Lagosse, have strong associations with eros and erotica. Nabokov, who was being published in *The New Yorker*

and in *Playboy* in the 1960s, the decade in which he was writing *Ada*, wrote to *Playboy* pointing out that the Playboy bunny, which always featured in some form or another on the cover of *Playboy* magazine, looked like a butterfly with an eyespot (for Nabokov's drawing, see *Nabokov's Butterflies*, p. 667). I suspect, although I did not make quite explicit in the notes to I.15, that Nabokov was also thinking of the butterfly that features in each issue of *The New Yorker*, peered at by the beau Eustace Tilley, and on the cover of each February anniversary issue, again flitting in some way before a version of Tilley, and that together prompted Nabokov in both *Pale Fire* and *Ada* to rename *The New Yorker* as *The Beau and the Butterfly*.

Somehow *Playboy* and its Bunny evoked an echo in VN's mind with butterflies and *The Beau and the Butterfly*.

One reason may be that butterflies and rabbits had been associated in his mind for some time. In *Speak, Memory* he recalls "By 1910, I had dreamed my way through the first volumes of Seitz's prodigious picture book *Die Gross-Schmetterlinge der Erde*" (123). As he wrote *Ada*, the name Adalbert Seitz naturally came to mind, and he has Ada in 1888 pretend to visit Kaluga "to consult Dr. Krolik's cousin, the gynecologist Seitz (or 'Zayats,' as she transliterated him mentally since it also belonged, as Dr. 'Rabbit' did, to the leporine group in Russian pronunciation)" (I.37: "zayats," as the German "Seitz" almost sounds to a Russian ear, is the Russian for "hare").

No one is likely to be able to discover when Nabokov first noticed that the names of two celebrated lepidopterists, Seitz and Krulikowsky, both "belonged to the leporine group," but with his eye for pattern and his early knowledge of both lepidopterists, it may well have been a "found pattern" that sat dormant in his mind for a long time until the *Playboy*-Bunny-Beau-Butterfly prompted him to complicate the pattern much further.

His justification? Probably that he felt nature's pat-

terns, in Lepidoptera and in mimicry, were still more convoluted. And, as he said, he preferred "obscure facts to clear symbols" (*SO* 7).

But Nabokov also seems to set up a deliberate opposition-and-association between the proliferation of rabbit names, and the prolific breeding capacities of rabbits, on the one hand, and on the other the pointed sterility of the Veens, despite their rampant sexuality, and Ada's failure to develop the world-wide larvarium she had hoped to establish with Krolik. Indeed she even inters some of Krolik's larvae in his grave. Perhaps here as in other ways Nabokov suggests that these Veens and their hectic coupling parallel the Villa Venuses (themselves a rococo reflection of the Playboy clubs) and *their* ultimate sterility and deadness.

Butterflies and Bunglers

By the end of the summer of 1884, "Dr. Krolik was swiftly running on short legs after a very special orange-tip above timberline, in another hemisphere, *Antocharis ada* Krolik (1884)—as it was known until changed to *A. prittwitzi* Stümper (1883) by the inexorable law of taxonomic priority." (I.8).

Could the emphasis on error here (Prittwitz was the German general relieved of his command only three weeks into World War I, after a series of disastrous military defeats, and "Stümper" means "blunderer, bungler") reflect a mistake VN might have recognized in his own youthful "A Few Notes on Crimean Lepidoptera," as he was compiling his *Butterflies of Europe* in 1963-65, just before beginning *Ada*?

In his 1920 article he had identified one specimen as *Euchloe belia* ssp. *uralensis* Bartel, 1902. He had the correct subspecies in mind, but for some reason instead of writing the correct species, *Euchloe ausonia* (Hübner [1804]), confused it, as Efetov and Zimmer noticed, with *Anthocharis belia* (Linnaeus, 1767), which belongs to a

very closely related Pierid genus.

But the subspecies name *uralensis* is itself a more recent synonym of *Euchloe ausonia* ssp. *volgensis* Krulikovsky, 1897, which, "by the inexorable law of taxonomic priority," stands as the true subspecies name. A still later synonym, in Krulikovsky's honor, ssp. *krulikowskyi* Sheljuzhko, 1928, cedes *a fortiori* to Krulikovsky's original subspecies designation.

That tangle perhaps explains the emphasis on error. Why the emphasis on Germany in "*prittwitzi* (Stümper)"? VN noted the subspecies emerging in April 1918, the month the German army, with defeat not far ahead, occupied the Crimea, and he saw it often "in the parks and gardens of the coast" (*Nabokov's Butterflies* 100) during that strangely carefree summer. That may itself suffice to explain the German World War I general who as it were defeats Krolik. Or was it that VN himself was somehow led astray in naming the butterfly by German lepidopterological taxonomy, which he would consistently criticize in later years (see *Nabokov's Butterflies* 202: "Germans, 'masterful collectors, but wretched classifiers,' as [Konstantin Godunov-Cherdyntsev] put it"; 309: "The complete absurdity which the Germans attain through complete ignorance of the principles of modern taxonomy . . . ")?