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Odds and Ends

- The Russian translation of Brian Boyd's *Vladimir Nabokov: The American Years*, tr. Maya Birdwood-Hedges, Alexandra Glebovskaya, Sergey Il'in and Tatyana Izotova, was published this fall by Symposium Press (St. Petersburg) and Nezavisimaya Gazeta (Moscow) under the title *Vladimir Nabokov: Amerikanskie gody*. The Russian translation contains material added to or corrected from the English-language versions. Russian scholars and Nabokov enthusiasts who do not read English are finally provided access to the essential Nabokov biographical source.

- December 1, 2004 marked the 9th birthday of the exceptional Zembla website, founded and maintained by Jeff Edmunds.

- Things are moving along in St. Petersburg for an eventual, official designation of the Nabokov residence as a State museum.

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Please note that prices (posted on the inside cover) will not increase for 2005. Members/ subscribers are once again encouraged to add one or more dollars to their annual dues payment in support of the Zembla Website, an essential, much appreciated dimension of the Society.

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I wish to thank Ms. Paula Courtney for her on-going, crucial assistance in the production of this publication.

NOTES AND BRIEF COMMENTARIES
By Priscilla Meyer

Submissions, in English, 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 editorial alterations. Please incorporate footnotes 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. Please observe the style (single-spacing, paragraphing, signature, etc.) used in this section.

A WINDOW ONTO TERRA

The action of *Ada* takes place on a world invented by Vladimir Nabokov and called by him Antiterra. But the reader of *Ada* can't help but feel that Antiterra's twin and opposing world, Terra, must in fact be our own Earth. In several articles (see for example "The Truth about Terra and Antiterra: Dostoevsky and *Ada*'s Twin Planets," *The Nabokovian* #51), I have already expressed my opinion that Terra and Earth are not at all one and the same place. In some sense, Terra is no more "real" than its twin, consisting as I believe it does of the world as described by nineteenth-century authors of literary Realism. And while Terra represents for Antiterrans the metaphysical horror felt in the face of death and madness, two subjects linked closely to Dostoevsky, the pain that is suffered by humanity on Terra arises from the French Naturalist novels,

primarily those of Naturalism's founder, Emile Zola (1840-1902). In fact it is my belief that *Ada*'s legendary Terra derives its name not from the Latin *Terra* meaning Earth, but from Zola's novel *La Terre* (*LT*, 1887), one of the Rougon-Macquart cycle of novels.

Van Veen, the narrator in *Ada*, says that the purpose of his first novel, *Letters from Terra* (*LFT*), was to show that "Terra cheated, that all was not paradise there..." (II.2) This intent seems to derive from Tolstoy's pronouncement on Zola's novel (which appears in the preface he wrote for the 1894 Russian edition of the works of Maupassant): "I don't believe what I read in novels like *La Terre* ..." (L.N. Tolstoy, *Collected Works in 22 volumes*, Moscow 1983, vol. 15, p. 228).

I should point out that Tolstoy's skepticism was not caused by any *un*realistic embellishments Zola made to the world he depicted, but on the contrary, by the literary distillation itself of the day-to-day life of the French peasantry. Because Zola overindulges in naturalistic details, his characters are occasionally depicted more as animals, who act more on the dictates of instinct, than as humans capable of reason and sensitivity.

In one scene in *LT*, a woman drives her husband to rape her own younger sister, who is five months' pregnant. She then tosses her, out of jealousy, onto the blade of a scythe, leading to the poor girl's death (Part Five, III). Comparable examples of cruelty are not encountered even on so inhuman a planet as Antiterra. So we may concur with Van's judgement, "... that perhaps in some ways human minds and human flesh underwent on that sibling planet worse torments than on our much maligned Demonia" (II.2).

But at the same time, the almost surreal cruelty inflicted on the poor girl in Zola's novel (like Lucette, she is secretly enamored of her violator) serves to underscore the less brutal but no less heartless cruelty in Van and Ada's behavior to their sister on the more civilized Antiterra. Ada, acting very like the older sister in *LT*, aids Van in his seduction of Lucette, doing

everything in her power to arouse the love that will prove fatal to her younger sister. The love triangles in the two novels seem very similar. In both cases, the cruelty of the established pair leads to the destruction of a younger sister.

In *Ada* the love triangle reaches its culmination in the "*débauche à trois*" scene (II.8), when Ada forces Lucette into her and Van's conjugal bed and then sets the aroused Van on her. Despite all of Ada's breeding, her behavior in this scene is basically the same as that of the coarse and depraved jealous older sister in *LT*. When Lucette manages to escape from her tormentors, Ada admits that for the first time in her life she is jealous: "Van, Van, somewhere, some day, after a sunbath or dance, you will sleep with her, Van!" Van's behavior, or at least his physical reaction to Lucette (he ejaculates without penetration), is somewhat reminiscent of the husband in *LT*, who had long lusted for his sister-in-law but had remained, like Van, in a state of sexual frustration.

But there is a more important link between the *débauche à trois* scene and the scene of violation and its concluding murder in *LT*. In *Ada* the scene is set in Van's Manhattan apartment on Alexis Avenue, his "wing *à terre*," as it was dubbed by one of the lady friends he entertained there, punning on the French *pied-à-terre*, meaning a temporary lodging. It is also the same flat where Van four years earlier "became pregnant" with his novel on Terra, *LFT*. Now, during the *débauche à trois* scene, a copy of the published novel is among several other trifles that occupy the bedside table near the bed on which Van and Ada caress and torture their poor half-sister.

Two things strike me as interesting about this. First is the Antiterran name Alexis Avenue, apparently referring to Lexington Avenue in Manhattan (see Brian Boyd's response to my question regarding Alexis Avenue in the NABOKV-L, January 25, 2004). But there is also the possible reference to the writer Paul Alexis (1847–1901), Emile Zola's first biographer and acolyte of Naturalism. Second, I feel sure that the windows

of Van's Manhattan apartment open directly onto Terra, that parallel world that Van imagines to be a place of great moral and physical suffering.

On Demonia, Terra is sometimes thought of not only as a world even crueler than Antiterra itself, but is also sometimes confused with the world beyond, i.e. the afterlife. If I am correct in thinking that Van's windows open onto that other world, then only heavy blinds could keep him from seeing the parallels between Lucette and the abused sister in *La Terre.*

He should also be able to make out the link that I think exists between Lucette and her namesake in Paul Alexis's story *La fin de Lucie Pelegrin* (1880). Lucie, a very popular young *fille de joie,* is dying in abject poverty of consumption. She is visited by a carefree coterie of her friends, among whom are two Adèles, Big Adèle and "the other Adèle." They bring a decent dinner and some wine to the dying girl, who still dreams of regaining her health and returning to the scenes of her former success in the dance-halls of Elysée-Montmartre. During the visit, an altercation erupts between Lucie's guests and her landlady, and the table is overturned, spilling wine and food onto the floor. The poor girl is left alone to die in a puddle of spilt wine, attempting to crawl to a window to hear the dance music floating up from the streets below. That same evening, Lucie's pregnant bitch, Miss, brings forth her litter on the dead girl's bed.

At first glance this insignificant scene from the Parisian demimonde has little if anything to do with *Ada* — at most it might be just another piece of Terra's puzzle, allowing us to add a little more to our understanding of this rather dark planet (remembering again that we are not speaking of our own Earth). But it is my contention that this modest tale is one of the most important sources of the Nabokov novel.

Ada's conception grew out of a short fragment that Nabokov wrote towards the end of 1965 (see Nabokov's essay "Inspiration," *Strong Opinions*, p. 310). This fragment is reproduced in the finished novel (its first title in the drafts was

Villa Venus) with some minor alterations, at the end of the chapter on the luxury bordellos called "floramors" which flourished briefly and fell quickly into decay. In the ruins of the last remaining floramor, Van embraces a girl named Adora, the enigmatic "other Ada" of the novel. Her origins remain a mystery: "not Rumanian, not Dalmatian, not Sicilian, not Irish" (II. 3). Perhaps she is French – from Terra's France?

The entire floramor chapter (II. 3) which tells of the Antiterran realization of Eric Veen's "Organized Dream" has, even in terms of the Antiterran colorful and quaint reality, a touch of the surreal, something of a long rambling dream about it. As has been noted previously (J. E. Rivers and W. Walker, "*Ada's* Dream-Delta: a Query," The Nabokovian, no. 3), the chapter preceeding the floramor chapter (II. 2), in which Van writes of his novel *LFT*, concludes with his falling asleep, and the succeeding chapter (II. 4) is a discourse on Van's dreams. Van divides them into two types, erotic and professional, the latter dealing with his research into "Terrology."

Considering all this, I would suggest that Eric Veen's "Organized Dream" and its realization on Antiterra is not a simple dream, but a dream within a dream. This dream is actually dreamt by Van and the erotic in it is inseparably interwoven with the transcendental (pointing to a reality other than Antiterran). This dual dream might be expressed as a circle drawn within a larger one (the erotic within the transcendental). The floramors, disseminated by Eric's grandfather "all over 'both hemispheres of our callipygian globe'" in memory of his deceased grandson may be interpreted as a sort of erotic painting on the wall of Van's dream. Actually the poor erotomane Eric and his extravagant architect grandfather David van Veen themselves appear to be characters in Van's dream. When the fabric of the Dream One thins and the floramors dissolve before our eyes and dwindle down to the ruins of the last Villa Venus, there begin to transpire the details of the other, deeper Dream Two. This second dream has a transcendental nature and would

appear to open a door for Van – without his realizing it – into the contiguous, parallel world of Terra.

The floramor chapter concludes with these words: "The ruinous Villa no longer bore any resemblance to Eric's 'organized dream,' but the soft little creature in Van's desperate grasp was Ada." Van experiences the sensation of waking, but as often happens, in life as well as in Nabokov's fiction, he is only beginning a new dream. The "little creature" he takes for Ada (now long Mme Vinelander), is actually one of the Adèles in the Paul Alexis story. She is probably Big Adèle, who, imperceptibly for Van, replaces "the other Adèle" from the same story, who has impersonated Adora in his Dream One.

Most of the other characters from the Alexis story are also present, even if sometimes they appear in disguise in the floramor chapter. Pregnant "Miss" turns up, for example, as a naked pregnant woman in the last Villa Venus, lying in a bed some way off, smoking and dreamily scratching her brown groin. Fat Victor, proprietor of the bar where Lucie's friends hang out, evidently appears as the Antiterran "King Victor," an habitué of the floramors. The musicians that Lucie strains to hear as she dies are transformed into the rats running on the piano keys, on which the dying housemaid at Van's villa, Princess Kachurin, has left some succulent bits of food, because she "fancied a bit of music when her cancered womb roused her before dawn with its first familiar stab." Finally the character of Lucie Pellegrin has contributed to Princess Kachurin her bird-like carelessness, love of music and closeness to death. The name Kachurin is partly derived from the Russian verb "*okochurit'sia*" (to die), but it is also related to the name of a coastal bird "*kachurka*," a petrel, *Procellaria pelagica*. (About the links connecting Lucette to various birds see D. B. Johnson's article, "Nabokov's Aviary in *Ada*," in *The Realm of Slavic Philology. To Honor the Teaching and Scholarship of Dean S. Worth from his UCLA Students*. (Bloomington, 2000); about possible kinship between *Ada*'s Princess Kachurin and

the fictitious addressee of Nabokov's Russian poem, *To Prince S. M. Kachurin*, see my note "*Ada* as a Triple Dream.")

The end of Van's floramor dream clearly highlights the details of another reality, that reality shown in the Paul Alexis story. As we have seen, it is probably this rather ghastly reality of the realist writers that is "Terra" for the inhabitants of Demonia. The floramor chapter prefigures the *débauche à trois* scene on Alexis Avenue, and its eventual result in Lucette's suicide from unrequited love for Van (III. 5). But, chronologically, the last visit to Villa Venus took place several years after Lucette's death in 1901, on July 21, 1904 – or perhaps 1908, or perhaps even several years later. Van doesn't seem to know the year himself. He is certain only about the date: July 21, Ada's birthday.

When we reread *Ada* and know what will eventually happen to Lucette, we can make out something about this floramor chapter of Van's memoir that Van himself cannot see. The entire Villa Venus story is only a dream that was sent to Van by Lucette "from Terra" as a gift to him on Ada's birthday. Mme Vinelander is unattainable to Van in waking life and it is only in a dream that he can hold Ada in his arms. In order to bring Ada once again into Van's arms, Lucette has "staged" for him this bright and difficult dream. She casts in it the characters of the Paul Alexis story, but, a talented actress, she plays some parts herself. It is she who appears in Van's dream as poor Princess Kachurin, and also perhaps as Cherry, a red-haired boy in one of the American floramors. Lucette, having killed herself and having appeared "on Terra," chose the Paul Alexis story in order to transform for Van a sad Adaless reality, precisely because the last time they were all three together, and all together in bed, was on Alexis Avenue and also perhaps because Lucie Pellegrin is her namesake.

Lucette had good reason to use characters from the Paul Alexis story to send Van news from Terra. But what was the reason for the director of all the dreams in *Ada*, Nabokov, to use

a nearly forgotten story by a second-rate writer for his authorial ends? It seems that if Van's dream within a dream of the Villa Venus lies at the very foundation of *Ada*, then the Paul Alexis story played a pivotal role in the novel's inception. And, if this was so, even the names of the two characters Ada and Lucette were taken from that story.

What might have brought *La fin de Lucie Pellegrin* to Nabokov's notice and what in it could have aroused the inspiration for *Ada*? It may sound paradoxical, but I think that it was less the story itself that attracted Nabokov, as much as its publication (in Russian translation) in the magazine *Slovo* (*The Word*) in the issue of February-March, 1880. The name of this magazine (combined with that of the famous Russian newspaper) turns up in the novel in a cryptic form as *Golos* (*Logos*), the Russian-language newspaper that the male-nurse Dorofey reads in Van's hospital (I. 42).

At this point allow me to note that the importance of the name of the magazine is indicated in *Ada* by the fact that it lies at the center of a complex of anagrams and puns (slovo, logos, golos, volos) that I intend to tackle in a future note. In that particular issue of *Slovo*, in the section "Chronicles of Science," an article appeared entitled "The Poetry and Prose of Electricity." It is probable that Nabokov used some of the ideas in this article in the novel's cryptic references to the force banned on Antiterra.

I believe that it was the introductory note apparently provided by the anonymous translator that inflamed Nabokov's interest in *La fin de Lucie Pellegrin:*

> "The author, one of the young followers of Zola, wrote the following of his attitude to his work: "If I wished to characterize my stories, I would simply say of them "all this actually happened." The concept of art that appeals to me best is Diderot's, which he in turn borrowed from Bacon's *Homo additus naturae* (Man *in addition to* Nature). The

> literary work of the writer who draws everything from within himself strikes me as somehow incomplete and of as little interest as a simple photograph of reality, in which the artist invests nothing of his own perception of that reality and doesn't filter it through the prism of his own artistic temperament."

Nabokov, in contrast, makes no attempt to hide from the reader of *Ada* that the novel is set on a non-existant planet Demonia or Antiterra. Moreover, closer observation allows the reader to see that Antiterra's twin planet, Terra, which the reader has probably taken as his own planet Earth, is a completely different place. I think that Nabokov is engaging in a polemical discussion with the realist authors, creating a work "draw[ing] everything from within [him]self" in order to produce not one, but two whole worlds — one the colorful if unlikely Demonia striking us with its intense brilliance, and the other, the Terra of the mad, lending the novel its own distinctive and mysterious tint.

For Nabokov, the definition of art is not "man in addition to nature," but "nature created anew by the artist." The true artist is not therefore the one who copies in his work the world he sees around him, but the artist who creates new worlds that meet his personal standards of harmony.

Thanks to Carolyn Kunin, the translator of this note

ADA AS A TRIPLE DREAM

Among the exotic lands that appear on the variegated map of Antiterra there is one with a particularly poetic name – Palermontovia. It is mentioned twice in *Ada*: in the chapter that deals with poor Aqua's destiny (1.3) and in the floramor chapter (2.3). "Palermontovia" is a portmanteau word that combines

Palermo, the biggest city in Sicily, with Mikhail Lermontov, the Russian poet (1814-1841). There also lurks the Romanic stem *mont* (mountain).

The other name of Antiterra is Demonia, so it is no wonder that Lermontov, the author of *Demon* (1829-1839), is held in high esteem on that planet. And yet, it is strange that his name is linked not with the Caucasus of which he sang in his prose and verse or, say, with Scotland where his fabulous ancestor came from, but with southern Italy. The poet not only had never been to that part of the world, but he never even mentions it anywhere in his writings. Nabokov's taste for portmanteau words is well known, but we also know his penchant for precision. Furthermore, we know how rarely his puns are mere caprices of his imagination without an additional secret meaning. Is it possible that "Palermontovia" also has its secret meaning?

Italy meant little to Lermontov. But it plays a prominent part in the works of another poet who can be regarded as the greatest successor of the so-called "Lermontovian" line in Russian literature: Alexandr Blok (1880-1921). Italy meant roughly the same to him as the Caucasus had meant to Lermontov – a major source of inspiration. In 1909, he traveled to Italy and wrote the cycle of poems *Ital'ianskie stikhi* ("Italian Verses"), 1909. True, among the poems of that cycle none is dedicated to Palermo. However, another Sicilian town occurs in the first chapter of Blok's long poem *Vozmezdie* ("Retribution"), 1910-1921. "The ruthless end of Messina" (as a result of the 1908 earthquake) is mentioned there as one of the apocalyptic events that marked the beginning of the twentieth century. That mention might be of little import were it not for a significant number of most interesting parallels between *Ada* and Blok's long poem (particularly its first chapter).

In his foreword to the poem, Blok defines its theme as the development of several links of a single familial chain. "*Dva-tri zvena, i uzh vidny zavety tiomnoi stariny*" (two or three links and the behests of dim olden times can be seen). Blok calls his

poem "my *Rougons-Macquart*," while *Ada* is a parody of that vast family chronicle by Émile Zola! Here are but a few of the affinities between the two family chronicles. Like Nabokov's novel, *Les Rougons-Macquart* is prefaced by a family tree. At the root of that tree is Adélaïde Fouque who started both branches of the family, the Rougons and the Macquarts (Nabokov, on the other hand, makes Ada Veen a final descendent, along with her brother Van, of two ancient families, the Veens and the Zemskis). Although Ada Fouque never appears in the twenty novels of Zola's epic, we know that she, like Ada Veen, is granted a long life, dying at the age of 105. Last but not least, one of the Rougons-Macquart novels is entitled *La Terre* which suggests that Zola's entire family chronicle might be somehow connected with Terra, the ghostly twin planet of Antiterra that is the setting of *Ada*.

I think that *Ada* can be regarded as Nabokov's polemic response to Zola's "natural and social history of a family," which is usually considered one of the highlights of nineteenth - century European Realism. But, in creating his parody, Nabokov builds on the achievements of the symbolist writers, particularly those of the Russian Silver Age poets. Thus it is only natural that many themes and motifs of *Ada* can be traced back to Blok's poetry and especially to his long poem "Retribution." According to Blok's plan, the action in his poem was to develop along the following lines: "After a series of disasters and defeats my *Rougons-Macquart* gradually free themselves from the *éducation sentimentale* of the Russian gentry, 'the coal turns into a diamond,' and Russia turns into a new America — not the old America but a new one." Alas, this plan proved unrealizable in Blok's poem – as it did in real life. He completed only the first of the three projected chapters of the poem. The action in the first chapter takes place in the late eighteen-seventies, in St. Petersburg. The main character is a certain "demon," the father of the poem's future hero. Now, because "Demon" is the nickname of Van's father, we have to dwell on the image of the

father in Blok's poem. (G. A. Levinton, in his article "The Importance of Being Russian or Les Allusions Perdues," also points out the connection between Blok's demon and Demon Veen; *VN: Pro et Contra*, St. Petersburg, 1997, p. 333.)

First of all, this image (which is given many features of A. L. Blok, the poet's own father) is closely connected with the larger "Demon" theme that pervades Blok's entire oeuvre. It should be said that this theme in Blok goes back not so much to Lermontov, but rather to a painting by Mikhail Vrubel (1856-1910), *Demon* (known in several versions), that had made a powerful impression upon the poet. At the same time, according to Van (3.8), this picture by Vrubel is nothing less than the portrait of his (Van's) father! And that means that the image of Van's father, Demon Veen, is closer to the Demon of Vrubel and Blok, than to Lermontov's *Demon*. If Demon Veen has a double on Terra, it is certainly the demon in Blok's poem, not in that of Lermontov. Characteristically, the first to notice a demonical something in the features of this man in Blok's poem was no other than F. M. Dostoevsky, who appears in "Retribution" as a character. "Looks like Byron," he whispers to Anna Vrevski. "He is a Byron, ergo he is a demon…" decide the ladies (Dostoevsky once actually said of A. L. Blok: "He looks like a *demon*"; Alexander Blok, Collected Works in eight volumes, 1960, vol. 3, p. 446.) Since Blok doesn't give any names to his Rougons-Macquart, the character of the father in "Retribution" remained known as "Demon" in the history of literature.

Dostoevsky, who is responsible for nicknaming the father in Blok's poem "demon," visited "in his declining years" the soirées of Anna Vrevski (in real life, A. P. Filosofov) "in order to collect material and strength for his *Journal*." Yet it is here, in *The Writer's Journal* (for April 1877), that the story "The Dream of a Ridiculous Man" first appeared. The hero of this story commits suicide in his dream and, after his imaginary death, is taken by an angel to a distant planet, an exact double

of our Earth. (About the connection between this planet and Antiterra, see my note "The Truth about Terra and Antiterra: Dostoevsky and *Ada*'s Twin Planets" in The Nabokovian, no. 51.) Since this dream (that was dreamt earlier in Dostoevsky by Stavrogin in *The Possessed* and Versilov in *A Raw Youth*) was inspired in the "Ridiculous Man" by Claude Lorraine's picture *Acis and Galatea*, we can assume that he lands on that other earth on its Mediterranean coast, either in Sicily (where the story of Acis and Galatea is set in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*), or perhaps in nearby Calabria. This land was once called Magna Graecia on our Earth (and presumably on Terra); but, on Antiterra, that very region is known as Palermontovia!

Lermontov never mentions in his works either Calabria, or Sicily. But he has a famous poem whose theme is death as seen in a dream. It is called *The Dream* (1841). In the foreword to his translation (in collaboration with Dmitri Nabokov, NY: Doubleday, 1958) of Lermontov's novel *A Hero of Our Time*, 1840, Nabokov quotes this prophetic poem in full and says that it might be entitled "The Triple Dream." Since the poem proves so important in the context of *Ada*, it would be appropriate to quote it here, too, in Nabokov's translation.

In a noon's heat, in a dale of Dagestan
With lead inside my breast, stirless I lay;
The deep wound still smoked on; my blood
Kept trickling drop by drop away.

On the dale's sand alone I lay. The cliffs
Crowded around in ledges steep,
And the sun scorched their tawny tops
And scorched me – but I slept death's sleep.

And in a dream I saw an evening feast
That in my native land with bright lights shone;
Among young women crowned with flowers,

A merry talk concerning me went on.

But in the merry talk not joining,
One of them sat there lost in thought,
And in a melancholy dream
Her young soul was immersed – God knows by what.

And of a dale in Dagestan she dreamt;
In that dale lay the corpse of one she knew;
Within his breast a smoking wound showed black,
And blood ran in a stream that colder grew.

Nabokov interprets this dream as follows. "There is an initial dreamer (Lermontov, or more exactly, his poetical impersonator) who dreams that he lies dying in a valley of Eastern Caucasus. This is Dream One, dreamt by Dreamer One.

The fatally wounded man (Dreamer Two) dreams in his turn of a young woman sitting at a feast in St. Petersburg or Moscow. This is Dream Two within Dream One.

The young woman sitting at the feast sees in her mind Dreamer Two (who dies in the course of the poem) in the surroundings of remote Dagestan. This is Dream Three within Dream Two within Dream One – which describes a spiral by bringing us back to the first stanza."

Nabokov goes on to speak of "a certain structural affinity" that exists between this poem and Lermontov's novel. But I think an even closer structural affinity exists between Lermontov's poem and *Ada*. For, just like this poem, *Ada* is, in fact, a triple dream dreamt by three different people. Below I shall try to prove that those three dreamers are Eric Veen, *Ada*'s narrator Van Veen, and the progenitor of all the Veens in the novel, Nabokov.

Compositionally, at the center of *Ada* there is Eric Veen's 'Villa Venus: an Organized Dream.' That it is a dream requires no special evidence: there is the word "dream" in the title of

Eric's essay. But, as I suggest in my note "A Window onto Terra," Eric Veen himself is but a character in Van's "transcendental" dream that Lucette sends him from Terra. If we start counting the dreams in *Ada* in inverse order, Eric's "Organized Dream" would be Dream Three within Van's Dream Two. That *this* is only a dream (i.e., that the fulfillment of Eric's dream of Villa Venus actually takes place in Van's dream of floramors) transpires toward the end of the chapter on floramors. As we remember, it is one of the two chapters in which "fabulous Palermontovia" is mentioned.

The last villa Venus visited by Van is situated "on a rocky Mediterranean peninsula" (in his essay *Inspiration*, Nabokov says that the whole of *Ada* as a novel began with the description of that last villa: SO, p. 310). Once an opulent palazzo, this villa is almost in ruins by the time Van visits it (having apparently suffered from one of the earthquakes casually mentioned in this chapter). The local dialect spoken by one of the native girls who still live in that half-demolished villa resembles Italian, from which we may conclude that the reference is to southern Italy. Perhaps, it is Calabria that Van has in mind. But is Calabria perhaps also part of Palermontovia on Antiterra? At least, "a rocky peninsula" (note that the adjective is also present in the initial little fragment that Nabokov calls "the strange nucleus of the book" in *Inspiration*) seems to refer to the rocky landscape in Lermontov's poem. And if it does, this can serve as an argument in favor of the theory that Van's last villa Venus is situated in Palermontovia, a mountainous dream land.

But the "Palermontovia" that hints at Lermontov, the author of *The Dream*, is not the only piece of evidence that Van's visit to the last villa Venus actually takes place in a dream. There is another detail that confirms the oniric nature of the final scene in the chapter on floramors. This detail also relates to Lermontov's poem. It is the name of a maidservant in that last floramor: Princess Kachurin. In the universe of Nabokov's fiction, she is, apparently, a close relative (a daughter,

perhaps?) of the fictitious addressee of Nabokov's 1947 Russian poem *To Prince S. M. Kachurin.* This poem is an account of a visit to Leningrad — as St. Petersburg was called before the restoration of its original name, and the author's native city — paid by the author upon the well-meant suggestion of the good Prince. The second stanza of that poem contains an obvious allusion to Lermontov's *The Dream*: "As an American clergyman / your poor friend is disguised, / and to all the Daghestan valleys / I send envious greetings."

So, "Princess Kachurin" clearly refers to Nabokov's own poem. But this name may also allude, by implication, to Lermontov's *The Dream* evoked in Nabokov's epistle. Moreover, I'm inclined to think that the whole visit to Leningrad described by Nabokov in his poem happens in the author's dream. Within that dream he dreams yet other dreams, of other journeys (to the country on a local train, and "to the pampas of my free youth, / to the Texas I once discovered"). At the end of the poem, the author is on the brink of beginning a new dream (inspired by Mayne Reid's novel *The Headless Horseman*). If it is all true, "the Daghestan valleys" in the seventh line provide a clue to the whole poem. They suggest that the entire incognito visit takes place, happily for the author of the poem who has so imprudently accepted his friend's advice, not in "real life" but in a dream. Moreover, it is not a simple dream, but, like the dream in Lermontov's poem, a complex one, within which the author dreams yet other dreams.

If my guess is correct and the poem *To Prince S. M. Kachurin* is an account of the author's dream, the allusion to that poem in *Ada*, together with "Palermontovia," clearly hints at the fact that, at the end of the chapter on floramors, we are faced not with real life, but with a complex dream reality. In other words, it is not just a dream, but a complex dream within which there can be yet other dreams and which itself can be part of a larger dream. The first part of our hypothesis quickly finds a confirmation: if not only Van's visit to the last villa Venus, but

everything described in the chapter on floramors happens in Van's dream (we have called it Dream Two), that dream would also include Eric's 'Organized Dream' (Dream Three). But what is Dream One in *Ada* and who is the dreamer?

In one of her marginal notes in the first pages of Van's memoir (1.2), the ninety-three-year-old Ada suggests that the wicked world of Antiterra "after all may have existed only oneirologically" (i. e., in the dream dimension). She seems to be right here, poor Ada. As often happens in Nabokov's novels, it dawns upon a character — in the given case, the heroine — that the surrounding world, and she herself as well, are merely a fantasy, the product of a creative dream that someone else is dreaming. It is clear that this someone, the Supreme Dreamer, can be no other than the creator of Antiterra, Nabokov himself.

As his biographer, Brian Boyd, points out (VN: *The American Years*, pp. 487-8), *Ada* can be traced back partly to the dreams VN and (according to Dmitri Nabokov) his wife dreamt that he began to record and tried to classify during the preparatory stage of work on a "new novel" in 1964. But it seems to me that, with respect to *Ada*, even more important than Nabokov's own dreams are the classic dreams, which border on the prophetic, of Russian literature. While *Ada* is staged on a planet, the double of Earth, which Nabokov has more or less borrowed from Dostoevsky's story "The Dream of a Ridiculous Man," Nabokov's novel owes its structure — a dream within a dream within a dream — to Lermontov's *The Dream*. From those two dreams, and perhaps from Blok's unrealized dream of a new America into which Russia should have turned, was born "Ada, an ample and delightful chronicle whose principal part is staged in a dream-bright America."

Translated by Dmitri Nabokov in collaboration with the author and Sergei Karpukhin. The author also thanks Alexander Dolinin for his invaluable suggestion.

ADDENDUM TO "*ADA* AS A TRIPLE DREAM"

Some readers of my essay "*Ada* as a Triple Dream" will no doubt challenge my bold assertion that Blok is "the greatest successor of the so-called 'Lermontovian' line in Russian literature." Well, perhaps, it would be more correct to put it this way: Blok is Pushkin's literary descendant in the Lermontovian line of succession (just as Khodasevich is, in Nabokov's own words, "Pushkin's literary descendant in Tyutchev's line of succession"). But even if skeptics should remain who are still unconvinced, here is another possible way of linking Blok to Lermontov via "the sky of Italy." Interestingly, this celestial link seems to shed some fascinating new light on the mysterious origin of Nabokov's inspiration for *Ada*.

Like Pushkin, Lermontov lived a short life and never traveled abroad. He saw the fabulous sky of Italy only in the blue eyes of a society beauty. Among his madrigals there is the following little poem:

Grafinia Emiliia	(Countess Emily
Belee chem liliia,	Is whiter than a lily,
Stroinei eio talii	Her waist
Na svete ne vstretitsia.	Is the slimmest in the world.
I nebo Italii	And the sky of Italy
V glazakh eio svetitsia.	Shines in her eyes.
No serdtse Emilii	But Emily's heart
Podobno Bastilii.	Is like the Bastille.)

("To E. K. Musin-Pushkin," 1839; the Italics in the original are mine.)

Blok, who did visit Italy once in his own not-too-long life, also mentions the sky of Italy. Although the poet was enchanted with the country (particularly with its artists), its sky is not blue, but black to him. One of the seven poems that are dedicated to Florence in Blok's cycle "Italian Verses" (1909) ends thus: "*O,*

bezyskhodnost' pechali, / Znaiu tebia naizust'! / *V chiornoe nebo Italii / Chiornoi dushoiu gliazhus'*." (Oh, the irreparability of grief, / I know you by heart! / I look with my black soul / Into the black sky of Italy.)

From Nabokov's diary (see Brian Boyd, *VN: The Russian Years*, pp. 191-193), we know that the most tragic event in his whole life is associated with Blok's "Italian Verses." When on March 28, 1922, the twenty-two-year-old Nabokov was reading to his mother the poem about Florence (in which it is compared to a smoky iris), the telephone rang and Joseph Hessen told Vladimir that his father had just had a bad accident. (Actually Vladimir Dmitrievich Nabokov had been assassinated by a terrorist and had died at once.) It is heart-rending to read this long entry in Nabokov's diary, in which he describes in minute detail the events of that evening: that late telephone call, the long ride by car, together with his mother, to the lecture hall in a distant part of Berlin where the assassination had taken place, their arrival at the site of the tragedy where they finally learned that Vladimir Dmitrievich was dead.

That night was certainly the darkest in Nabokov's entire life. He lost his beloved father, with whom he had had very strong intellectual, emotional and spiritual ties. One of Vladimir Dmitrievich's favorite poets was Alexandr Blok, whom his son adored so much. He declared himself a knight of Blok's Beautiful Lady (one of Blok's early books was "Verses on a Beautiful Lady"). And there is a lot of tragic symbolism in the fact that his son first learned of the tragedy (even if not the whole truth) at the very moment when he was reading to his mother, Elena Ivanovna, Blok's tender "Italian Verses."

Vladimir Dmitrievich was born on July 21, 1870 (In *Speak, Memory* Nabokov gives a slightly different date: July 20). Birthdays (and birthday parties) play a very important role in *Ada*. We know the birthdays of practically all the significant characters (at least, of all the Veens) in the book. July 21 is Ada's birthday. Why did Nabokov give his father's birthday to

the heroine — who, as he was the first to admit, is not exactly a loveable creature? Why didn't he give it to a more sympathetic character in his book — say, to Lucette? I think I can answer these questions.

Ada (and not Lucette) is a Beautiful Lady to Van, the book's hero. Van, Ada's faithful *rytsar'* (knight), has much more in common with Alexandr Blok than is usually believed. (In my next article I will prove that Nabokov has consciously used the image of Blok, mainly his physical appearance and the mode of behavior with women, as a model for Van Veen.) Nabokov first conjured up the image of the protagonist of *Ada* late in 1965, a few months before the novel began to flow. He was called Juan at first. Here is the initial passage of *Ada* that Nabokov cites in his essay *Inspiration* (SO, p. 310):

Sea crashing, retreating with shuffle of pebbles, Juan and beloved young whore — is her name, as they say, Adora? is she Italian, Roumanian, Irish? — asleep in his lap, his opera cloak pulled over her, candle messily burning in its tin cup, next to a paper-wrapped bunch of long roses, his silk hat on the stone floor near a patch of moonlight, all this in a corner of a decrepit, once palatial whorehouse, Villa Venus, on a rocky Mediterranean coast, a door standing ajar gives on what seems to be a moonlit gallery but is really a half-demolished reception room with a broken outer wall, through a great rip in it the naked sea is heard as a panting space separated from time, it dully booms, dully withdraws dragging its platter of wet pebbles.

This passage differs only slightly from the description of Van's last Villa Venus in the finished book (II.3). There is no date in it indicating *when* the hero visits that half-ruined villa. In the final version, though, the date *is* given (at least, conjecturally): "twenty-first of July, nineteen-four or eight or even several years later." In a sense, July 21 is not only Ada's birthday; it is also the book's birthday.

In "Window onto Terra" I argue that Van's visit to that last Villa Venus (and, in fact, to all the other floramors) happens in the dream that his late half-sister Lucette sends him from Terra, the novel's "other world." In my other article, "*Ada* as a Triple Dream," I try to prove that Van's dream of floramors is part of a larger dream of Antiterra that is dreamt by its creator, Nabokov. Here, in this addendum, I would like to suggest that, by giving to Ada his father's birthday and to Van, Ada's faithful knight, many features of Alexandr Blok — whose poetry is intimately connected for Nabokov with his father's death — Nabokov wants to imply that this beautiful dream of Antiterra was somehow inspired in him by the spirit of his father, Vladimir Dmitrievich Nabokov. The fact that Van was born in 1870 (the year of VDN's birth) and that he reunites with his Beautiful Lady, after a long separation from her, in 1922 (the year of VDN's tragic death), shortly before Ada's 50th birthday, for ever and ever, seems but to confirm my hypothesis.

Thanks to Dmitri Nabokov for improving the English of this addendum

—Alexey Sklyarenko, St. Petersburg

NABOKOV AND HERZEN

This piece is dedicated to Nabokovian themes in Herzen, and the Herzen theme in Nabokov. Yuri Lotman once proposed replacing the inexact and discredited term "influence" with the word "dialogue" (Yuri Lotman. *Problema vizantiiskogo vliianiia na russkuiu kul'turu v tipologicheskom osveshchenii* // Yuri Lotman. *Istoriia i tipologiia russkoi kul'tury*, p. 52); this essay is a short overview of the Herzen-Nabokov dialogue.

The dialogue takes place at two distinct levels: biographical and artistic. At the biographical level Herzen motifs are present in both Vladimir Dmitrievich's and Vladimir Vladimirovich Nabokov's lives. And at the artistic level there are affinities between some of Nabokov's characters and people depicted in Herzen's celebrated memoir, *Byloe i dumy*.

Alexander Herzen (1812-1870) is perhaps the most well-known 19th-century Russian emigrant. His experience as an exile, and even more, his trenchant style, could have appealed to Nabokov. Herzen's manner of writing, which Turgenev characterized as that of a "born stylist" and Isaiah Berlin as colloquially lively, is so full of vim and blood that one is immediately reminded of Part Four of *The Gift* with its satirical flamboyance. It is our impression that stylistically Nabokov is closer to Herzen than to Saltykov-Shchedrin, to whom he was famously compared by fellow emigrants in the 1930s. Besides, Herzen was a political emigrant and a partisan of liberal values, always standing up to the state's irresponsible violence, and this aspect of his personality might have seemed attractive to such an "old school" liberal as Nabokov. Apart from being his life's work, Herzen's political convictions had moral implications for him, and in this respect he is kin to Nabokov, Solzhenitsyn, V.D. Nabokov, Tolstoy, and, admittedly, to a goodly number of Russian intellectuals of all epochs.

Herzen in Nabokov

Direct references to Herzen in Nabokov's oeuvre are rather dismissive. Herzen is mentioned most often in *The Gift*, Nabokov's most richly Russian novel. The first mention is in Chapter 3:

> He read Herzen and was again better able to understand the flaw (a false glib glitter) in his generalizations when he noticed that this author, having a poor knowledge of English

> (witnessed by his surviving autobiographical reference, which begins with the amusing Gallicism "I am born"), had confused the sounds of two English words "beggar" and "bugger" and from this had made a brilliant deduction concerning the English respect for wealth. (*The Gift*. Trans. Michael Scammel with collaboration of author, p. 213)

In this passage, as Alexander Dolinin pointed out in his commentary (Vladimir Nabokov. *Sobranie sochinenii russkogo perioda v 5 tomakh*, v. 4, pp. 699-700), Godunov-Cherdyntsev quotes Herzen's letter to Charles Edmond Choïeçki of 15 August 1861, in which Herzen mistakenly put "I am born" instead of "I was born," influenced by the French "Je suis né." Also in this passage Godunov-Cherdyntsev refers to *Byloe i dumy* (Chapter XXXVII) where Herzen wrote of England:

> A country, which does not know a more insulting word than the word 'beggar,' the more harasses a foreigner the more helpless and destitute he is. (A.I. Herzen, *Sochineniia v 9 tomakh*, v. 5, p. 344, my literal translation)

Godunov-Cherdyntsev maintained that Herzen, who hadn't spoken English before he came to London in 1852, mistook the popular curse "bugger" for "beggar" and concluded that a Briton wanting to insult someone calls them "pauper," which, according to Herzen, goes to show the immensity of respect towards wealth in an ordinary Englishman's consciousness.

After that Herzen is mentioned in Chapter 4, which is dedicated to Nikolai Chernyshevsky's life and which cannot evade Herzen, whom Chernyshevsky had visited in London and who as a liberal revolutionary and a journalist had been advancing the same cause as Chernyshevsky. On the whole the name of Herzen is brought up on about eight occasions. Six of them are minor quotations borrowed from various works and letters of

Herzen. And two of them are major references: 1) the meeting in London which is described as witnessed by Natalia Tuchkov-Ogarev, Herzen's friend Ogarev's former wife and now Herzen's partner in civil marriage; and 2) the arrest of Vetoshnikov and Chernyshevsky after a dinner *chez* Herzen in London.

Although there are several references to Herzen, Nabokov is always dismissively curt and never appreciative of him, which might be sufficient reason for a reader to ignore this literary figure and to look for dialogues elsewhere. But Nabokov's apparent cool lack of interest does not necessarily disprove our case, in as much as "Nabokov, just as Tolstoy before him, tended instinctively to veil some of the most memorable artistic impressions of his youth while revealing those of lesser issue," as Gennady Barabtarlo has observed (*Aerial View. Essays on Nabokov's Art and Metaphysics*, p. 17).

Still, Herzen rates an important mention in *Speak, Memory*. Interestingly, Bolshaia Morskaia Street, where the Nabokovs had their house, was rebaptised Herzen Street under the Soviets. The photograph of the house faces page 16 of the Everyman's Library edition of *Speak, Memory*. The caption, among other things, says:

> This photograph, taken in 1955 by an obliging American tourist, shows the Nabokov house, of pink granite with frescoes and other Italianate ornaments, in St Petersburg, now Leningrad, 47, Morskaya, now Herzen Street. Aleksandr Ivanovich Herzen (1812-1870) was a famous liberal (whom this commemoration by a police state would hardly have gratified) as well as a talented author of *Bïloe i dumï* (translatable as 'Bygones and Meditations'), one of my father's favourite books.

One must not forget also that, as Brian Boyd wrote in his Introduction to the Everyman's Library edition of *Speak,*

Memory, the Russian title of the book, *Drugie berega*, echoes "both a famous line from one of Pushkin's reminiscential poems and *S drugogo berega*, the first book that one of Russia's greatest autobiographers, Alexander Herzen, had written after leaving Russia." Curiously enough, Christopher Hitchens reviewed Tom Stoppard's *The Coast of Utopia* in the *Atlantic Monthly* (December 2002) and, apparently mistaking *S drugogo berega* for *Byloe i dumy*, remarked that "Vladimir Nabokov is said to have admired *My Past and Thoughts* (*Byloe i dumy*) so much that he tried retrospectively to alter its title to something less pompous-sounding."

Nabokov in Herzen

1. Biographical level

Brian Boyd describes an episode from Vladimir Dmitrievich Nabokov's student life (*Vladimir Nabokov: russkie gody*. Trans. Galina Lapina, p. 38). In March 1890 Nabokov was arrested along with other students who demonstrated for academic freedoms and the independence of universities. They were kept in custody until late evening, without the authorities starting an enquiry. And then the Petersburg general governor arrived and ordered the release of Nabokov, a son of the former minister of justice. VDN asked if his friends would be released with him. As the answer to this was "No," he decided to stay in prison with his friends. In the notes, Boyd identifies as his source an article by N. Mogiliansky published on April 1, 1922, in the émigré newspaper *Poslednye novosti* (Paris).

In *Byloe i dumy* (Part 1, Chapter VI) Herzen tells about a similar episode from his own student life. He was arrested in consequence of the Malov affair – students evicted a rude and ignorant professor from the lecture room. The arrested suspects were kept in a "university isolation cell," a dirty cellar.

> On Saturday evening the inspector made his appearance and announced that I and one other of us might go home, but that the rest would remain until Monday. This proposal seemed to me insulting and I asked the inspector whether I might remain; he drew back a step, looked at me with that menacingly graceful stare with which tsars and heroes in a ballet depict anger in a dance, and saying, "Stay by all means," went away. I got into more trouble at home for this last escapade than for the whole business. (Alexander Herzen. *My Past and Thoughts*. Trans. Constance Garnett; rev. by Humphrey Higgens, p. 95)

We know that *Byloe i dumy* was one of V.D. Nabokov's favourite books. It is possible that having found himself in a situation already described with great panache in *Byloe i dumy*, he acted as a person he admired had acted under similar circumstances.

Vladimir Nabokov settled in Switzerland after his nineteen years in the United States. When asked by Bernard Pivot in May 1975 why he had chosen a hotel in Switzerland to live in, he said he depended on "*un courrier régulier et sûr comme en Suisse.*" In other interviews he usually recalled that many Russian writers had lived in Switzerland and walked along the shores of Lac Leman before him. In this connection it may be curious to remember that Herzen was not only among those Russian authors, but became a citizen of a small Swiss village after he had renounced his Russian citizenship. He also—rather prophetically—wrote in *Byloe i dumy* (Chapter XL):

> Except for Swiss naturalization I would not accept any other in Europe, not even English. [...] Not a nasty master with a good one did I want to replace, but to disengage from serfdom and become a free tiller of the soil. For that two

> countries presented themselves: America and Switzerland. (my translation)

Nabokov could likewise have in mind Herzen's dislike of the Germans as a nation in formulating his own aversion to the German petit bourgeois spirit. Herzen's reasons for disliking the Germans were personal (his contacts with Georg Herwegh and his wife Emma, see "Rasskaz o semeinoi drame"), while Nabokov's reasons were of a more general order. His later remark on "the amo et odi emotions with which Russia as a nation viewed Germany as a nation" (interview with Dieter E. Zimmer for a German TV station in 1966) seems very accurate. The "odi," however, has hardly ever been better represented in any Russian writer than in Herzen and Nabokov.

2. Artistic level

There are two strikingly Nabokovian episodes in Herzen's memoir.

In "Zapadnye arabeski" (II. V grozu) Herzen gives an account of his revolutionary experience in Paris. Among other things he describes his arrest in early June 1848. As he and Annenkov were walking to La Madeleine, they were stopped by a National Guard cordon. They were searched, asked their destination and allowed to pass. But the next cordon, beyond La Madeleine, refused to let them pass and sent them back. When they came back to the first cordon they were stopped again and the officer refused to let them pass and instead arrested them and took them to the police (Herzen, 5, 284). The whole story is strongly reminiscent of Chapter 2 of *Bend Sinister* in which Adam Krug tries to cross the bridge guarded by Ekwilist soldiers, although in *Bend Sinister* the incident is elaborated to such an extent that it sounds very literary and playful. Cf. the words of one of the soldiers:

"I fail to understand, Professor, what enabled you to effect the crossing of the bridge. You had no right whatever to do so since this pass has not been signed by my colleagues of the north side guard. I am afraid you must go back and have it done by them according to emergency regulations. Otherwise I cannot let you enter the south side of the city."

The second episode serves as a means of characterization in Herzen. The same role is assigned to its counterpart in Nabokov. In *Byloe i dumy* (Chapter XXXVII) Herzen writes:

In the spring of 1852 Orsini was expecting very important news about his family affairs: he was tormented at not getting a letter; he told me so several times, and I knew in what anxiety he was living. At dinner-time one day, when two or three outsiders were present, the postman came into the entry: Orsini sent to ask whether there was a letter for him; it appeared that there was; he glanced at it, put it in his pocket, and went on with the conversation. An hour and a half later, when I was alone with him, Orsini said to me: "Well, thank God, at last I have got an answer, and all is quite well." I, knowing that he was expecting a letter, had not guessed that this was it, with so unconcerned an air had he opened it and then put it in his pocket. (*My Past and Thoughts*, p. 374)

Now we invite the reader to compare this with the following episode from *The Gift* (Chapter 2), in which Fyodor Godunov-Cherdyntsev gives a typical example of Konstantin Kirillovich's behaviour:

Once in November he was given a telegram at table; he unsealed it, read it to himself, read it again to judge by the second movement of his eyes, laid it aside, took a sip of port

wine from a ladle-shaped goblet of gold, and imperturbably continued his conversation with a poor relative of ours, a little old man with freckles all over his skull who came to dinner twice a month and invariably brought Tanya soft, sticky toffees—tyanuchki. When the guests had departed he sank into an armchair, took off his glasses, passed his palm from top to bottom over his face and announced in an even voice that Uncle Oleg had been dangerously wounded in the stomach by a grenade fragment. (*Gift*, p. 142)

It may be that Nabokov kept the memorable passage from Herzen's memoir in mind when evoking his, arguably, most loved character. It is equally plausible that in his creative consciousness the personae of that little drama–the Italian revolutionary Orsini, Herzen–and his father V.D. Nabokov (through Herzen) all commingled to form a unique, highly individualized image.

This piece, focused essentially on *Byloe i dumy*, does not exhaust the theme of the Nabokov-Herzen dialogue. We have only touched upon this interesting interaction between the writers.

—Sergey Karpukhin, Irkutsk State University

NABOKOV OR PLAUSIBLE [VRAISEMBLABLE] TIME IN THREE NOVELS
(***Bend Sinister, Pnin*** **and** ***Ada or ardor***)

"I confess I do not believe in time. I like to fold my magic carpet, after use in such a way as to superimpose one part of the pattern upon another."
(*Speak Memory*, VI ;6).

Shakespeare and the negation of time (*Bend Sinister*, chapter 6)

In *Bend Sinister*, chapter 6 (the philosopher Krug and his son's walk at the Lakes) begins with the statement that there exists no tangible proof that the memories we have in a waking state are real, and continues with a discussion between Baise and Krug in which they imagine having perpetrated the immense hoax that is the life and work of Shakespeare: "theoretically there is no absolute proof that one's awakening in the morning (the finding oneself again in the saddle of one's personality) is not really a quite unprecedented event, a perfectly original birth." [p. 83 Vintage].

Everyone knows the innumerable conjectures surrounding the life of Shakespeare and the authorship of his works. VN himself has castigated this search for "Baconian acrostics," but behind these uncertainties which are nowehere near being resolved (and behind the invocation of Shakespeare in *Bend Sinister*) is, perhaps equally important, Shakespeare's concept of time.

Indeed, in Shakespeare's tragedies, the concept of the unity of time, action and place dear to French authors has no place. Thus "MacBeth" takes place at once in London of the beginning of the sixteenth century and in Scotland of the eleventh. The mystery that surrounds the presumed author of "Hamlet," and the fact that he (Shakespeare) is making fun of Time and of the way time is commonly perceived in theater, furnish an ideal entry into the tragic farce of *Bend Sinister*.

In this novel, the negation of time which Krug feels when in a waking state could be linked to the suffering he has endured since his wife's death. In this way, Nabokov reminds us that memory knows how to be selective in order to permit us to better bear the pain of the loss of a loved one.

Thus Krug's night's sleep would be a brief respite in the existence of the hero who is persecuted by Paduk's government.

What could be more natural than to imagine in the first seconds of consciousness following a nightmare that "real" existence (Nabokov always put this word in quotation marks), with all its vicissitudes, is purely illusory and that a new life has begun?

When Nabokov says he does not believe in time, he is alluding to the image of Heraclitus' river. Van Veen writes in *Ada*: "we regard Time as a kind of stream..." For Nabokov, time does not always follow a regular, tranquil course; he has ecstatic moments of the negation of time which he experiences when he finds himself in the midst of butterflies ("This is ecstasy, and behind the ecstasy is something else, which is hard to explain".)

This negation of time could be part of an acute perception of eternity, the invention (or discovery? after all, the etymology is similar) of theologians which is described as a total and immediate perception of all instants of time. Some authors consider that to dream is to find yourself in eternity. In his memoirs, Nabokov tells us that time is a prison from which he unceasingly seeks an exit. Krug's dream, if one believes the assertion above, would be a manner of escaping the infernal unfolding of the tale by "diluting" it in this bottomless eternity, or by including ones own unhappiness in the masquerade staged by himself or his friend Baise...or by the narrator. The presence of the narrator in *Bend Sinister* is often perceptible (the description of Krug's dream tells us that VN, incontestable dictator of all the characters including Paduk, appears as a watermark in the narrative in a fashion more or less visible to the initiated—"*(...) but a closer inpection (...) reveals the presence of someone in the know" [p. 64])*. In certain passages it is Krug who is speaking; at the end of the tale it is Nabokov who, having dismissed all the characters of his nightmare, resumes control. For *someone in the know*, Nabokov's view of Krug is infinitely tender, a point that should be underlined; it has sometimes been said that Nabokov is a tyrant who mocks his characters who are mostly pathetic monomaniacs.

V. Nabokov, J.L. Borges and B. Russell

In *Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis, Tertius*, Borges conceives of the world of Tlön as an example of negation of time and notes: "*it reasons that the past is indefinite, that the future has no reality other than as a present hope, that the past has no reality other than as a present memory*", making reference to a passage from Bertrand Russell's *Analysis of Mind* (1921 ed., p. 159), which suggests that "*that the planet has been created a few minutes ago, furnished with a humanity that remembers an illusory past*". I am not sure whether Nabokov read Russell's book, but it is certain that he did not particularly appreciate the philosopher (partly for political reasons, no doubt), as witnessed by his refusal to participate in a conference with Russell ("Strong Opinions," *London Times* 30 May 1962). Nevertheless, the assertion in chapter 6 of *Bend Sinister* is the same as that made by Russell and Borges. In a response to an article by Jeffrey Leonard which appeared in issue 17 of *TriQuarterly* (published together in *Strong Opinions*), VN states that he owes nothing to this famous Argentinian essayist and his somewhat muddled compilation "A new refutation of time," and advises looking instead to Berkeley and Bergson.

The nature of time according to Bergson, the texture of time according to Van Veen

In the memoirs of his European past, VN quotes a philosopher friend named Vivian Bloodmark – an anagrammatical alias that everyone will recognize – who asserted that : *"[...] while the scientist sees everything that happens in one point of space, the poet feels everything that happens in one point of time"* (*Speak, Memory*, Chapter XI). Nabokov, like Pushkin, loved fateful dates, and sprinkled his novels with dates that would be easy for him to verify at the moment of printing. In chapter V

of *Pnin*, Nabokov brings to our notice, by way of his character Bolotov, the fact that the date on which *Anna Karenina* begins is uncertain. It is Professor Pnin who comes to reveal the exact date, naturally avoiding the trap of the new Gregorian calendar ("*I can tell you the exact day [...] The action of the novel starts in the beginning of 1872, namely on Friday, February the twenty-third by the New Style*"). In his course on Tolstoy, VN notes that there is a difference which speaks volumes between the physical time of Anna and the spiritual time of Levin. This difference in time is, according to VN, a literary example of Relativity. In the same vein, he adds that in *Anna Karenina*, Tolstoy succeeds in making the unfolding of his story coincide with the reader's time, a skill that other authors who are more preoccupied with time, such as Joyce or Proust, would not have managed to reproduce.

In the fourth part of *Ada*, Van Veen lets us in on his great discovery: Time according to Bergson. Van Veen, like Marcel Proust, studied Henri Bergson's philosophy. Parallel examination of the style and especially the ideas of Van in his *Texture of Time* on the one hand, and of Henri Bergson in *Duration and Simultaneity* (D&S) on the other reveals clear similarities. Although Nabokov would not hesitate to retort that his conception of time is more Nabokovian than Bergsonian, the pronouncements that he has Van make in *Ada* are quite close to those of Bergson's philosophy.

This chapter of *Ada* provides Nabokov with a chance to use his technique of counterpoint, simultaneously mixing a discourse about Time with metaphors about space, which lead him to describe the events of his car journey to the town of Mont Roux. When Van writes : "we measure Time (a second hand trots, or a minute hand jerks, from one painted mark to another) in terms of Space[...]," Bergson for his part contends that "we spatialise it [time] as soon as we measure it."

Later, Van writes "*that* is what we wished to prove and have now proved," making fun in passing of the modest "we"

of philosophers. Bergson adds : "*this* is real Time" (D&S III), and again : "*here* is everything observed, *here* is the real" (VI).

Van takes advantage of his discourse about Time to use Space as a spatio-temporal bridge between his philosophical disquisition and his car journey in the Swiss Alps. Thus he recognises that : "I am also aware that Time is a fluid medium for the culture of metaphors." Bergson in *Duration and Simultaneity* is also happy to use metaphor : "One cannot be there, for each brings with himself, wherever he goes, one Time which chases away all others, just as the envelope around the walker makes fog retreat at each step." (D&S, final note).

Van's discovery is therefore this confusion between Time and Space, denounced by Bergson, at the same time as the impossibility of grasping this "texture" of Time (called "nature" by Bergson); in other words, exactly what happens *between* the tick and the tock of the clock. In this, he takes up the assertion of Saint Augustine, who said that Time is our greatest problem when he wrote: "and Aurélius Augustinus, too, he, too, in his tussles with the same theme, fifteen hundred years ago, experienced this oddly physical torment of the shallowing mind[...]".

But in contrast to the Bishop of Hippo, Van (and VN agrees with him about this) claims not to believe in *the future ("a quack at the court of Chronos")*; thus he maintains: "actually the future is a fantasm belonging to another category of thought essentially different from that of the Past, which, at least, was here a moment ago[...]," echoing the ideas of Bradley, who denies the future. This position of VN's concerning the future is reiterated in Chapter 1 of *Transparent Things*. His rejection stops at the future, one might say, not extending as far as the Present, which one of the Indian schools of philosophy nevertheless denies, finding it elusive. In Van's analysis of a tangible time, he challenges himself to perceive its texture and refutes Heraclitus' image of it as a flowing river, and it is interesting to note that Van wisely neglects to talk about the

concept of eternity. Schopenhauer claimed to find this eternity in sleep, as did Saint Augustine when he wrote this memorable phrase : "I die each day."

Nietzsche, the modern father of the Eternal Recurrence, a dusted-off Pythagorean concept beloved of researchers into the disturbing sensation of *déjà vu*, took chloral hydrate in his struggle with insomnia. While not specifically mentioning the theological concept of eternity, Van nevertheless evokes it at the exact moment when his sleeping pill starts to take effect ("here the pill floated its first cloudlet"), in the form of "a determinate scheme [which] would abolish the very notion of Time." It would therefore not be presumptuous to make Van realise that the concept of eternity becomes perceptible in the waking state.

In *Ada*, Van states that he does not believe in Relativity, and in a more general way, in the Time of physicists. The powerful telescopes at our disposal today, notably the Hubble (which operates outside the "filter" of the atmosphere), are instruments which allow us to see distant heavenly objects whose light has taken several years to reach us; in other words, these objects may no longer exist at the moment when we see them. It is generally agreed that such devices are veritable Time machines (although far different from those imagined by H.G. Wells). But Van also rejects this fact : "Technological sophists argue that by taking advantage of the Laws of Light, by using new telescopes revealing ordinary print at cosmic distances through the eyes of our nostalgic agents on another planet, we can actually see our own past..." VN gives us leave to doubt Van's scientific abilities at the point where the latter reveals what happened at his three conferences on Bergson's Time. In essence, Van arrives late for the first (devoted to the Past), puts a listener to sleep and causes general hilarity in the second (devoted to the Present), then fakes a heart attack in the third, the one devoted to the Future, which he calls "Sham Time," and in which he he has himself carried out before reading a single line of his notes.

In rejecting the idea of the Future, Van subtracts one element from the past-present-future triptych. However, the number **3** pursues Van through his story (Part IV) : as well as the **3** conferences on Time, Van tells us about his **3** villas, reserves **3** rooms at the **Three Swans** Hotel, which has undergone, he discovers, a number of transformations since 1905, notably the replacement of a painting depicting "**three** ample-haunched Ledas" (**Leda**, beloved of Zeus, took the form of a swan to seduce him) with a neo-primitive painting of **3** yellow eggs. Lastly, once in the elevator, Van thinks he hears part of a news report on some competition, "possibly a **tri**cycle race." Finally, we should note that *Ada* is a family chronicle with three main characters (Ada, Van and Lucette).

The Three Swans is a play on words which leads us to consult Marcel Proust's novel *Du côté de chez Swann*, divided into **three** parts (*Combray, Un amour de Swann, Noms de pays : le nom*), but the leitmotiv of the number three is a painful reminder to Van of the ravages of time, and in particular the modifications of the past brought about by what was at that time the future and which ends up being the present in his last visit to the Three Swans. The painting that Van found "hugely memorable" has been replaced by "a neoprimitive masterpiece." In this exchange of paintings, Nabokov presents for Van's nostalgic consideration a work of art labelled neoprimitive. The irony of this oxymoron does not disguise Nabokov's notorious disdain for "primitive" art, decried numerous times in *Strong Opinions*. With the oxymoron "neoprimitive," Nabokov is also making reference to the description that Proust gives us of the Grand-Hôtel de la Plage (beginning of the third part of *Du côté de chez Swann*) : "*Si bien que toute la pièce avait l'air d'un de ces dortoirs modèles qu'on présente dans les expositions "modern style" du mobilier, où ils sont ornés d'œuvres d'art qu'on a supposées capables de réjouir les yeux de celui qui couchera là, et auxquelles on a donné des sujets en rapport avec le genre de site où l'habitation doit se trouver.*" In "Mademoiselle

O," the fleeting vision of an old swan, heavy and clumsy as it tries in vain to heave itself into a dinghy, reminds Nabokov of his former governess, Cecile Miauton. Thus, the swan motif reappears 40 years later in *Ada*, as every evening, Nabokov contemplates from his balcony the same iterative swan swimming in the same lake (see *Vladimir Nabokov*, Jane Grayson, p. 111).

Time, one of the main themes of *Ada*, is not limited to the description presented to us by Van Veen in the fourth part of the novel. Van does not believe in the Future ; however, in *Ada* Nabokov relentlessly makes him suffer the ravages of Time. In the same way that Gauguin deals with Bergson's Vital Impulse (or with Schopenhauer's Will) by painting all the stages of human life in *Qui sommes nous, d'où venons nous, où allons nous?* (thus we see a newborn on the right of the painting, an old Tahitian woman on the left), Nabokov has us follow the amorous adventures of Van and Ada from their adolescence through to their peaceful old age, in which Van celebrates his ninety-seventh birthday (Part V). In the programme "Emissions," 30th May 1975, Gilles Lapouge pointed out quite rightly that we arrive, at the end of the novel, at a sort of immobility of Time, keeping in mind that one of the main themes of *Ada* was, of course, Time («[...] this is my time and *theme*,» writes Van in Part IV). We can say that in *Ada*, following Tolstoy's example in *Anna Karenina*, Nabokov succeeds in getting us to share in the decelerated or dilated (to borrow a Bergsonian expression) time that the aging narrator experiences, and this in spite of some lapses in narrative time.

Time according to Nabokov

Nabokov often put the word «reality» in quotation marks. In doing this, he wanted partly to differentiate himself from the banal and insipid reality of bad novels, but especially to point out that each person has, according to their powers of perception and memorization, their own conception of reality. It is in this

relative reality of Nabokov's that we find his perception of time. As for Berkeley, neither material things nor ideas exist for him outside the mind which perceives them. Lolita is an example of this *esse est percipi* of Berkeley's philosophy ("to be is to be perceived") : "*Lolita la nymphette n'existe qu'à travers la hantise qui détruit Humbert : et voici un aspect essentiel d'un livre singulier qui a été faussé par une popularité factice,*" Nabokov reminded us in "Apostrophes."

Thus, it is not the cosmic Time of physicists that interests Nabokov (who took the chance to remind us that only one letter separates the words *cosmic* and *comic*), but rather individual Time, perceptible through the prism of art, imagination and memory.

In an article on prodigies of memory, a French scientific review, *Science et Avenir*, cites the case of Vladimir Nabokov. It is from the point of view of this mnemonic ability that we have to see his perception of Time.

The philosophy of Nabokov's duration is the reflection of a particular sharpness: the past and the present are seen as the memorised accumulation of sensory perceptions or of extraordinarily rich and precise ideas by one who spent his life pushing the limits of his imagination, of his memory of facts, and relentlessly unearthing the colourful side of these facts.

George Berkeley thought that our existence is God's dream, and that we would disappear if He were to wake up, like the Red King in *Alice Through the Looking Glass* ; Bertrand Russell imagined a humanity endowed with an illusory past; Borges claimed to have "felt" eternity during an evening stroll in a quarter of Buenos Aires; Nabokov experienced "suspended" Time on dicovering a species or a rare specimen of butterfly: these opinions are remarkable precisely because they defy the laws of physics.

I wish to thank Priscilla Meyer and Brett Shireffs for translation.

—Alain Adreu, Papeete

BOTTICELLI'S *PRIMAVERA* IN *LOOK AT THE HARLEQUINS!*
(30th Anniversary of the Novel)

Nabokov's works abound with references to Botticelli and his art. In *Laughter in the Dark*, the blind Albinus attempts to transform the shapes and colors in his mind and perceives this mental operation as "the opposite of trying to imagine the kind of voices which Botticelli's angels had" (*Laugh* 241-42). Here Nabokov seems to suggest Botticelli's *Virgin and Child with Eight Angels* (ca. 1481-83), the painting to which he earlier alludes in *The Defense*. We may recall that Luzhin's wife guides the protagonist through the Berlin Kaiser Friedrich Museum and draws his attention to the artwork of "this one [who] liked lilies and tender faces slightly inflamed by colds caught in heaven" (*Def* 190-91; 2: 423 and 715). In this description, the painting, along with *Virgin and Child Enthroned Between Saint John the Baptist and Saint John Evangelist* (1484) (both are presently at Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie), can be unmistakably identified. This "cold" motif resurfaces once again in *Bend Sinister* when Ember describes Ophelia and asserts that "[T]he uncommon cold of a Botticellian angel tinged her nostrils with pink and suffused her upperlip—you know, when the rims of the lips merge with the skin"(*BS* 114). Ember's assertion is later refracted in *Look at the Harlequins!*, in Vadim Vadimovich's pronouncement that "the mad scholar in *Esmerlada and Her Parandrus* wreathes Botticelli and Shakespeare together by having Primavera end as Ophelia with all her flowers"(*LATH* 162). (On the link between Botticelli's art and Nabokov's wreathed mermaids, see Gerard de Vries, "Sandro Botticelli and Hazel Shade," *The Nabokovian* 49 [Fall 2002]: 12-23). Ember's assertion and Vadim's pronouncement seem to allude to John Everett Millais's *Ophelia* [1851, Tate Gallery, London] that depicts the Shakespearean heroine floating dead in the stream and covered

with a multitude of flowers.) And in *Lolita*, when thinking of the title heroine, Humbert speaks of "those wet, matted eyelashes," evidently referring to Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* (ca. 1484-86, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence) that he names later in the novel when comparing the girl to "Botticelli's russet Venus—the same soft nose, the same blurred beauty" (*AnL* 64, 270 and 366, 439). Humbert also speaks about "that tinge of Botticellian pink" that is manifest in the three graces in *Primavera* (ca. 1482, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence) (*AnL* 64 and 366).

In the Ur-*Lolita* novella, *The Enchanter*, Nabokov describes "[A] priceless original: sleeping girl, oil. Her face in its soft nest of curls, scattered here, wadded together there, with those little fissures on her parched lips, and that special crease in the eyelids over the barely joined lashes, had a russet, roseate tint where the lighted cheek—whose Florentine outline was a smile in itself—showed through" (*En* 70). The description reads like a curious cross between Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* and Giorgione's *Sleeping Venus* (ca. 1510, Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden). Finally, *Look at the Harlequins!*, Nabokov's last published novel, refers to *Primavera* directly. In his letter that contains the marriage proposal to Annette Blagovo, Vadim Vadimovich, the bed-ridden protagonist of the novel, implores his addressee:

> Do not write, do not phone, do not mention this letter, if and when you come Friday afternoon; but please, if you do, wear, in propitious sign, the Florentine hat that looks like a cluster of wild flowers. I want you to celebrate your resemblance to the fifth girl from the left to right, the flower-decked blonde with the straight nose and serious gray eyes, in Botticelli's Primavera, an allegory of Spring, my love, my allegory. (*LATH* 107)

Contextually, this is the protagonist's love letter and marriage proposal to Annette Blagovo. Meta-textually, however, it may

be perceived as Nabokov's own profession of love for his wife Véra.

Elsewhere I have discussed Nabokov's authorial presence in his oeuvre. But is Véra, his wife, his Muse, his counsel for more than half a century, present in his works? When asked about this in one of his interviews, Nabokov responded: "Most of my works have been dedicated to my wife and her picture has often been reproduced by some mysterious means of reflected color in the inner mirrors of my books" (*SO* 191). In some cases the "reproductions" of Véra's "picture" are more discernible than in others. We may recall that Véra appears, alongside her husband, toward the end of *King, Queen, Knave* as the girl with "a delicately painted mouth and tender gray-blue eyes," which, in Nabokov's own words, points to "the appearances of my wife and me in the last two chapters" as "merely visits of inspection" (*KQK* 254 and viii). Véra appears once again in Chapter 15 of *Speak, Memory* as the narrator's interlocutor whom he addresses as "you." Another example of Véra's presence, albeit rather surreptitious, can be detected in Nabokov's earlier poem "Kon'kobezhets" ("The Skater," 1925). We may recall its final quatrain that consists of the following lines: ("Ost**a**v**il** ia o**din** uzo**r slovesn**yi, / **m**gnov**e**nno **r**askruzh**i**vshiisia ts**ve**tok.../ **I za**vtra **s**neg **b**esshu**mn**yi i **otve**snyi / zapo**r**osh**it is**cher**ch**ennyi kat**ok**" (1: 635). ("I left behind a single verbal figure, / an instantly unfolding flower, inked. / And yet tomorrow, vertical and silent, / the snow will dust the scribble-scrabbled rink.") (Trans. Dmitri Nabokov; reprinted by arrangement with Dmitri Nabokov. All rights reserved.) This "single verbal figure," which the lyrical 'I' of the poem "left behind" on the ice, anagrammatically contains the dedication, as signified by the bold-faced letters in the original, transliterated, Russian: Vere Evseevne Slonim Vladimir Nabokov Sirin (To Véra Evseevna Slonim Vladimir Nabokov Sirin). The poem was written on February 5, 1925, that is, a little over two months before Vladimir and Véra were married (April 15), and

Nabokov evidently intended this poem as a gift to his bride and wife-to-be.

Returning to the above-quoted passage from *Look at the Harlequins!*, we may perceive it, as the entire novel for that matter, beyond its contextual meaning, as Nabokov's own affirmation of love for his wife. It appears that Nabokov has distributed Véra's traits among some of the novel's female characters. For example, he endows **L**yubov **S**erafimovn**a** **S**avich, whose name contains an anagram of Véra's maiden name—Véra Slonim—, with Véra's excellent typing skills, her ability to recite his every poem by heart, and her remembering "thousands of enchanting minutiae scattered through all my novels" (*LATH* 83); Annette Blagovo—with some of Véra's physical attractive attributes, and bestows his adoration of Véra on Vadim's last wife, the "you" of the novel, whom the protagonist calls "my ultimate, my immortal one" (*LATH* 122). As Brian Boyd has remarked, "And it is You who helps retrieve Vadim from the realization of his worst fears, You who restores him to his self and who points beyond it /. . . ./ And in a very clear sense this You is also Véra Nabokov, the 'you' of *Speak, Memory*" (*VNAY* 642). Indeed, it is the virtues and talents of Véra, and her life-long commitment to her husband, along with Nabokov's own literary genius, that made him one of the greatest writers of our time, in complete contradistinction to mediocre and philistine Annette, Vadim's wife of twelve years, who enjoyed reading the run-of-the-mill Galsworthy and Dostoevsky (see *LATH* 98-99), and who was totally indifferent to her husband's writings. The same insurmountable distance lies, of course, between Nabokov and Vadim Vadimovich himself, whose name is merely a slur of Vladimir Vladimirovich (cf. *LATH* 249), Nabokov's given name and patronymic. Vadim's literary talent is immeasurably inferior to that of Nabokov, his ultimate prototype, and his life and art are but "a parody, an inferior variant" (*LATH* 89) of those of his creator.

There are numerous clues in support of the notion that the novel constitutes Nabokov's homage to Véra. To begin with, the novel's private nickname— *Look at the Masks!* —alludes to Vladimir and Véra's first meeting at the charity ball where she wore a wolf mask. (Cf. the poem "Vstrecha" ["The Meeting," 1923], dedicated to this auspicious, fatidic, event [1: 610-11].) And as Brian Boyd has intimated, "in all likelihood, the whole novel was a tribute to the kind fate that united them" (Brian Boyd, "The Nabokov Biography and the Nabokov Archive," *Biblion* 1, no. 1 [Fall 1992], 30 and 32.) Further, the very name of Botticelli's painting mentioned in the passage, *Primavera*, Italian for "spring," as is often the case with Nabokov, points to multilingual wordplay. The painting's title, divided and inverted, that is **vera prima,** suggests "Véra the First"—the title accorded only to royalty. Furthermore, the word *vera* signifies "faith" in Russian, but it is also a feminine form of the Italian adjective *vero* that means "veritable," "thorough," "real," "perfect." Curiously, as an Italian colloquialism, *vera* also means "a wedding ring," the connotation that nicely fits in the meaning of the passage and in Nabokov's intending the entire novel as a present to Véra for their golden wedding anniversary. (The novel came out only months before this event: the first standard edition was published on August 27, 1974, and the book club edition—in December of that year. See Michael Juliar, *Vladimir Nabokov: A Descriptive Bibliography*, New York: Garland Publishing, 1986, 348-49.) Although the protagonist draws a comparison of Annette Blagovo to Flora, "the flower-decked blonde with the straight nose and serious gray eyes" meta-textually suggests the physical appearance of Véra Slonim who had "gray-blue eyes" and who was "a ravishing blonde" in her young years. (Stacy Schiff, *Véra [Mrs. Vladimir Nabokov]*, New York: The Modern Library, 2000, 53 and 18, respectively). Nabokov's mention of Spring in the passage reminds *his* beloved addressee that their first meeting (May 8) and their wedding (April 15) took place

in spring. Moreover, the Latin word for "spring," *ver* or *veris*, is reminiscent of Nabokov's wife's first name, whereas the Russian word for "spring"—*vesna*—is a partial anagram of her maiden name—**Véra Slo**nim. Finally, the concluding, and very emphatic, phrase of the passage—**my** l**o**v**e**, **my a**llegor**y**—contains the anagram "my Véra"—perhaps another sign of the concealed dedication to the upcoming golden wedding anniversary.

Intriguingly, this presumed intention on the part of Nabokov corresponds to the history of the painting itself: art historians have maintained that *Primavera* had been commissioned to commemorate the 1482 wedding of Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de' Medici and Semiramide d'Appiano. (Although, this hypothesis was advanced in 1978, four years after the novel's publication, Nabokov could make this conjecture knowing that Venus, the central figure in the painting, was also recognized as the goddess of marriage and that it was long-believed that the painting was commissioned by Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de' Medici. See, respectively, Ronald W. Lightbown, *Sandro Botticelli: His Life and Work*, 2 vols., Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978, 1: 80-81; Joseph Archer Crowe and Giovanni Battista Cavalcaselle, *A History of Painting in Italy*, 6 vols., New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903-14, 4: 253n.1; Herbert Percy Horne, *Alessandro Filipepi, Commonly Called Sandro Botticelli, Painter of Florence*, London: George Bell & Sons, 1908, 50.)

Thus, in *Look at the Harlequins!*, Nabokov not only encapsulates, albeit in the travestied, tongue-in-cheek manner, his magnificent literary legacy, but also pays a remarkable tribute to Véra—the most appropriate summation of their fifty-year blissful marriage. And it is noteworthy that, to accentuate the message, Nabokov employs the illustrious Italian Renaissance art masterpiece whose title encodes his wife's name and his tender reverence toward her.

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ZOOLOGICAL NOMENCLATURE AND KINBOTE'S NAME OF GOD

In *Pale Fire*, in the very last sentence of the important Note to Line 549 in the commentary (Kinbote-Shade dialogue on religion), Kinbote states: "In trying to find the right name for that Universal Mind, or First Cause, or the Absolute, or Nature, I submit that the Name of God has priority". This rather straightforward sentence, which reflects Kinbote's religious zeal (see also Note to Line 101), appears to have a second layer: a playful message from Nabokov.

"Priority" is a fundamental term in biological systematics concerning the names of living organisms and rules on assigning those names (taxonomic nomenclature). These very strict rules call for establishing (publishing) the priority Latin name. All later names given to the same organism are considered "synonyms" and are superfluous. A zoologist always literally "tries to find the right name", which will "have priority". It is the most standard operation which Nabokov had to apply countless times himself in his entomological research. He gives an imaginary example in *Ada*, I: 8, "*Antocharis ada* Krolik (1884)—as it was known until changed to *A. prittwitzi* Stümper (1883) by the inexorable law of taxonomic priority". In the annotation to this sentence, Brian Boyd mentions that Nabokov refers approvingly in *Speak, Memory* to "nomenclatorial changes as a result of a strict application of the law of priority" (*The Nabokovian*, 1997, 38). Same attention to nomenclatural rules is seen in Nabokov's 1952 letter to Cyril dos Passos (Brian Boyd & Robert M. Pyle, eds. *Nabokov's Butterflies: Unpublished and Uncollected Writings,* 2000, p. 486-487), where he says "I am all for suppressing doubtful names; but first of all let us discuss those names and prove that they *are* doubtful".

The Law, or rule, of Priority in nomenclature was first formally published in 1905 in the *Regles Internationales de la Nomenclature Zoologique* (Paris), in French, German and

English. The Russian translation appeared in 1911—when Nabokov was already "dreaming his way through" (*Speak, Memory*) lepidopterological literature.

Nabokov used the 1905 Rules of Zoological Nomenclature during all his active life in entomology; it was still under these "inexorable" rules that Francis Hemming in 1960 named the lycaenid genus *Nabokovia*. At this time the Rules were very much discussed in zoological circles, since a new revision was on its way. In 1961—a year before *Pale Fire* was published—the old Rules were replaced by the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature*, which contained the Law of Priority as its basic operating principle. The latest, 4th edition of the Code (London, 1999) confirms the Principle of Priority as the most fundamental concept (Ch. 6, Article 23).

Kinbote knew nothing about natural history but Nabokov forces him to observe even a very minute detail from zoological nomenclature—such as an incorrect capitalization of the species epithet "*Shadei*" in the Latin name of *Bombycilla shadei*, an imaginary species of waxwing, the bird central to *Pale Fire* (Note to Line 71 in commentary; see also Brian Boyd, *Nabokov's* Pale Fire*: The Magic of Artistic Discovery,* p. 178). This is of course not Kinbote speaking but Nabokov—or maybe also Shade, since Shade liked to know "the names of things" (see e.g. Note to Line 238). Naming is very important for the naturalist's psyche: see *The Gift* on Fyodor's father who "was happy in that incompletely named world in which at every step he named the nameless". Naming a new species was Nabokov's childhood dream (*Speak, Memory*). St. Augustine, the subject of Kinbote-Shade discussion, wrote in Latin, but Latin is also the language of zoological nomenclature, Linnaeus being its Adam.

Reading "priority" in its technical, nomenclatural sense opens many playful if Talmudic interpretations of Kinbote's phrase: the supernatural Name of God can be treated as a human-given "name" of a purely natural object, subject to human-made rules. All five "names" quoted by Kinbote

(Universal Mind, First Cause, Absolute, Nature, Name of God) were of course myriads of times spelled out ("published") by theologians and philosophers. Of all these "names", it was the "Name of God" that was "published" first—by Moses in Exodus 3 (or, if you prefer, by a so-called Jahwist ca. 900–850 BC).

The names in zoological nomenclature, to be legitimate ("available"), must be accompanied by descriptions (diagnoses), which are allowed to be rather succinct. The God of the Old Testament provides a combined name/description in Exodus 3:14, usually rendered as "I am that I am", *Ego sum qui sum* (diagnosis) but also interpretable as YHWH (name). Interestingly, this "self-diagnosis" is mirrored by the diagnosis of humans (genus *Homo*) given in 1758 by Linnaeus who used the famous motto *Nosce te ipsum* ("Recognize yourself").

All other "names" listed by Kinbote do not have formal nomenclatural priority (which is judged strictly by the date of publication). The name of Nature (*physis*) comes from Ancient Greece and does not precede the Hebrew Name of God by time of its first "publication". The other three names can even be traced to their individual authors, all of whom came much later than Moses. Universal Mind is assignable to Anaxagoras; First Cause, to Aristotle; and The Absolute, to Hegel. Thus, all four other "names" listed by Kinbote are, as a zoologist would say, "junior synonyms" of "the great and terrible" Nomen Dei. The latter holds its Priority.

According to the Code, the junior synonyms are not "valid" but are "available": if the senior synonym (in this case, Name of God) becomes by some reason "unavailable," the next-in-line junior synonym (in this case, probably Nature) will take its place by priority. Why can a name become unavailable? Most commonly, this happens if it has not been properly published, e.g. not supplied with a necessary description at the moment of publication. Since the entire Torah can be argued to represent

such a "description," the Name of God surely seems to be a very secure "senior synonym."

In the Russian translation by S. Ilyin and A. Glebovskaya (1997), unfortunately, the taxonomic reference to "priority" is lost. The words "the Name of God has priority" are translated as "pervenstvo prinadlezhit imeni Bozhiyu." "Pervenstvo" in Russian, however, does not double as a term for zoological priority; this word is "prioritet."

I thank Dr. Brian Boyd for his comments on this note.

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ANNOTATIONS TO *ADA* 23: PART I CHAPTER 23

by Brian Boyd

Updated and expanded versions of earlier instalments in this series (currently as far as *Ada* I.20) are now available online, along with the text of *Ada*, keyed to the pages and lines of the first and Vintage editions, on the *ADAonline* website at http://www.libraries.psu.edu/nabokov/ada/index.htm. Some cross-references to early notes or to motifs below may be to material noted for the first time only in the *ADAonline* version of the Annotations.

I welcome corrections or suggestions, sent either to the *Nabokovian* or to me (b.boyd@auckland.ac.nz), and will gratefully acknowledge on *ADAonline* any changes prompted by such feedback.

Forenote

Now that Van and Ada's love has moved from private emotion to frantic action, it runs a new risk: public observation. Lucette, freed by Mlle Larivière's taking to her bed, is the first to see them after "the machine which our forefathers called 'sex'" (129) has begun to operate smoothly.

Until recently, Van and Ada have been frustrated by the distance between them. Now that closeness has replaced distance, a new but comically lighter frustration faces them: their need to escape Lucette's prying and almost omnipresent eyes. The flimsiness, extravagance and diversity of their impromptu ploys, in the five days Lucette is on the loose, amusingly testify to the urgency, frequency and desperate inventiveness of their passion.

Part 1 Chapter 23: Annotations

142.01-02: All went well until Mlle Larivière decided to stay in bed . . . : she had sprained her back: Cf. 374.11-