

THE NABOKOVIAN

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CONTENTS

News by Stephen Jan Parker	3
"The Glasses of St. Joseph" by Vladimir Nabokov translation by Dmitri Nabokov	4
Notes and Brief Commentaries by Priscilla Meyer	5
"Exiled, Art Treasures Sold" Gavriel Shapiro	5
"An Anti-Locust Campaign in Nabokov (and Pushkin)" Victor Fet	13
"Invisible Angel" Alexey Filimonov	14
"Some Dreams of Alexander Blok as Enacted in <i>Ada</i> by Van Veen and Vice Versa" Alexey Sklyarenko	16

"Fathers and Children in <i>Ada</i> " Alexey Sklyarenko	38
"The Link Between Ronald Pym and La Petite Dormeuse in <i>Lolita</i> " Emil Niculescu	51
"Nabokov and Bret Harte: An Overlooked Allusion in <i>Lolita</i> " Gary Scharnhorst	53
"'A Dorset Yokel's Knuckles': Thomas Hardy and <i>Lolita</i> " Neil Cornwell	54
"The Tattoo is a Tahitian Vahine" (<i>Lolita</i> , Part II, Chapter 22) Alain Andreu	64
Annotations to <i>Ada</i> : 23. Part I Chapter 23 by Brian Boyd	68

News
by Stephen Jan Parker

Nabokov Society News

In 2004, the Society had 180 individual members (132 USA, 48 abroad) and 95 institutional members (77 USA, 18 abroad). Society membership/subscription income for the year was \$5,910; expenses were \$6,100. Thanks once again to the generosity of its members, in 2004 the Society forwarded \$387 to The Pennsylvania State University for support of the Zembla website.

Odds and Ends

– The Vladimir Nabokov Museum in St. Petersburg holds its third international Nabokov conference on July 21-22. The topic is "Vladimir Nabokov and Russian Emigre Literature."

– The Sixth International Summer School, to be held at the Nabokov Museum in St. Petersburg, will run from July 25 - August 3. One series of seminars will be conducted by Prof. D. Barton Johnson and another series by other distinguished Nabokov scholars.

Please note that subscription prices (posted on the inside cover) have not increased 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, a much appreciated dimension of the Society.

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

Очки Иосифа

Слезы отри и послушай: в солнечный полдень
старый
плотник очки позабыл на своем верстаке. Со смехом
мальчик вбежал в мастерскую; замер; заметил; подкрался
тронул легкие стекла, и только он тронул,—мгновенно
по миру солнечный зайчик стрелынул, заиграл по далеким
пасмурным странам, слепых согрелая и радуя зрячих.

The Glasses of St. Joseph

Wipe off your teardrops and listen: One sunny midday, an
aged
carpenter forgot his glasses on his workbench. Laughing,
a boy ran in; paused; espied; sneaked up;
and touched the airy lenses. Instantly
a sunny shimmer traversed the world, flashed across distant,
dreary lands, warming the blind, and cheering the sighted.

(Nabokov 1999-2000, 1:604)

Trans. Dmitri Nabokov
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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.

EXILED, ART TREASURES SOLD

Boris Anisfeld (1879-1973) studied at the Odessa School of Art under Gennady Ladyzhensky and Kiriak Kostandi (1895-1900) and then at the Imperial Academy of Arts in St. Petersburg under Dmitri Kardovsky and Ilya Repin (1901-1909). He was a member of *The World of Art*, a participant in the group's exhibitions, and a contributor to various Russian periodicals, including *Satirikon*. In the eleventh issue of the periodical for 1908 there is a drawing entitled *Tiur'ma* [Prison] that depicts a dilapidated coach approaching a fortress-like artists prison by a serpentine-looking road (Fig. 1). One wonders whether the drawing was a source of inspiration for Nabokov's describing the prison-fortress and the "road wound around its rocky base" as well as the "old, scarred carriage" (IB 11 and 214) in *Invitation to a Beheading*.



Another possible reference to Anisfeld appears in *Drugie berega* [Other Shores, 1954], Nabokov's Russian-language memoir. There, Nabokov describes works of *The World of Art* painters in his mother's study, including "'delectable,' in the parlance of those times, Bakst's *Turks*" ("vkusnymi, kak togda govorilos', *Turkami* Baksta") (5: 172). Those "delectable" *Turks* by Leon Bakst were apparently among "a number of watercolor sketches made for the Schecherazade ballet" (1910) that, as Nabokov recalls, his "parents possessed" (*SM* between 160 and 161). From 1907 on, Anisfeld, like Bakst, had worked primarily as a stage and costume designer. He received commissions from the Mariinsky and Vera Kommissarzhevskaya Theaters in St. Petersburg as well as from the Ballets Russes

in Paris. In particular, he designed the stage and costumes for *Islamey*, another ballet with the Oriental locale, set to Mily Balakirev's music by Mikhail Fokine and premiered in the spring of 1912 at the Mariinsky Theater. It is noteworthy that several costume sketches for this ballet, such as *Moor* and *Eunuch*, were originally in the possession of V. D. Nabokov. (See Yevgenia Petrova, ed., *The World of Art. On the Centenary of the Exhibition of Russian and Finnish Artists 1898* [St. Petersburg and Helsinki: Palace Editions, 1998], 253-254.) And it is quite possible that in recalling Bakst's "delectable" *Turks*, Nabokov had in mind a composite image of his costume designs and of those by Anisfeld whose artistic style was very much influenced by Bakst.

Savely Sorin's (1878-1953) professional training was very similar to that of Anisfeld: he studied at the Odessa School of Art under Kostandi (1895-1899) and then at the Imperial Academy of Arts in St. Petersburg under Ivan Tvorozhnikov, Vasily Savinsky, and Repin (1899-1907). Unlike Anisfeld, however, who distinguished himself primarily as a stage and costume designer, Sorin made a name for himself as a portraitist. In the years prior to the Bolshevik takeover, he painted many famous representatives of the artistic world, and his works were frequently reproduced in periodicals, such as *Apollon* [Apollo], *Solntse Rossii* [The Sun of Russia], and *Stolitsa i usad'ba* [The Capital and the Country Estate]. In 1917-1918, Sorin lived in Yalta, and in 1919-1920—in Tiflis, Batum, and Baku, before leaving for France and, at the outbreak of World War II, for the United States.

In *Speak, Memory*, Nabokov singles out "a well-known painter called Sorin" (*SM* 248) among those whom he recalls seeing in the Crimean exile. And it is quite possible that Nabokov later encountered Sorin, a mutual acquaintance of Benois and Dobuzhinsky, in Paris and New York City. (On Sorin's ties with the artists, see *A. N. Benois i M. V. Dobuzhinskii—Perepiska* [A. N. Benois and M. V.

Dobuzhinsky—A Correspondence], St. Petersburg: “Sad iskusstv,” 2003.)

It appears that Nabokov alludes to Sorin in his fictitious reference to “a resplendent portrait by Serov, 1896, of the notorious beauty, Mme de Blagidze, in Caucasian costume” (*LATH* 50). In this playful pastiche, Nabokov seems to conflate the two portraitists, **Valentin A. Serov** (1865-1911) and **Savely A. Sorin** whose names bear strong phonetic and visual resemblance. Both Serov and Sorin painted the same personalities, such as Fyodor Chaliapin and Maxim Gorky. Furthermore, both painters were also known for their portrayal of famous beauties and even depicted the same models, such as Princess Olga Orlova (cf. her namesake, although with a different patronymic—Olegovna rather than Konstantinovna—at the beginning of *RLSK*) and the ballerinas Tamara Karsavina and Anna Pavlova.

Among Serov’s models with the Caucasian link, however, there is only one—Mariia Akimova [Akimian] (1908), the daughter of a rich Moscow philanthropist of Armenian origin—V. I. Kananov [Kananian]. This is not the case with Sorin. The French noble particle and the Georgian name of the illusory female sitter mentioned in *LATH* most likely suggest Sorin’s portraits of several Georgian Princesses whom he painted during his Caucasian period: Salomeia Andronikova, Melita Cholokashvili (Sorin completed her portrait in Paris in 1927), Meri Shervashidze, and Eliso Dadiani—all four well known for their remarkable beauty. Andronikova was the lyrical addressee of Osip Mandel’shtam’s poem “Solominka” [“A Little Straw”] and of his octave that begins and ends with the lines “Doch’ Andronika Komnena, / Vizantiiskoi slavy doch’!” [“Komnena, the daughter of Andronik, / the daughter of Byzantine glory!”] (both poems written in 1916). Shervashidze was the purported heroine of Galaktion Tabidze’s poems “Meri” (1915) and “V puti” [“On the Road,” 1916]; she won a beauty contest held in Constantinople in 1921 and was, together with Cholokashvili,

the top Chanel model in Paris of the 1920s. (For information on Melita Cholokashvili and Meri Shervashidze also known under her married name Eristavi, or Eristova in the Russified form, see Alexandre Vassiliev, *Beauty in Exile*, New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2000.) Nabokov was undoubtedly familiar with Sorin’s portraiture, as it was reviewed and occasionally reproduced in the Berlin-based magazine *Zhar-ptitsa* [Firebird] to which he was a frequent contributor. (See Sergei Makovsky, “Portrety S. A. Sorina” [“Portraits by S. A. Sorin”], *Zhar-ptitsa* 8, [1922]: 2-6.) And Sorin’s portrait of Eliso Dadiani (Fig. 2), for example, was reproduced in the first issue of the magazine (1921). Characteristically, Sorin did not portray Dadiani in Caucasian costume.



A few words about Nabokov's choice of the fictional sitter's name—de Blagidze. Blagidze is a commoner's Georgian name, and therefore its appearance in combination with the French noble particle "de" is amusing in its incongruity. (Curiously, there were some Russian émigrés in France who, to emphasize their noble origin, would add "de" to their surname. See, for example, the obituary of Marina de Kovalevskaya, *Russkaia Mysl'* [La pensée russe], No. 4010, 23 December 1993—5 January 1994, p. 23. Cf. Nabokov's own invention—Dmitri de Midoff [LATH 90]. This latter Gallicized Russian surname apparently alludes to Anatoly Demidoff, a Napoleon admirer, who built a special gallery on Elba Island, known as the Demidoff Gallery, to serve as the local museum for the Emperor's relics. Another possible allusion to the exact namesake of Nabokov's fleeting character—although spelled Dimitri Demidoff—is a personage in the operetta, set in Odessa and Paris, *Flora Bella*, premiered in Broadway Casino Theatre in 1916). The surname apparently came to Nabokov's attention because of his interest in chess. There was a chess master Aleksandr Blagidze (b. 1923) who had been active on the Soviet and international chess scene between the mid-1940s and the early 1960s (see L. Ia. Abramov et al., eds., *Shakhmatnyi slovar'* [A Chess Dictionary], Moscow: "Fizkul'tura i Sport," 1964, 199).

An additional strand in this intricate collage is Karsavina's portrait by the American artist John Singer Sargent (1856-1925), whose middle and last names somewhat resemble the surnames of both Russian painters. Sargent depicted the famous ballerina and beauty in the title role of the legendary Georgian Princess, in traditional Caucasian costume, in the ballet *Thamar*, performed in Paris in Theatre du Châtelet in May of 1912 (Fig. 3). In 1942, this charcoal drawing became part of the Harvard University Fogg Art Museum collection with which Nabokov presumably familiarized himself while residing in Cambridge, Mass. (1941-1948).



"The Visit to the Museum" (1939) contains a passage in which the narrator asks the custodian of the museum whether it would be possible to purchase "one of these paintings" to which the latter replies: "The treasures of the museum are the pride of the city," "and pride is not for sale" (*Stories* 279). Later on, however, M. Godard, the museum curator, agrees to sell to the narrator the sought-after painting, Gustave LeRoy's *Portrait of a Russian Gentleman* (see *Stories* 280-281).

This whole episode may be perceived as Nabokov's allusion to the Soviet government's selling Russia's art treasures in the early 1930s. Especially known is the deal in which the Soviets sold to Andrew William Mellon, then U. S. Secretary of the Treasury, a large number of priceless masterpieces from the Hermitage Museum collection, such as Van Eyck's *Annunciation*, Raphael's *Madonna Alba*, Titian's *Venus*

with a Mirror, and Rembrandt's *Man in Oriental Costume* (now all part of the Andrew W. Mellon Collection, the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC). (For a detailed account of this and other sales of Russia's art treasures, see Nikolas Il'in and Natal'ia Semenova, eds., *Prodannye sokrovishcha Rossii* [Sold Treasures of Russia], Moscow: Trilistnik, 2000).

For obvious reasons, the deal was not publicized at the time of its making (October 1930—April 1931). It was reported in the press as early as October 1931 (*New York Herald Tribune* and *Art News*) and was officially announced in 1935. By the time Nabokov was composing the story (1938) the information about the sale of Russia's art treasures was widely known, especially after Mellon bequeathed the collection to the nation and financed the construction of the National Gallery of Art shortly before his death in 1937. It is feasible, therefore, that this deal, with which Nabokov was certainly familiar, was discussed during his Paris visit in the Spring of 1937 with the artists Mstislav Dobuzhinsky, Konstantin Somov, and Alexander Benois. Dobuzhinsky, the young Nabokov's drawing master, was a staunch protector of Russia's art treasures. And so were Konstantin Somov, whose father, Andrei Ivanovich, had been the curator of the Hermitage Picture Collection (1886-1906), the author of *Kartiny imperatorskogo Ermitazha* [Paintings of the Imperial Hermitage, 1859], and of the three-volume *Katalog kartinnoi galerei Ermitazha* [A Catalogue of the Hermitage Picture Gallery, 1st ed. 1889-1895]; and Alexander Benois, the author of *Putevoditel' po kartinnoi galeree Ermitazha* [A Guide to the Hermitage Picture Collection, 1910] and the Collection curator after the Bolshevik takeover and until his departure from Soviet Russia (1918-1926).

The episode under discussion evidently conveys in fictional form Nabokov's indignation against the Soviet regime for squandering Russia's national treasures. Nabokov seems to express his strong opinion about this shameful deal by way of M. Godard's insistence on "using the red—the red, please"

(*Stories* 281) in writing and signing the agreement—the devil's pact indeed!

—Gavriel Shapiro, Cornell University

AN ANTI-LOCUST CAMPAIGN IN NABOKOV (AND PUSHKIN)

In *Father's Butterflies*, *Second Addendum to The Gift* (in B. Boyd & R. Pyle, eds., *Nabokov's Butterflies*, 2000, pp. 198-234, translated by D. V. Nabokov), Fyodor Godunov-Cherdyntsev writes about his father: "He detested applied entomology—and I cannot imagine how he could work in present-day Russia, where his beloved science is wholly reduced to anti-locust campaigns or class struggles against agricultural saboteurs" (213).

In the original Russian text of *Vtoroe dobavlenie k "Daru"* (*Zvezda*, 2001, No. 1), the last part of this sentence reads: "...gde ego lubimala nauka splosh' svedena k pokhodu na saranchu ili klassovoI bor'be s ogorodnymi vreditel'iami." One can notice that the pun in this phrase is on the dual meaning of "vrediteli." Agricultural (*ogorodnye*, i.e. vegetable garden) *vrediteli* are insect "pests." However, during Stalin's era the word "vrediteli" in general referred first of all to human "saboteurs" who were to be denounced, arrested and executed. In the original Russian phrase, the meaning is heavily weighted toward insects, thus creating a "class struggle against insects." "Agricultural saboteurs," of course, can only be humans but not insects.

As there is no matching pun in English, this phrase is difficult to translate. Dr. Brian Boyd kindly pointed this out to Dmitri Vladimirovich Nabokov, who agreed with the alternative translation suggested by Dr. Boyd, "class struggle against the sabotage of vegetable-garden pests."

"Pokhod na saranchu" (anti-locust campaign), besides being a reference to a very real problem which faced applied entomology in southern Russia and the USSR, is of course also Nabokov's hidden reference to the famous incident involving Pushkin during his exile in Odessa, in southern Russia. On May 22, 1824 Count Vorontsov, in writing, ordered young Pushkin (who was assigned to his office as a clerk) to write a report on a locust infestation. Pushkin reported, in verse, "The locust flew, flew, / And landed / Sat, sat, ate all, / And left again." ("Sarancha letela, letela / I sela. / Sidela, sidela – vsio s"ela / I vnov' uletela"). This verse was long considered apocryphal, but was later found in Vorontsov's letter to Anton Fonton (N. Eidelman, "Sarancha letela...i sela", *Znanie-sila*, 1968, No. 8-9). This is one of the few entomological poems in Pushkin (other than Prince Gvidon's triple metamorphosis into a mosquito, a fly, and a bumblebee in the "Tale of Tsar Saltan").

The Old World locust in question (*Locusta migratoria*, the eighth Egyptian plague) should not be confused with a "locust" of the eastern USA, which is indeed not a locust (=grasshopper) but a cicada—as Shade once explained to Kinbote (*Pale Fire*, Commentary to Line 238).

—Victor Fet, Department of Biological Sciences, Marshall University

INVISIBLE ANGEL

For Courage

Inscription on the coat of arms of the Nabokov family

We do not know whose hand it is that holds the sword in the light of the shining stars in the poem *Gerb* (*The Blazon*), just as the one who holds a curved sword depicted in the coat of arms of the Nabokov family remains invisible for us. It is probably the timeless element that impersonates the timeless Valour and

Glory, as in Fyodor Tyutchev's poem that might have inspired Nabokov:

*Nebesnyi svod, goriashchii slavoi zvezdnoi,
Tainstvenno gliadit iz glubiny,
I my plyviom, pylaiushcheiu bezdnoi
So vsekhn storon okruzheny.
("Kak okean ob'emlet shar zemnoi..." 1830)*

The firmament, burning with stellar glory,
Mysteriously looks out from the deep,
And we sail, by the flaming abyss
Surrounded on every side...
("As the Ocean Encircles the Globe...")

Slava (*Fame*) and *Podvig* (*Glory*) are the titles of Nabokov's poem and novel. The coat of arms has turned into not just the blazon of exile, but also into a symbol of a spiritual battle for the Word against its enemies: "I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth" (Rev. 2:16).

Was it not the author himself who has stretched this flashing sword down from the bright bottomless sky? "We are the caterpillars of angels" (1923) was his inspired, if casual, remark in one of his early poems.

"A sword of diamond" is the sword ornamented with celestial stones: "Do not lay up treasures on earth... but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (Matt. 6: 19-20).

"The briny dark" is a name for afflictions and tribulations, and perhaps an allusion to the status of the elected: "You are the salt of the earth" (Matt. 5: 13).

We cannot insist that there are direct links between the Nabokov poem and the heraldic image, but the symbol of a pulsating sword, chastening or creative, cuts, as it were, through the thin veil between dream and waking life which meet in a point that Nabokov calls *tochka iskusstva* ("the point of art")

in *Drugie berega* (in *Speak, Memory*, 8:3, he speaks of a point that is “intrinsically artistic”).

—Alexey Filimonov, St. Petersburg

SOME DREAMS OF ALEXANDER BLOK AS
ENACTED IN *ADA* BY VAN VEEN AND VICE VERSA

Dreams are very important in *Ada*. The protagonist, Van Veen, is a talented dreamer who is endowed with the gift of having bright and colorful dreams. Interestingly, the most intricate and vivid of them he has not while he is sleeping, but in waking life, without realizing that he is dreaming. A good example is Van's dream of floramors, the palatial brothels that the old architect David van Veen has built all over Demonica (except Tartary), fulfilling the dream of his deceased grandson, Eric (2.3). As I showed in a series of earlier articles, both David van Veen and young Eric, author of the essay “Villa Venus: an Organized Dream,” are but characters of Van's dream. The “Organized Dream” of the erotomaniac Eric thus turns out to be a dream within a dream. This complex dual dream appears to Van to be a “real life”—and in some sense it is real, forming, as it were, a new reality. The hero of that reality, however, turns out to be not Van Veen, an invented character, but a real person—Alexander Blok, the Russian poet of genius (1880-1921).

Blok's entire oeuvre—like no other poet's oeuvre, perhaps—has an oneiric origin. Many of his poems (and nearly all of his best ones) are either a description of a dream had by the author, or a dream that is inseparably intertwined with reality. To the former belongs the long poem *Nochnaya Fialka* (“Wild Orchid,” 1906) subtitled “A Dream”; to the latter, a wonderful short poem, one of the best in Russian literature, *Neznakomka* (“Incognita,” 1906). The lyrical hero of that poem who spends his evenings at the inn counter dreams that every evening, at the

same hour, a girl enters the tavern, unescorted, passes between the drunkards with the red eyes of rabbits shouting “*In vino veritas!*” and sits down at the window:

I kazhdyi vecher v chas naznachennyi
And every evening, at a set hour
(*Il' eto tol'ko snitsia mne?*)
(Or do I just dream of it?)
Devichiy stan, shelkami skhvacennyi,
A girl's figure wrapped in silks
V tumannom dvizhetsia okne.
Moves in the misty window.

I medlenno proidia mezh p'ianymi,
And having slowly passed through
the drunken crowd,
Vsegda bez sputnikov, odna,
Always unescorted, alone,
Dysha dukhami i tumanami
Breathing the fragrance of perfume
and mists,
Ona saditsia u okna.
She sits down at the window.

I veiut drevnimi pover'iami
And of the ancient beliefs do remind one
Eio uprugie shelka,
Her resilient silks,
I shliapa s traurnymi per'iami
And the picture hat with mournful feathers
I v kol'tsakh uzkaia ruka.
And the slim hand with the rings.

What the hero of that poem only dreams of happens in *Ada* to Van Veen in waking life, several times in his life: “He headed

for the bar and as he was in the act of wiping the lenses of his black-framed spectacles, made out, through the optical mist (Space's recent revenge!), the girl whose silhouette he recalled having seen now and then (much more distinctly!) ever since his pubescence, passing alone, drinking alone, always alone, like Blok's *Incognita*" (3.3). This time the strange girl in a picture hat whom Van approaches and stands as close behind her as physically possible turns to him and proves to be no other than his half-sister Lucette. Surprised at meeting him, no less than Van is, she says: "I didn't expect you to wear glasses. You almost got *le paquet*, which I was preparing for the man supposedly 'goggling' my hat." It would be interesting to compare this whole scene, and Lucette's words, to the lines from another poem by Blok, *Zhenshchina* ("The Woman," 1914). The whole poem was written as if on behalf of a woman.

No chuvstvuiu: on za plechami
 But I feel: he is behind my shoulders
On podoshiol v upor...
 He came close to me...
Uzhe ia gnevnyimi rechami
 I'm already preparing
Emu gotovliu' dat' otpor...
 To rebuff him with angry words...

That meeting of Van with his half-sister happened in Paris, in 1901, a few days before Lucette's suicide. But at least twice before – in the railway station café at Brownhill, in 1884, and in a Kalugano restaurant, in 1888 – Van saw similar looking girls, similarly clad, at the bar counter. On the first of these two occasions "a thought brushed him that she was a cocotte from Toulouse" (1.27); describing the second girl Van calls her "a graceful harlot" (1.42). Thus, both times it is a matter of "hired love." And even "to a quarter virginal" Lucette, in one of her

conversations with Van, calls herself "a *kokotische* virgin, half *poule*, half *puella*" (2.5).

But then the mysterious girl in Blok's poem, of whom its hero dreams, also turns out to be, in the dull but sober light of everyday reality, a prostitute. This fact only strengthens the connection between Van's queer vision and the heroine of Blok's poem. But what does this connection imply? In my opinion, only one thing: a lone girl at the bar whom Van believes to have seen several times in his life is but his dream. It is a recurrent dream that seems reality to Van. It begins one summer day in 1884 when Van who is heading for Ardis for the first time in his life gets off the train at a little rural station. "Suddenly a hackney coach drove up to the platform and a red-haired lady, carrying her straw hat and laughing at her own haste, made for the train and just managed to board it before it moved" (1.5). We can suspect from the very beginning that this red-haired lady is only a charming vision. To go from the station to Ardis Hall Van takes the hackney coach that has brought the lady to the station. But in the next sentence the hackney coach turns into a calèche, then into a runabout and, at the end of the paragraph, into "an old clockwork taxi." Such transformations are possible only in a dream. Our suspicions about the oneiric origin of the whole episode is confirmed later when we see the strange similarity between that red-haired lady and Lucette as she looks in 1899, fifteen years later. At the same Parisian bar, after Van and Lucette have recognized each other, he says to her: "The last time I saw you was two years ago, at a railway station. You had just left Villa Armina and I had just arrived. You wore a flowery dress which got mixed with the flowers you carried because you moved so fast – jumping out of a green calèche and up into the Ausonian Express that had brought me to Nice" (3.3).

The lady with a straw hat in her hands who boards the train in haste looks like the grown-up Lucette is to look in 1899; and, similarly, the ladies in picture hats whom Van sees several times

sitting and drinking at the bar (he believes them to be whores) look like Lucette is to look in 1901, when Van meets her in a Parisian bar. If Van only dreams of all those girls (and we have enough reasons to believe it), they obviously belong to one and the same category. In other words, we are faced here with a recurrent dream that Van has for several years of his life and that he cannot quite distinguish from reality. Apparently, that dream was sent to him from Terra by Aqua, his alleged mother. Poor Aqua committed suicide in 1883, about a year before Van visits Ardis for the first time and sees the mysterious Incognita at the little railway station. In her last note addressed to Van and his father Demon (Aqua's husband), Aqua mentions Ardis and promises Van that he will ramble in its magnificent Park (1.3). Later we learn that the decision that Van will spend the summer of 1884 at Ardis was made by Demon and Marina (Aqua's sister and Van's real mother) on April 23 of that year, which is the anniversary of Demon's and Aqua's marriage (the first one after Aqua's death) (1.38). But perhaps the main evidence that Van's dream of the charming Incognita is sent to him by the spirit of Aqua, whom as a child he believed to be his mother, is her pseudonym with which she sometimes signed her short letters to her husband from various madhouses Demon bundled her off to (1.3).

That fanciful though not completely improbable "pen name," Madame Shchemyashchikh-Zvukov ('Heart rending-Sounds'), is somehow reminiscent of the funny names that some of the Chekovian characters have. However, it turns out to be a reference not to Chekhov, but to Blok, the author of *Incognita*. The very expression *shchemiashchiy zvuk* ("a heart-rending sound") is his invention and occurs at least twice in his poetry. The poem "Priblizhaetsia zvuk..." (The sound is ever nearer...), written in 1912, begins thus:

Priblizhaetsia zvuk. I, pokorna shchemiashchemu zvuku,

A sound gets nearer. And, giving herself to the heart-rending sound,

Molodeet dusha.

The soul becomes younger.

I vo sne prizhimaiu k gubam tvoiu prezhniiu ruku,

And in a dream I press to my lips your former hand,

Ne dysha.

Holding my breath.

Snitsia – snova ia mal'chik i snova liubovnik...

I dream that I again am a boy and again am a lover...

And in one of Blok's poems from his cycle *Zakliatie ogniom i mrakom* ("Incantation by Fire and Dark," 1907) that opens with the four lines: *O, chto mne zakatnyi rumianets, / Chto zlye trevogi razluk, / Vsio v mire kruzhashchiysia tanets / I vstrechi trepeshchushchikh ruk!* ("Oh, what is to me the crimson of the sunset, / What are the anxieties of separations, / All in the world is but a whirling dance / And the encounters of trembling hands!") heartrending sounds are paired with "free Russia:"

Ch'i pesni? I zvuki?

Whose are those songs? Whose sounds?

Chego ia boius'?

What is it that I'm afraid of?

Shchemiashchie zvuki

The heart-rending sounds

I vol'naia Rus'?

And the free Rus'?

While in the former of these two poems "the heart-rending sound" heard by the author inspires in him a dream of first love, in the latter, "the heart-rending sounds" are associated for him with his native country, "free Russia." Thus, the two notions,

first love and free Russia (sacred to both Blok and Nabokov), become inseparably connected thanks to Blok's "heart-rending sounds." Aqua's quaint pseudonym that, as "Palermontovia" in the same paragraph of *Ada* had, seems at first a mere fancy of Nabokov turns out to be an important key to the whole novel. Being a covert reference to Blok, author of the long poem *Vozmezdie* ("Retribution," 1910-1921) and the collection of verse *Rodina* ("Motherland," 1907-1916), this pseudonym allows us to cast light on some strange peculiarities of Antiterranean geography.

On Antiterra, the entire territory of Russia (not a free country at the time when Nabokov wrote *Ada*), "from the Baltic and Black seas to the Pacific Ocean," is occupied by Tartary, an independent inferno. The very word "Russia" on that planet is "a quaint synonym of Estoty, an American province extending from the Arctic no longer vicious Circle to the United States proper" (1.3). That strange fact can have two explanations: the humorous and the historic. The humorous one is that *pravoslavnaia Rus'* ("orthodox Russia") *provalilas' v tartarary* ("has gone to hell") – a hypothetical possibility suggested by Potugin in Turgenev's novel *Dym* ("Smoke," 1867, Chapter XIV). And the only "historical" explanation possible is that, in the course of Antiterranean history, Russians lost the Kulikovo battle (1380) to the troops of the Golden Horde led by Khan Mamay. Presumably, on Antiterra it was Mamay who gained the victory, which allowed the Tartars to invade the territory "from Kurland to the Kuriles." The Russians evidently had to move to North America.

Interestingly, such an outcome of the Kulikovo battle seems to be vaguely suggested by Blok in his cycle *Napole Kulikovom* ("On the Field of Kulikovo," 1908) from that same collection "Motherland." Indeed, Blok saw the autocracy of the tsar as "the Tatar yoke." The struggle against it hasn't yet ended, and the invisible Kulikovo battle still continues. As the famous line from the opening poem of the "On the Field of Kulikovo" cycle

goes: *I vechnyi boi! Pokoi nam tol'ko snitsia...* ("And the eternal fight! Repose is what we only dream of..."). We cannot tell who will come out a victor in that battle. But, as an epigraph to the fifth and last poem of the cycle, *Opiat' nad polem Kulikovym...* ("Again above the Field of Kulikovo"), Blok chose the gloomy prophetic lines by Vladimir Solov'iov: *I mgloiu bed neotrazimykh / Griadushchii den' zavoloklo* (And the mist of irresistible disasters / has clouded the days to come). Blok had a presentiment of the impending catastrophe that will happen to Russia, and we can only be puzzled by his failure to see that, with the Bolsheviks seizing power in 1917, Solov'iov's prophecy came true and Russia found herself under *their* Tatar yoke.

However it may be, Blok's point of view is not unlike, in certain respects, Nabokov's perception of the historical process. In one of Nabokov's rare "political" poems, *O praviteliakh* ("On the Rulers," 1944), the lines occur: *Umiraet so skuki istorik: / Za Mamaem vsio tot zhe Mamay*. ("The historian dies of sheer boredom: / on the heels of Mamay comes another Mamay.") He regarded the Soviet Union, with its totalitarian régime, as the new Tatar yoke, a modern Golden Horde. Accordingly, in *Ada*, Tartary (or, to be more precise, the "ruthless Sovietnamur Khanate") is a country concealed from the rest of the world by the Golden Veil (a lighter variety of the Iron Curtain) and ruled by Khan Sosso (2.2). "Khan Sosso" is an obvious allusion to Sosso Dzhughashvili, also known as Joseph Stalin (1879-1953), a Soviet dictator, who is compared to Mamay in the poem "On the Rulers." It is also worth noting that a certain "colonel St. Alin, a scoundrel" is one of *Ada*'s countless incidental characters, a second in the Demon-d'Onsky duel (1.2).

Blok didn't live to see the accession of Khan Sosso and failed to see the new Tatar yoke in Lenin and the Bolsheviks. However, it is most interesting that he imagined the future Russia as "a New America." One of his poems from the

collection "Motherland" is entitled *Novaia Amerika* ("The New America," 1913). "The New America" (a free industrial Russia) is opposed in it to *polovetskiy stan* ("the camp of the Polovtsy"), *tatarskaia buinaia krep'* ("the wild host of Tartars"). By the latter Blok means political chaos associated with absence of the elementary political freedoms. The poem concludes with the following optimistic lines: *To nad step'iu pustoi zagorelas' / Mne Ameriki novoi zvezda* ("It is the star of a new America / that I glimpsed above the deserted steppe"). Alas, this star was to be concealed soon by the heavy thunder clouds of war and then by the bloody mists of Revolution. And yet, in his Foreword to "Retribution," Blok again speaks of Russia turning into a new America.

As we know, this transformation never happened. Blok's dream didn't come true. But what has proved impossible in life is possible in art (and perhaps this is the only consolation that we can have). The principal part of *Ada*, an ample and delightful family chronicle, "is staged in a dream-bright America" (5.6). That fantastic half-Russian land, "the Amerussia of Abraham Milton" (1.3), is closer to Blok's dream of Russia that *has* turned into a new America, even if by the acrobatic somersault to another continent, than to the real United States. The fact that the colorful reality described in *Ada* is directly connected to Blok's dream of "a new America" is confirmed by another dream of Blok's realized in *Ada*. I am talking about Blok's delightful dream of the Incognita which Van Veen, the protagonist of *Ada*, has in waking life. What is even more surprising, a real event that has once happened to Blok seems to underlie, so to speak, another, even more complex dream of Van's. Moreover, it seems that the very image of Van Veen (as far as his looks and his behavior toward women are concerned) can be traced back to Blok.

Van's dream of Incognita is sent to him by Aqua who committed suicide – partly, because of her unrequited love for Demon. By sending Van this dream, Aqua probably wants to

warn him against acting thoughtlessly toward his innocent half-sister and to prevent Lucette's suicide. Unfortunately, Van fails to interpret correctly this and other dreams that Aqua sends him from Terra and so dismisses the warning. After Lucette follows poor Aqua's example and commits suicide, Van never dreams of the Incognita again. No wonder: now that Lucette is dead, there is no need to warn him any more. But apparently Lucette does not bear Van malice – for she sends him, in her turn, one of the most beautiful dreams that a literary character has ever had: Van's dream of the floramors.

Van is dreaming of Villa Venus, as earlier he had been dreaming of the Incognita, as it were, in waking life. It seems to Van that he really visited all those hundred, or ninety-nine, memorial floramors built by Eric's grandfather. (David van Veen died as his hundredth house was being built.) We can guess that the floramors exist only in Van's dream already when we learn their number. The chapter preceding the floramor chapter concludes with Van falling asleep, and the last words brushing his consciousness are: "ninety-seven, night-nine, one hund, red dog..." (2.2). Just as David van Veen fails to complete his hundredth villa before he dies, Van fails to count to one hundred before he falls asleep, and gets two dogs instead (*Hund* is German for dog). On the other hand, the following chapter (2.4) is a discourse on Van's dreams. Van divides them into two main groups: professional and erotic. Since Van's professional field of study is "terrology," a branch of psychiatry that deals with the problem of Terra, his dream of floramors (just like his dream of the Incognita) falls under both categories. While the mildly erotic dream of the Incognita is sent to Van by Aqua, the hard erotic dream of the floramors, almost "a real thing," is sent to him by Lucette from Terra. However, the main reason that makes me think that all those floramors exist only in Van's dream, can be found in the Villa Venus chapter itself (see my "*Ada* as a Triple Dream").

Toward its end, when the luxurious floramors collapse one after another with amazing speed, a different reality begins to transpire through the fabric of Van's dream. In the last remaining floramor, a half-ruined villa somewhere in Southern Italy, on the shore of the Mediterranean, Van holds in his lap a sleeping girl, whose name he believes to be Adora. In my essay "A Window onto Terra" I suggested that one can discern, through the description of that whole scene, some details of Paul Alexis' story "La fin de Lucie Pelegrin." It is not quite so. True, Lucette, the director of Van's dream, uses certain characters of that story, including Lucie's pregnant bitch Miss, in order to create for Van a verisimilar illusion of reality. But it seems that another, a completely real incident underlies Van's visit to one last floramor.

That incident happened to Alexander Blok and is known to us in the account of a streetwalker, who had the following strange meeting with the poet. Nabokov could have read of it in Maxim Gorky's sketch, "A. A. Blok" (*Zametki iz Dnevnika. Vospominaniia*, Berlin, 1924, "Notes from the Diary. Reminiscences"), or in the Russian magazine *Beseda* also published in Berlin (No. 1, May-June 1923). Gorky met that *baryshnia s Nevskogo* ("a girl from Nevsky," as he calls her) in a restaurant on that Avenue and here is what she told him:

"Is that little book you have by Blok, the notorious one? I've met him, too – just one time though. Once in the autumn, very late, and, you know, slush, fog, already about midnight on the [city] Duma clock, I was awfully tired and wanted to go home – when suddenly on the corner of Ital'ianskaia street I was hailed by a decently clothed, handsome man, with a very proud face, I even thought: a foreigner. We walked – it was near, Karavannaia Street, 10, rooms for rendezvous. I talked while walking, but he kept silent, and I felt uneasy, somehow unusual – I don't like rude men. When we were in, I asked for tea; he called, but no servant came, so he went himself into the corridor, and I was,

you know, so tired, so chilly and fell asleep sitting on the sofa. Then I suddenly woke up and saw: he was sitting opposite me holding his head in his hands, with elbows on the table, and looking at me so sternly – horrible eyes! But I even felt – so ashamed I was – no fear, I only thought: "Ah, my God, he must be a musician!" He had curly hair. "Ah, excuse me, I said, I shall now undress."

And he smiled politely and said: "No, please, don't bother." He sat down next to me on the divan, took me onto his lap and said, stroking my hair: "Do doze a little more!" And just imagine! – I fell asleep again, – a scandal! I understood, of course, that it was bad of me, but I simply couldn't do anything! He was rocking me so softly and I felt so comfortable with him; every time I opened my eyes and smiled, he would smile, too. I think I was sleeping when he shook me off gently and said: "Well, good-bye. I must be going." And he placed a 25 rouble bank-note on the table. I said: "Look, how that can be?" Naturally, I felt dreadfully embarrassed, excused myself. It was all so funny, so unusual. And he laughed gently, shook my hand and even kissed it. He left, and when I was going, the servant told me: "Do you know who was with you? Blok, the poet – look!" And he showed me the portrait in a magazine – that's right, it was he. My God, I thought, how foolishly everything happened!"

And [continues Gorky] there could actually be glimpsed, on her snub-nosed ardent face, in the mischievous eyes of a little dog, a fleeting reflection of the sorrow of the heart and of insult. I gave her all the money I had with me and from that moment felt that Blok was clear and dear to me.

I like his stern face and the head of a Florentine of the Renaissance times."

One might ask what this scene described by Gorky has to do with the scene in Van's last villa Venus? It turns out that there are a lot of parallels between them. First of all, both men, Blok and Van Veen, hold a sleeping girl, a prostitute, in their

laps. Van pulls his opera cloak over the girl. The girl in Gorky's sketch doesn't mention the legendary cloak, but many memoirists speak of Blok's "blue cloak" so that it practically became proverbial. That blue cloak is mentioned in Blok's famous poem *O doblestiakh, o podvigakh, o slave...* ("About the valours, about the feats, about the glory..." 1908) that opens the cycle of verse *Vozmezdie* ("Retribution," 1908-1913, not to be confused with the long poem of that name). True, Van's last floramor is situated in Italy, and the rooms to which the girl takes Blok, in Petersburg. But let me call your attention to the name of the street where Blok meets her, *Ital'ianskaia* ("Italian" street). That street goes parallel to Nevsky Avenue and crosses *Karavannaia* street (its name is explained in *Speak, Memory* as the Street of Caravans: Chapter Nine: 3), where the *maison passe* was situated. *Karavannaia* street (note that there is "Van" in that name and that there is a sexual pun on "caravan" in *Ada: caro* [flesh] Van: 2.8) was well-known to Nabokov, because twice a day he rode its whole length on his way to the Tenishev School and back home. That street goes from Nevsky Avenue to the Cinizelli circus. In SM Nabokov notes that this circus was "famous for its wrestling tournaments." But Blok, too, speaks of Petersburg circuses and wrestling tournaments in his Foreword to "Retribution" (the long poem). Here is what he says of them:

"Inseparably connected to all this [the events that happened in 1911] is for me the flourishing of French wrestling in the Petersburg circuses: a thousand-strong crowd showed an exceptional interest in it; there were true artists among the wrestlers; I shall never forget the wrestling match between the ugly Russian heavyweight and the Dutchman whose muscular system was a most perfect musical instrument of rare beauty."

This passage would be worth citing for the mere reason that Van is also a poet of physical strength. In his student years he

even performs in English variety shows with the striking stunt of dancing on his hands. He was taught this stunt by King Wing, Demon's wrestling master, a former circus artiste. Van's beautifully attuned muscular system (note, by the way, that Van Veen is a "Dutch" name) allows him to win the fight at a picnic (1.39) against the ugly heavyweight Percy de Prey (a Russian count, despite his non-Russian name). So new interesting parallels can be traced between Blok's Foreword to "Retribution" and *Ada*. Those parallels will appear even more obvious if we consider some other events of 1911 mentioned (or passed over in silence) by Blok in his Foreword to the poem (that "was jotted down, in its main features, in 1911").

Among the events Blok cites in his Foreword are "a most interesting lecture" delivered by P. N. Miliukov, "The Armed World and the Reduction of Arms," and "the prophetic article" by A. P. Mertvago, "The Nearness of a Great War" (*Utro Rossii*, 1911, Oct. 25). The First World War broke out less than three years after the appearance of Mertvago's article, and less than three years after Blok had written the Foreword to "Retribution," V. D. Nabokov, the writer's father, was killed in Berlin. In 1922, when that same P. N. Miliukov was delivering his other lecture, there was a terrorist attempt on his life. V. D. Nabokov, Miliukov's friend and the Kadet party associate, managed to disarm the first assaulter with a boxing blow, but was shot dead from behind by the second terrorist. One might ask: what does this tragedy have to do with *Ada*? In my opinion, it plays a very important role for the whole novel. Nabokov's dream of Demonism, the planet on which *Ada* is staged, might have been sent to him by the spirit of his father (see my "Addendum to *Ada* as a Triple Dream" in *The Nabokovian* No. 53 and my essay "Fathers and Children in *Ada*" in this issue). I'm quite sure that Nabokov did believe in the supernatural origin of his inspiration for the novel and, it seems to me, he had some reasons to do so.

The rare, but "telling" name Mertvago also occurs in *Ada*. B. Pasternak's novel *Doctor Zhivago* (1957) is known on Antiterra as "*Les Amours du Docteur Mertvago*, a mystical romance by a pastor" (1.8). As Vivian Darkbloom explains in his "Notes to *Ada*," *zhiv* means in Russian "alive" and *mertv*, "dead." Indeed, *Doctor Zhivago*, for which Pasternak received the Nobel Prize, is a completely dead volume that even a few first-rate "Poems of Iuriy Zhivago" placed at the end fail to enliven. However, I think that Nabokov plays on the title of Pasternak's novel not only (and not so much) in order to stress his contempt. No, by introducing the name Mertvago into the text of *Ada*, he wants to hint that Blok's Foreword to "Retribution" also has a prophetic power. Namely, it portends in a strange way the murder of V. D. Nabokov in Berlin. The writer's father was killed, that is, became *mertv*, defending P. N. Miliukov whom Blok mentions in his Foreword along with a "prophetic" article whose author is a certain Mertvago. The murder of V. D. Nabokov occurred some 32 months after Blok had written his Preface, just as the War broke out 32 months after the publication of Mertvago's article. The prophetic character of Blok's preface would have been indisputable, had it been written by Blok on July 20, V. D. Nabokov's birthday. Actually, though, it is marked with a slightly different date: 1919, July 12. Still I think that it was this date that prompted Nabokov to "correct," as it were, his father's birthday – from the 20th to the 21st of July ("12" backwards) – and to give this birthday to *Ada*, the Fair Lady of his novel.

And of course it is not by chance that Van Veen visits his last Villa Venus on "the twenty first of July [on *Ada*'s birthday], nineteen-four or eight or even several years later." Perhaps this visit takes place in 1911? However that may be, Blok's meeting with a prostitute is supposed to have happened in 1911 (probably between November 11 and 14). It is the incident that Blok, naturally, does not mention in his Foreword among the events of 1911. Comparing it with Van's visit to the last Villa Venus,

one can point out another shared detail. "A very distant church clock, never audible except at night" ("Van hears how it clanged twice and then added a quarter"), seems to "echo" the clock (famous for its strike) on the building of the Petersburg city council (the corner of Nevsky and Mikhailovskaia Street) that "the girl from the Nevsky" mentions in her account. One should say that, in general, local details of Petersburg topography play a more prominent part in *Ada* than is usually believed. In my essay on the L disaster, which also refers to the real event that happened in St. Petersburg, I will try to show that some other streets and avenues of Nabokov's native city are important in *Ada*.

We have thus ample evidence that a different reality, the reality whose hero was Alexander Blok, underlies Van's dream of floramors – at least, its final part. Not only does Van Veen "fulfill" certain poetic dreams of Blok (first of all his dream of the Incognita), but, vice versa; what Van only dreams of was enacted by Blok. That mutual dream (which reminds one of the old Chinese parable of the sage and the butterfly) becomes even more striking if we consider the similarity of Van's and Blok's features and, especially, their manners. First of all, both men are outstanding Don Juans. At first (in that initial fragment describing the half-ruined Villa Venus from which the novel *Ada* began: SO, p.310), even the name of *Ada*'s protagonist was Juan. His "Don Juan list" is formidable. Even if we don't count all those women who are only dreamt of by Van, that list would still contain many hundreds of names. (Van once confesses that "he could never go without girl pleasure for more than forty-eight hours:" 3.5.) The Don Juan list of Blok might not be so long, but it is also very impressive. According to rumors, it included more than three hundred women. For the most part, they were "one-night partners." And I think that the famous "Van question," which he asked Cordula and which Lucette wants him to ask her (2.5), can be traced back to the lines from Blok's poem *V*

diunakh ("In the Dunes"), from the cycle *Vol'nye mysli* ("Free Thoughts," 1907) written in free verse:

Svobodnym vzorom
 With a free gaze
Krasivoi zhenshchine smotriu v glaza
 I look in the eyes of a fair woman
I govoriu: "Segodnia noch', a zavtra –
 And say: "Today is night, but tomorrow
Siiaiuschchiy i novyi den'. Pridi.
 There will be a radiant new day. Come.
Beri menia, torzhestvennaia strast'.
 Take me, triumphant passion.
A zavtra ia uidu – i zapoiu."
 And tomorrow I shall go – and sing."

Blok is furthermore the author of the poem *Shagi Komandora* ("The Steps of the Knight Commander," 1912) from the cycle "Retribution," which is the best treatment of the Don Juan legend by a Russian Silver Age poet. That legend also finds its original interpretation in *Ada*. In the ship cinema on board the "Tobakoff," Van and Lucette watch the film (in which Ada is cast) called *Don Juan's Last Fling* (3.5). It is after this film (which Van refuses to see to the end) that Lucette commits suicide. I hope to compare Pushkin's, Blok's and Nabokov's versions of the European legend about Don Juan in one of my future essays. Now, let's turn from the specifically Don Juanian features to the general similarity between Blok and Van Veen. We shall see that Nabokov has consciously used Blok's physical appearance as a model for his hero.

First of all, such features as the proud profile that makes one look like a foreigner and "the stern face of a Florentine" fit not only Blok, but also Van. Then, let's consider Van's curly hair. That he has "inherited" it not, say, from Pushkin, but directly from Blok is confirmed by the following comparison.

We learn that Van is curly-headed only at the end of Part Two, when Van, whose long affair with Ada was finally discovered by Demon, walks home across Manhattan in order to shoot himself. "He was coatless, tieless, hatless; a strong sharp wind dimmed his sight with salty frost and played Medusaeen havoc with his black locks." (2.11) On the other hand, in the first poem of Blok's (already mentioned) cycle "Incantation by Fire and Dark," which has the first five lines of Lermontov's famous "Gratitude" as the epigraph, the lines occur:

I vstrechaiu tebia u poroga
 And I meet you [life] at the threshold
S buinyim vetrom v zmeinykh kudriakh,
 With a tempestuous wind in my Medusaeen locks,
S nerazgadannym imenem Boga
 With the unresolved name of God
Na kholodnykh i szhatykh gubakh.
 On my cold and pressed lips.

A propos de lips. We know that the lips of Van and Ada, brother and sister, were "absurdly similar in style, tint and tissue." (1.17) And, as a parallel, here are the last two lines of the seventh poem ("*Noch' – kak veka, i tomnyi trepet...*" "The night is like centuries and the languid trepidation...") from Blok's cycle "The Black Blood" (1909-1914):

Togda moi rot svoim izvivom alym
 Then my mouth, with its scarlet curve,
Na tvoi tainstvenno pokhozh
 Mysteriously resembles yours.

It is also interesting to cite the full text of the little second poem from that cycle. Van and Ada would have particularly enjoyed it (for they live on Demonia and regard themselves as two young demons):

Ia gliazhu na tebia. Kazhdyi demon vo mne
 I gaze at you. Every demon in me
Pritailsia, gliadit.
 Lies concealed, gazing.
Kazhdyi demon v tebe storozhit
 Every demon in you is on guard,
Pritaia's' v grozovoi tishine...
 Lying concealed in a thunderstorm silence...

I vzdymaetsia zhadnaia grud'...
 And the avid breast rises...
Etikh demonov strashnykh vspugnut'?
 Scare away those horrible demons?
Net! Glaza otvratit' i ne smet', i ne smet'
 No! To turn one's eyes away and not dare,
 not dare
V etu strashmuiu propast' gliadet'!
 To gaze into that awful abyss!

But let's return to Van who has now come to his penthouse on Alex[is] Avenue and clasps his Thunderbolt pistol and puts it to his temple before the mirror. He presses the trigger – but nothing happens, for the pistol in his hand has imperceptibly turned into a comb. Is it necessary to say that such transformations can occur only in dreams? When the reader realizes that this is another dream of Van's that he has, as it were, in waking life, he can easily guess (especially, as there are many details that hint at the correct solution) who sends Van this dream, saving his life. It is also most interesting that the situation Van finds himself in is reflected in the following lines by Blok (from his poem "Night as a night and the street is empty..." from the cycle "Retribution"):

Vse na svete, vse na svete znaiut:

Everybody in the world, everybody in the world
 knows:
Shchast'ia net.
 There is no happiness.
I kotoryi raz v rukakh szhimaiut
 And everybody clasps, not for the first time,
Pistolet!
 A pistol in his hands!

I kotoryi raz, smeias' i placha,
 And not for the first time, laughing and crying,
Vnov' zhivut!
 They live on.
Den' – kak den'; ved' reshena zadacha:
 Day as a day; for the problem is solved:
Vse umrut.
 Everybody will die.

That it is Aqua who helps Van to solve this simple problem is confirmed by the following. The lines just quoted echo one of Blok's most famous poems from his magnificent cycle *Pliaski smerti* ("Dance Macabre," 1912-1914):

Noch. Ulitsa. Fonar'. Apteka.
 The night. The street. The lantern. The pharmacy.
Bessmyslennyi i tusklyi svet.
 A meaningless and dull light.
Zhivi eshchio khot' chetvert' veka –
 You can live for another quarter of a century –
Vsio budet tak. Iskhoda net.
 All will be the same. There is no way out.

Umriosh' – nachniosh' opiat' snachala,
 Should you die – you will begin all over again,
I povtoritsia vsio kak vstar':

And all will be repeated as in the old days:

Noch', ledianaia riab' kanala,

The night, the icy ripple of a canal,

Apteka, ulitsa, fonar'.

The pharmacy, the street, the lantern.

In her time, poor Aqua has successfully managed to commit suicide. She did it by taking an innocent medication combined with a draught of just as innocent cleansing fluid. She probably knew that the mix would be lethal, because she had once helped Milton Abraham organize a "Phree Pharmacy" in Belokonsk (1.3). Thus, it seems that a connection can be established between Aqua's suicide and another poem by Blok from the cycle "Dance Macabre":

Pustaia ulitsa. Odin ogon' v okne.

A deserted street. One window is lit.

Evrei-aptekar' okhaet vo sne.

The Jewish chemist sighs in his dream.

A pered shkapom s nadpis'iu Venena

And before the glass shelf labeled *Venena*,

Khoziaistvenno sognuv skripuchie kolena,

Having proprietorially bent his creaking knees,

Skelet, do glaz zakutannyi plashchiom,

A skeleton, wrapped in a cloak up to his eyes,

Chego-to ishchet, skalias' chiornym rtom...

Is looking for something, grinning with his

black mouth...

But, perhaps, Aqua had died – began all over again (this time, on Terra), as in the preceding poem by Blok? She doesn't want this for Van, knowing that a reunion with Ada and a long happy life with her lie still in store for him. It is no accident that

we learn of their (not yet final) reunion that happened thirteen years later already in the next sentence. Happy again, Van and Ada only laugh at that youthful impulse of Van's when he nearly shot himself.

The major part of Nabokov's family chronicle (almost three fourths of the book) is dedicated to the childhood, boy[girl]-hood and youth of the two main heroes, Van and Ada. Their youth ends at the moment when they separate at the end of Part Two – Van, in order to almost succumb to the temptation of suicide; Ada, in order to marry Andrey Vineland. But their younger half-sister, Lucette, fails to live beyond the limits of "the perilous age." She commits suicide in Part Three of the novel and thus remains young forever. Van and Ada outlive her by many years, but maybe it is Lucette to whom they owe the bliss of their final reunion and long life together. At least if Van, in his mature, and even old, age, still has young dreams, certainly it is only thanks to Lucette. The last beautiful dream that Lucette sends Van and that he sees in waking life is, apparently, Van's charming secretary, Miss Violet Knox. Ada affectionately calls her *Fialochka* (little violet). Her surname is homonymic with the Latin word for "night," *nox*. It connects to Lucette's suicide: "The sky was also heartless and dark, and her body, her head, and particularly those damned thirsty trousers, felt clogged with Oceanus Nox, n,o,x." (3.5) At the same time, the name and surname of Van's secretary is a reference to the heroine of Blok's poem *Nochnaia Fialka* ("Wild Orchid") mentioned at the beginning of this article. The Night Violet in Blok's poem is not only a mauve flower that grows in the bog, but also *Korolevna tumannoï strany* ("the princess of a hazy country") who spins her endless yarn – the yarn of dreams.

Van decides to write his memoirs in 1957, the year when he meets Violet Knox. She is responsible for typing out Van's manuscript (5.4) and so participates in creating of *Ada*. So we can suppose two things. First, the decision to write the autobiography is somehow prompted to Van and Ada by

Lucette's spirit. Second, Lucette helps them in their work that continues for ten years, until the very last day of Van's and Ada's lives. Generous Lucette returns good for all the evil that Van and Ada have unwittingly done to her, having driven her to suicide. Moreover, she allows them to live once again through all the dramatic events of their love. But at the same time, she makes them feel pangs of conscience at the end of their lives. And I think that the epigraph (Solness's words in Ibsen's drama *The Master Builder*), which Blok has chosen for "Retribution" (the long poem), would also perfectly fit *Ada*: YOUTH IS RETRIBUTION.

I thank Victor Fet for his help in the translation of this essay.

—Alexey Sklyarenko, St Petersburg

FATHERS AND CHILDREN IN *ADA*

In my article "*Ada* as a triple dream" (*The Nabokovian*, No. 53) I posit that the Italy of Blok and the Caucasus of Lermontov blend in *Ada* to form the imaginary country of Palermontovia. In a little addendum to that article (*Ibid.*) I have tried to link Lermontov with Blok through "the sky of Italy" — an expression which can be found both in one of Lermontov's madrigals and Blok's cycle *Italian Verses*. However, the connection between the two poets, as well as one's Italy and the other's Caucasus, is more profound in *Ada* than I originally assumed. An important missing link between them is apparently Pushkin and his two poems "On the hills of Georgia" and "Then saw I a black swarm of demons." The former poem is one of Pushkin's most famous elegies:

Na kholmakh Gruzii lezhit nochnaia mgla;
The night murk lies on the hills of Georgia;

Shumit Aragva predo mnoiu
The Aragva thunders before me.
Mne grustno i legko; pechal' moia svetla;
I feel sad and light-hearted. My sorrow is bright;
Pechal' moia polna toboiu,
My sorrow is full of you,
Toboi, odnoi toboi... Unyn'ia moego
Of you, of you alone... Nothing torments,
Nichto ne muchit, ne trevozhit,
Nothing disturbs me in my melancholy,
I serdtse vnov' gorit i liubit — ottogo,
And my heart is again on fire and loves — for
Chto ne liubit' ono ne mozhet.
It cannot live and not love.

This poem (addressed to Anette Olenin, the girl with whom the poet was enamored at the time) was composed by Pushkin in 1829, when he was on his way to the theatre of war in Transcaucasia. The whole journey was subsequently described by the poet in his 1835 *Journey to Arzrum during the Campaign of 1829*.

A good reader of Nabokov would remember that it is "the transparent rhythms of 'Arzrum'" that helps Fyodor to conceive a book about his father and his father's entomological expeditions to Central Asia in *The Gift* (1937). For Fyodor, "with Pushkin's voice [that can be heard in his prose] merged the voice of his father" who loved to recite Pushkin's poems. At the same time, Fyodor's father looks with suspicion on the new school of poetry and its best representative, Alexander Blok, who is adored by Fyodor. Blok was the favorite poet of Vladimir Dmitrievich Nabokov, the writer's own father; otherwise, the tastes of Fyodor's father and V. D. Nabokov are much the same. Actually, the image of Fyodor's father, Konstantin Kirillovich Godunov-Cherdyntsev, was partly modeled after V. D. Nabokov, also a passionate lepidopterist who passed his love

for butterflies on to his son. Fyodor's father even shares with V. D. Nabokov his birthday: July 8 (Old Style). It seems that Nabokov – who was usually reticent about his private tragedy, the loss of his father who had been killed by a terrorist in 1922 – has given much of his filial love and the pain caused by Father's death to the hero of *The Gift*, Fyodor Konstantinovich Godunov-Cherdyntsev, whose father perished on the return from one of his expeditions. And who knows, perhaps the book on his father that Fyodor conceives but never actually writes corresponds to some rejected project of Nabokov himself who dreamt of writing a book on *his* father.

But what if that book, dedicated to Father, eventually materialized as *Ada or Ardor: A Family Chronicle*? That hypothesis is not at all as absurd as it might appear at first blush. Let us not forget that Nabokov himself took the vulgarian Shchyogolev's seemingly preposterous advice in *The Gift* to write a novel about a middle-aged man who loved a little girl, and finally wrote *Lolita*. Similarly, it would seem at first that Nabokov's *Family Chronicle* has nothing to do with his own family. Yet, in the first "Addendum" to my study of dreams in *Ada*, I suggest that Nabokov's iridescent dream (*raduzhnyi son*) of Antiterra was somehow inspired by the spirit of his father. Or, rather, it was Nabokov himself who wanted to suggest the otherworldly influence; and, I have to admit, he has almost succeeded in making at least one reader of *Ada* believe in the supernatural origin of his inspiration for the novel. Here, in this "Second Addendum," I hope to bring forward more evidence in support of my theory. I will also try to show that one of Nabokov's secret, deeply personal purposes in writing *Ada* was to "re-address," so to speak, Pushkin's poem "On the Hills of Georgia" to his father, Vladimir Dmitrievich Nabokov.

First of all, let's consider the narrator and the narrator's father in *Ada* and compare them to the narrator and the narrator's father in *The Gift*. The protagonist of *Ada* is Dr Van Veen, "a scion of one of our most illustrious and opulent families,

son of Baron 'Demon' Veen" (5.6). Morally, Van, that "irresistible rake," cannot be more distant from the chaste Fyodor, whose Russian muse remains for a long time his only lover. And yet, both characters have at least one feature in common: their deep love for and ardent admiration of Father (not unlike Nabokov's own feelings toward his parent). Demon Veen, again, seems as totally different from Fyodor's father as to almost be his exact opposite. But if we look more closely, we shall discover as many as three things the two fathers have in common. First, they are fabulously rich, second, they are blessed each with a loving son and, third, they die a violent death (Demon perishes in a mysterious airplane disaster). Interestingly, all three things (richness, filial admiration and violent death) apply to Nabokov's father as well.

To explain this strange set of similarities between Demon Veen, on the one hand, and Fyodor's and Nabokov's fathers, on the other, we have to dwell on the mysterious and elusive figure of Van's father. In the novel, Dementiy Veen ('Demon' is his society nickname) is the son of Dedalus (which makes him an Icarus-like figure); but his literary pedigree proves even more fascinating than his mythological one. His name and nickname link him to as many as three characters in Russian literature, while his Baronial title seems to suggest the fourth.

In *Ada* there are many explicit references to Lermontov's long poem *Demon* (1829-1839). As a child of ten, Van himself puzzles out "the exaggerated, but on the whole, complimentary allusions to his father's volitations and loves in another life in Lermontov's diamond-faceted tetrameters" (1.28). Van is very shrewd, but I doubt that he can discover what seems to be the only direct connection between the two Demons. According to the family tree that precedes Nabokov's *Family Chronicle*, 'Demon' Veen was born in 1838 (on January 5 as we learn in the beginning of *Ada*'s second chapter). And it was in the beginning of that year that Lermontov completed the fifth (antepenult) version of his poem. He used, for the first time, the

Caucasus as the poem's setting; and the image of Tamara, a Georgian beauty with whom Demon falls in love, was conceived in his mind. In *Ada*, all references to Lermontov's poem are accompanied by a mention of either Mt Kazbek (the Caucasus's second-highest peak, famously compared to a diamond facet in *Demon*) or of "a temporary Tamara." All of this provides sufficient ground to maintain that Demon Veen as a character owes his existence to Lermontov's poem. Officially, Demon is of Russo-Irish descent. But I think he has a Caucasian, Georgian to be more exact, strain in his blood.

The nickname of Van's father links him, though, not only to Lermontov's *Demon*, but also to the *Demon* from Blok's long poem *Vozmezdie* (*The Retribution*, 1910-1921). 'Demon' in it, just as in *Ada*, is a kind of soubriquet of the hero's father. That character (whose real name is unknown to us) assumes this alias thanks to F. M. Dostoevsky who himself makes a fleeting appearance in Blok's poem. It must be noted that Blok's *Demon* is rather insipid (and, moreover, not demonic at all), and little wonder that the demonism of *Demon Veen* derives not from Blok's character, but from some of Dostoevsky's characters or F. M. Dostoevsky himself—for instance, *Demon's* passion for gambling (and some of his other passions). I would make so bold as to say he has "inherited" this gene directly from Dostoevsky, the author of *Igrok* (*The Gambler*, 1865), who was a notorious gambler himself. And what about *Demon's* love for little girls, which evolved toward the end of his life? According to some rumors (not that we have to trust them), Dostoevsky also had a secret passion for little girls. Svidrigaylov's dream from Part Six of *Crime and Punishment* is usually cited by way of evidence (trying to present Svidrigaylov as Dostoevsky's self-portrait), as well as Stavrogin's confession from *The Possessed* (Chapter "At Tikhon's"). Indirectly, the fact that *Demon Veen* owes some of his features to Dostoevsky or his characters is proved by the origin of *Demon's* official

name, *Dementiy*, which apparently was borrowed from Dostoevsky's work.

In Dostoevsky's feuilleton *Peterburgskie Snovideniia v Stikhakh i Prose* ("St.-Petersburg Dreams in Verse and in Prose," 1860), a certain *Dementiy Ivanych*, the head of a department, is mentioned. *Dementiy* is an extremely rare name in Russian literature (in fact, I can't remember another character with that name). But I would not affirm that the name of Van's father has anything to do with the name of an occasional character in Dostoevsky's journalistic work (note, though, that Van's name-and-patronymic is *Ivan Dementievich*, "*Dementiy Ivanych*" in reverse, so to speak), were it not for several other details. Dostoevsky's feuilleton is a description of a series of dreams that the author claims he had had in his youth – as well as in more recent times. The dream in which *Dementiy Ivanych* appears proves prophetic (*son v ruku*), as the author, soon after he has had that dream, happens to read in a newspaper of a man whom he calls *Novyi Garpagon*, "another Harpagon." It is the same old story of a man who lives all his life in abject poverty, but leaves after his death *grudy zolota*, "heaps of gold." (Interestingly, even before reading of this man in a newspaper, Dostoevsky invented him in his short story "*Gospodin Prokharchin*" ("Mr. Prokharchin," 1847).

Now, Blok's *Demon*, who leads a lonely life in his late years and dies in squalid conditions, is also compared to Molière's hero in the Third Part of *Vozmezdie*. The author calls him *sei sovremennyi Garpagon*, "this present-day Harpagon." It means that *Demon Veen* in *Ada* can be linked not only to the two *Demons* in Lermontov and Blok, but also – through the two Harpagons in Dostoevsky and Blok – to *Dementiy Ivanych* from one of Dostoevsky's "St. Petersburg Dreams." In other words, both the name and the fashionable nickname of Van's father go back to characters in Lermontov, Dostoevsky, and Blok. But, apart from that, *Demon* is a baron, which presumably links him to yet another character in Russian literature.

The most famous baron in Russian literature is of course the hero of Pushkin's mini-drama *Skupoi Rytsar'*. It was written in 1830 in Boldino and published in 1836, with the subtitle "Scenes from Chenstone's [sic] Tragicomedy *The Covetous Knight*." It is usually believed that Pushkin has ascribed his original play to the English poet William Shenstone (1714-1763) for personal reasons: his father Sergei Lvovich was noted for his miserliness. The play's central conflict is between the greedy, to the point of insanity, Baron and his young son Albert, whom his stingy father keeps in utter misery. The Baron is not just a Harpagon, he is a veritable poet of greediness – for he loves money for its own sake. Scene Two, the famous cellar monologue of the Baron, was translated into English by Nabokov as *A Scene from "The Covetous Knight"* and included in his book *Three Russian Poets* (1944). In that monologue, the Baron says, among other things: "...like some doëmon / from here in private I can rule the world."

Although Pushkin's Baron compares himself to a demon, it might seem that Demon Veen has little in common with him. He is a loving father, and his relations with his son are much warmer. On the other hand, in *Ada*, Demon, despite all his paternal love, threatens to disinherit Van at one point (2.1) and, at another, threatens to curse his son (3.11). Demon is not greedy at all, but, as the Baron of Pushkin's little tragedy, he shows a rich strain of poetry – and he is even capable of appreciating the blackmailing poetry of Baron Norbert von Miller ('Black Miller') who is, like Pushkin's Baron, the poet of greediness. Cf.: *Versatile Norbert spoke English with an extravagant accent, hugely admired wealthy people and, when name-dropping, always qualified such a person as 'enawmously rich' with awed amorous gusto, throwing himself back in his chair and spreading tensely curved arms to enfold an invisible fortune* (3.11). Yet, I think that of still greater importance is the fact that Demon Veen and his son Van are linked with the old Baron and his son Albert from

Pushkin's little tragedy not directly, but rather through another pair of characters: Versilov and his illegitimate son Arkady Dolgoruky in Dostoevsky's novel *Podrostok* (*The Adolescent*, 1875).

I discuss the parallels between *Ada* and *The Adolescent* in my essay "Traditions of a Russian family in *Ada*" (The Nabokovian, 52) and will not dwell on them here. In one of my future notes I will try to prove that the spying and blackmail theme in *Ada*, represented by Kim Beauharnais and the already mentioned Black Miller, descends from this novel, too. But a few words must be said about the parallels between Dostoevsky's novel and Pushkin's play. Most interestingly, the situation (if not the conflict) in *The Covetous Knight* is mirrored in *The Adolescent*. It is the young Arkady who dreams of becoming fabulously rich, while his father Versilov has squandered more than one fortune in his life. Arkady's *idée fixe* is to grow into another Baron Rothschild, and he loves to quote Pushkin's Baron: "This knowledge [of his money's power] I deem sufficient..." Pushkin's Baron, from whom Arkady has borrowed his fixed idea, is, in a sense, his literary godfather. At the same time, the image of his father Versilov is, to some extent, Dostoevsky's self-portrait (and we have seen that Demon Veen shares with Dostoevsky some of his actual and assumed passions). It is also very important that Versilov in *The Adolescent* has the same dream inspired by Claude Lorrain's picture *Acis and Galatea* that the hero of Dostoevsky's story "The Dream of a Ridiculous Man" is to have several years later.

Thus, obvious parallels exist between the three pairs of fathers and sons in Pushkin's *The Covetous Knight*, Dostoevsky's *The Adolescent* and Nabokov's *Ada*. But we have seen that Van Veen and his father Demon in *Ada* are also connected to two other pairs of sons and fathers: Fyodor and his father in *The Gift* and, through them, to Nabokov and his father in real life. Now, if it is true that the actual relationship between Pushkin and his father is reflected in the father-and-son conflict

in *The Covetous Knight*, a complicated connection (involving a series of fictional sons and fathers, with Van and Demon in the middle of them) can be established between Pushkin and his father, on the one hand, and Nabokov and his father, on the other. If put into a scheme, it will look like this:

Pushkin	Albert (Arkadiy Dolgorukiy)	Van Veen
Fyodor Konstantinovich	Nabokov	
his father	The Baron (Versilov)	Demon Veen
his father	his father	

The scheme's upper line consists of sons and the nether line, of fathers. The two pairs of real sons and fathers, the Pushkins and the Nabokovs, form two opposite ends of the chain. But if we look now at the relationship within those terminal pairs, we shall see that the warm friendship and mutual love between Nabokov and his father make a glaring contrast to the troubled relations between Pushkin and his parent. That contrast was enhanced, in a strange way, by Fate. While, in Nabokov's family, it was the father who was murdered, Pushkin's father Sergei Lvovich survived his son who was killed in a duel at the age of thirty-seven. So we can say that the relationship between father and son in Nabokov's family, and the fate that has befallen Nabokov's father, mirror the relationship between Pushkin and his father and the poet's tragic destiny.

The first sentence of *Ada* ("All happy families are more or less dissimilar; all unhappy ones are more or less alike") turns inside out the first sentence of *Anna Karenin*. But, in contrast to Tolstoy's novel, in *Ada* there is no opposition between a happy family and an unhappy one. We have only one family, the last representatives of which are Van and Ada – brother and sister and happy lovers at the same time. Their case is truly unprecedented, just as unprecedented and unique as anybody's happiness. I suppose Nabokov considered his own family's

happiness that he had presented with such care in *Speak, Memory* as equally unique. This is the reason why I think that the implicit opposition between a happy family and an unhappy one, which the first sentence of the book refers to, is in effect the opposition of Nabokov's (possibly the twentieth-century's greatest writer's) happy family and Pushkin's (possibly the nineteenth-century's greatest poet's) unhappy one.

The covert opposition of Pushkin and his father to Nabokov and his father serves a twofold purpose. On the one hand, Nabokov's father is contrasted with Pushkin's. On the other, he is brought so close to the poet as to practically merge with him. In *The Gift*, Nabokov says of Fyodor: "Pushkin entered his blood." I chose that phrase as an epigraph to my essay "Traditions of a Russian Family in *Ada*," because, in my opinion, Nabokov's major task in writing *Ada* was to trace his writerly genealogy back to Pushkin. It means that Pushkin has entered not only Fyodor's blood, but also Nabokov's. Similarly, when Nabokov says of Fyodor in the next sentence that Pushkin's voice merged with the voice of his father, we may infer that this can also be said of Nabokov and his perception of his father's voice. The image of Father seems to be strongly associated with that of Pushkin in Nabokov's mind. And if my guess that Nabokov's dream of Antiterra was somehow inspired by the spirit of his father is correct, we have to look for that planet's remotest origins in Pushkin.

The other name of Antiterra, the planet where *Ada* takes place, is Demonia. On the one hand, it hints at the fashionable soubriquet of Van's father, linking as it does the planet where the novel's action takes place with the father theme which extends far beyond the novel's boundaries. On the other hand, the planet's original name 'Demonia' (Antiterra is the name which appeared, most likely, only in the middle of the 19th century after the L disaster and the appearance of the term Terra) refers to Pushkin. For it is to Pushkin, author of the poem "Demon" (1823) and a number of other *œuvres* in which dark

demonic powers are at work, that the theme of demonism goes back in Russian literature. Many of Pushkin's demons are anthropomorphic, that is, are endowed with human form. Such are, for example, all demons mentioned in the mini-dramas. In *The Stone Guest* (1830) Don Juan and Laura are possessed of a demonic charm, which is also an eminent characteristic trait of Van and Ada. Before Don Juan appears in Laura's house and before his duel with him, Don Carlos addresses Laura as "sweet Demon" (scene 2). And just prior to the culmination and the appearance of the Commander's statue in Donna Anna's house (scene 4), Donna Anna says to Don Juan: "They say you are a godless debaucher, / You are a real demon. How many women / Have you ruined?"

Demons look differently in the poem "Then saw I a black swarm of demons" (1832) written in *terza rima* and stylized as a fragment from Dante's *Inferno*:

Togda ia demonov uvidel chiornyi roi,
Then saw I a black swarm of demons
Podobnyi izdali vatage murav'inoi –
That looked from afar like a horde of ants –
I besy teshilis' prokliatoiu igroi:
And the devils amused themselves by playing
an accursed game:

Do svoda adskogo kasalasia vershinoi
Till hell's vault reached the peak
Gora stekliannaia, kak Ararat ostra –
Of a glass mountain, sharp like Ararat,
I razlegalasia nad tiomnoiu ravninoi.
Whose base sprawled above the dark plain.

I besy, raskaliv kak zhar chugun iadra,
And the devils, having brought to a glow the
cast iron of a canon ball,

Pustili vniz ego smerdiashchimi kogtiami;
Let it roll down with their stinking claws;
Iadro zaprygalo – I gladkaia gora,
The ball began to bounce – and the smooth
mountain

Zvenia, rastreskalas' koliuchimi zvezdami.
Cracked, ringing, into sharp spangles.
Togda drugikh chertei neterpelivyi roy
Then the impatient swarm of other devils
Za zhertvoi kinulsia s uzhasnymi slovami.
With terrible words rushed for a victim.

Skhvatili pod ruki zheny s eio sestroi,
Grabbed a woman and her sister,
zagolili ikh, i vniz pikhnuli s krikom –
And bared their bottoms and pushed them down with a cry –
I obe sidiuchi pustilis' vniz streloi...
And, sitting, they dashed downwards like an arrow...

Poryv otchaian'ia ia vnial v ikh vople dikom;
The upsurge of despair I heard in their wild cry;
Steklo ikh rezalo, vpivalos' v telo im –
The glass cut them, stuck into their bodies –
A besy prygali v veselii velikom.
And the devils leaped in great exultation.

Ia izdali gliadel – smushcheniem tomim.
I looked on from afar – languid with confusion.

This poem depicts not an earthly landscape, but rather a corner in hell. Yet, it can serve, in my opinion, as an important link between the Caucasus and Italy in *Ada*. On the one hand, Hell's glass mountain is compared to Ararat (the biblical mountain that Pushkin refers to in *Arzrum*), and

on the other hand, being an imitation of Dante, this poem points to Italy. At the same time, a swarm of demons, and especially "a woman with her sister," links the poem with *Ada*.

Pushkin's elegy "On the hills of Georgia" (see the beginning of this note) is another, perhaps a still more important, connection between Pushkin/Lermontov's Caucasus and Dante/Blok's Italy. Firstly, it describes the hills of Georgia, the country where Lermontov's *Demon* takes place. Secondly, this poem is instinct with the feeling of sorrow – the kind of sorrow of which Blok speaks in one of the poems from *The Italian Verses*:

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

This poem (4. "The scorching stones burn") belongs to "The Florentine Cycle," which for Nabokov forever remained associated with a personal tragedy – the loss of his father (see "Addendum to *Ada* as a Triple Dream"). This is why Nabokov would have felt especially keenly Blok's words about the hopelessness of sorrow. I do not think, however, that he could apply the last two lines to himself. His soul was not black; and his grief for his father, not blunted or dulled by long separation, was rather light, of a Pushkinian sort.

All of this persuades me that, by "crossing" in *Ada* Pushkin's sorrow with that of Blok's, Nabokov makes the latter brighter, more Pushkinian-transparent. At the same time he seems to appropriate it, turn it into his own asset. And I believe that *Ada*, that admirably complicated dream about Demonism, which may

have been sent to Nabokov by his father's spirit, – *Ada* is, at the same time, a declaration of love for Father. In other words, Nabokov wished to re-address Pushkin's elegy "On the hills of Georgia" to his father, V.D. Nabokov, but "the hills of Georgia", it seems, should be replaced by "the hills of Italy" and "the Aragua" by "the Mediterranean."

Translated by Sergey Karpukhin

—Alexey Sklyarenko, St. Petersburg

THE LINK BETWEEN RONALD PYM AND LA PETITE DORMEUSE IN *LOLITA*

The phrase "*La Petite Dormeuse ou l'Amant Ridicule*" is found in the famous Enchanted Hunters motel episode in which Humbert Humbert eventually succeeds in having intercourse with Lolita. He utters the French words as he gazes at the sleeping child and yet "[he] did not dare to launch upon [his] enchanted voyage" (*Annotated Lolita* 129). Alfred Appel Jr.'s explanation of the French phrase is that "there is no picture by this name. The mock-title and subject matter parody eighteenth-century genre engravings" (*AL* 381). Yet there is an explanation for the missing *tableaux*. The phrase does not refer to any actual painting. "*La Petite Dormeuse*" should be read as Humbert calling Lolita a "Sleeping Beauty" rather than a "Sleeping Maiden." And he probably imagines himself as the prince who rescues her from an evil witch's curse. Thus the episode generally parodies the famous fairy tale (here H.H. and Lolita take turns falling asleep and being enchanted either by fake pills or awkward kisses). But the "Sleeping Beauty" reference is foreshadowed one hundred pages earlier when H.H. includes an entry, "Pym, Ronald" alongside the masks of

Lolita ("Quine, Dolores") and Quilty ("Quilty, Clare") (AL 33-4).

Alfred Appel Jr.'s reading of Pym as Humbert Humbert offers a different possibility. He points out that Pym is in fact A. Gordon Pym of Edgar Allen Poe's novel, *The Narrative of A. Gordon Pym*. According to *Lolita's* editor, both Nabokov and Poe use a first-person narrator; and both authors begin the novel with mock realism and deceit that ultimately metamorphoses into a vision beyond normal readerly expectations (AL 348). I believe that the surfacing of the illustrator Ronald Pym in Humbert Humbert's entries from *Who's Who in the Limelight* subverts earlier readings of this masked Humbert. Ronald Pym exists in library catalogues as an illustrator who has created several children's books, among them one published in 1951 called *Sleeping Beauty: The Peepshow Book*. Nabokov must have been intrigued by its bizarre title and saw it would fit his satiric and parodic project on American popular culture. As a children's book based on the classical story, it would have been familiar to many American parents.

Moreover, it is possible that Ronald Pym worked with Nancy Mitford on her *Love in a Cold Climate* (1949) and *Pursuit of Love* (1945). It is strange that the available Mitford books illustrated by Ronald Pym appear only in the Folio Society editions published in 1991 (*Pursuit of Love*) and 1992 (*Love in a Cold Climate*); Pym seems to have been active mostly in between the late 1940s and 1977 (Mika Waltari, *A Nail Merchant at Nightfall*, 1954; Bryan Guinness, *The Children of the Desert*, 1947; *Hellenic Flirtations*, 1977; and others). It is interesting to note that Nancy Mitford's sister Diane had married Bryan Guinness (Lord Moyne), and so Mitford would have known Ronald Pym through Guinness as early as the 1940s. Nabokov would have surely known these books because, like *Lolita*, they scandalized the average American reader, who resented the unapologetic representation of the main character's homosexuality. Mitford wrote to Evelyn Waugh: "*The Woman's*

Home Journal says [Cedric Hampton] is revolting and that neither they nor any other American mag will touch him" (*Dictionary of Literary Biography* Vol. 191). Soon after, she declared to the same interlocutor that "it seems in America you can have pederasts in books so long as they are fearfully gloomy & end by committing suicide. A cheerful one who goes from strength to strength like Cedric horrifies them" (DLB). She could not have referred to Humbert since *Lolita* would not be published until 1955. But Nabokov must have thought of Cedric and Mitford's reaction and thus created Humbert Humbert. After all, H.H. combines both Cedric's strength and elegance as well as "the pederast's" destructive behavior that, according to Mitford, had success with the American public. I want to thank Professor Ernest Kaulbach for his invaluable guidance on this and other topics.

—Emil Niculescu, Slavic and Eurasian Department, University of Texas, Austin

NABOKOV AND BRET HARTE; AN OVERLOOKED ALLUSION IN *LOLITA*

In chapter 3 of part two of *Lolita*, Humbert reminisces about the movies he and Lolita viewed during their travels. Not only did they see, "oh, I don't know, one hundred and fifty or two hundred programs during that one year," but Lolita's tastes were indiscriminate: "Her favorite kinds were, in this order: musicals, underworlders, westerners." The latter type featured "the mahogany landscape, the florid-faced, blue-eyed roughriders, the prim pretty schoolteacher arriving in Roaring Gulch," etc. This final phrase alludes to the plot of Bret Harte's tale "The Idyll of Red Gulch" (1869), in which a young eastern schoolmarm named Miss Mary arrives in a California mining camp and falls in love with the dissolute miner Sandy Morton.

(Nabokov conflates the titles of two Harte stories, "Red Gulch" and "The Luck of Roaring Camp.")

But Nabokov may have had an altogether different source for the plot and title of Harte's story. On 21 June 1955, several months after Nabokov finished a draft of the novel but shortly before he received page proofs (Nabokov, "Lolita and Mr. Girodias," *Evergreen Review*, 11 [February 1967], 37-41), an adaptation of Harte's tale was nationally televised on the popular program "The U. S. Steel Hour." The episode, entitled "Red Gulch," featured Teresa Wright as Miss Mary, Franchot Tone as Sandy Morton, and Jayne Meadows, Amy Douglass, and Russell Collins in supporting roles, two of them new to the plot (<http://us.imdb.com/title/tt0045449>). Nabokov apparently saw the program—after all, he also enjoyed "westerners" (Alfred Appel Jr., "Introduction" to *The Annotated Lolita* [New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970], p. xliv)—and apparently inserted a reference to it in the proof of his new novel.

—Gary Scharnhorst, University of New Mexico

"A DORSET YOKEL'S KNUCKLES": THOMAS HARDY AND *LOLITA*

Why should Humbert Humbert refer to himself as having "a Dorset yokel's knuckles" (*The Annotated Lolita* 274)? Alfred Appel attributes this merely to the "salad of racial genes" mentioned by Humbert at the beginning of his narrative (*AL* 9), although the phrase refers, more specifically, to his father. The obvious answer is to say that this quality stems from Humbert's mother, "an English girl, daughter of Jerome Dunn, the alpinist, and granddaughter of two Dorset parsons, experts in obscure subjects" (*AL* 9-10). Appel may or may not be correct in reporting "Jerome Dunn" as "non-allusive" (*AL* 334, 10/1), although his identical verdict in the same note on "Clarence Choate Clark" has recently been called into serious question (see George Ferger's detailed article on John Ray: *Nabokov*

Studies, 8, 2004). Almost at the very end of *Lolita*, we encounter speculation on the revival of "quilted Quilty, Clare Obscure" (*AL* 306). Ferger sees "Clare Obscure" as a Ray-ified reflection of "Clark, Esquire" (Humbert's supposed lawyer, the aforementioned "Clarence Choate Clark, Esq.," *AL* 3). However, beyond any supposed machinations by "John Ray Jr., PhD," "Clare Obscure," in conjunction with the other Dorset references (preceded in a similar tenor by "Clare the Impredictable," 302), is surely suggestive of a genuflection in the direction of Thomas Hardy. If *Jude the Obscure* itself does not appear to be of particular interest in connection with *Lolita*, then perhaps there is something else in the Hardy *oeuvre* that might be.

Thomas Hardy is a figure who seemingly makes only the most sporadic of appearances in the literature on Nabokov (indeed, Oliver Hardy seems to be accorded more attention). We do know, though, that Nabokov had at least some knowledge of his poetry. John Shade's literary allusions can include Hardy (Brian Boyd, *Nabokov's "Pale Fire"* 40); Kinbote knows Hardy's poem "Friends Beyond" (*ibid.* 212; first identified by Michael Long, *Marvell, Nabokov* 241, n. 11). Nabokov, while at Wellesley, and driving with friends (Boyd tells us), would "make up impromptu parodies of poems by Hardy or Housman or whomever" (*Vladimir Nabokov: The American Years* 83). Alexander Dolinin suggests a borrowing—and, indeed, in *Lolita*—from Hardy's poem "The Phantom Horsewoman," which contains the line "and the seaward haze," rhyming with "craze" and "gaze" ("A Note on the Last Name of Dolores Haze alias Lolita," *The Nabokovian*, 50, Spring 2003, 51-2). So Hardy perhaps, after all, joins the ranks of the other English poets alluded to in *Lolita* (who include Belloc, Browning, Eliot and Keats). Nabokov's "Lectures on Style and Short Stories," Maxim Shrayer tells us (*The World of Nabokov's Stories* 11), included notes on Hardy's story "The Melancholy Hussar of the German Legion."

However, I have thus far been unable to find any comment by Nabokov on Hardy the novelist (even, for instance, among

the much disliked “‘great’ second-raters,” such as those listed in *Strong Opinions* 54 and *passim*). Nevertheless, such is the breadth of Nabokov’s English reading of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (the names do not need listing here) that it seems highly improbable that Hardy’s novels would have escaped him.

Nabokov was convinced that many Victorians “got away with pederasty and nympholepsy” (SO 81; see also Appel, *AL* 381-2, 131/1). Among his answers to the question of “what scenes one would like to have filmed,” Nabokov included “Poe’s wedding. Lewis Carroll’s picnics” (SO 61). Any Victorian novels that highlighted, or even hinted at, relationships between older men and much younger women would seem bound to have aroused his interest, and there is at least one work by Hardy that should certainly, therefore, have attracted Nabokov’s attention.

Hardy’s *The Well-Beloved* appeared in serial form (as *The Pursuit of The Well-Beloved*) in 1892, was revised for book publication in 1897 (counting thereby as the last of Hardy’s novels to be published—*Jude the Obscure* dating from 1895), and received final revisions in 1912 for the Wessex Edition, reprinted in 1922. *The Well-Beloved* (subtitled “A Sketch of a Temperament”) has reappeared in modern printings (notably in Oxford World’s Classics, 1986, complete with variants, edited by Tom Hetherington; reprinted 1998—the edition cited here), but it can probably be considered still as one of the least read of Hardy’s novels. If Nabokov did read *The Well-Beloved*, we can almost certainly assume that he would have read it in its post-1897 form. It is tempting, though, to think that Nabokov might have been aware of Hardy’s “prospectus” for the original edition, in which he stated: “There is not a word or scene of the tale which can offend the most fastidious taste” (*Well-Beloved* xi). This chimes pleasantly with John Ray’s assurance over *Lolita* that “not a single obscene term is to be found in the whole work” (*AL* 4). If Nabokov had not come across this before, it was quoted by R.L. Purdy, in his *Thomas Hardy: A Bibliographical Study*, published (tantalizingly enough) in 1954 (*W-B* xi; xxxiv).

Had Nabokov approached (or re-approached) *The Well-Beloved* with a prior knowledge of Joyce’s *Ulysses*, the first thing he would surely have noticed is the phrase “that Gibraltar of Wessex” (*W-B* 9), in the very first sentence of the novel. This designation (applied to “The Isle of Slingers,” as Hardy calls Portland Bill, the area of the novel’s primary setting—as opposed to The Isle of Wight: “The Island” to Hardy) would immediately have reminded Nabokov of the scene of the young Molly Bloom’s upbringing, which (as I have argued elsewhere) may be seen to have had a certain impact on *Lolita* (while *Ulysses* is alluded to by John Ray on the second page of his Foreword: *AL* 4). Other details that would have appealed to Nabokov include the use of the word “metempsychosis” (*W-B* 90), with which, again, considerable play is made in *Ulysses*; the ironic presence in the text of “this *Ultima Thule*” (for the Isle: 95); and the presence of a chapter entitled “Too Like the Lightning” (Juliet’s line from *Romeo and Juliet*, II, 2, 119, quoted again: 46; cf. Quilty’s play *The Lady Who Loved Lightning*: *AL* 31; and Lo’s allusive response: 220).

In the novel’s second chapter Nabokov would have encountered the first exposition of the protagonist’s theory of “his Well-Beloved” (*W-B* 16), which must certainly have struck him, were he to have been at any stage at all of his concern with systems of nympholepsy, or similar ideas. Hardy himself wrote of his early interest in “the Platonic Idea” and “the truth that all men are pursuing a shadow, the Unattainable” (*ibid.*, xi). In *The Well-Beloved* (as indicated by the title), this preoccupation concentrates on the female persona—and in particular its younger form.

To his Well-Beloved he had always been faithful; but she had had many embodiments. Each individuality known as Lucy, Jane, Flora, Evangeline, or whatnot, had been merely a transient condition of her. ... Essentially she was perhaps no tangible substance; a spirit, a dream, a frenzy, a conception, an aroma, an epitomized sex, a light of the eye, a parting of the lips. God only knew what she really was; Pierston did not. She was indescribable. (16)

She, "the masquerading creature," can turn up anywhere, "having instant access to all ranks and classes" to inspire instant love, and might even be "the implacable Aphrodite herself," whose practice might be "tormenting him for his sins against her beauty in his art" (ibid.)—for Jocelyn Pierston (in the first edition "Pearston") is a sculptor, a sort of alternative Pygmalion figure (both Pierston and Humbert think of "the refuge of art" [*AL* 309]—although Pierston eventually renounces his art).

Pierston considers himself to be under "a curious curse, or influence," deriving from "a deity...Aphrodite, as a poet would put it, as I should put it myself in marble" (*W-B* 35). He suffers from "his migratory Beloved...or rather the capricious Divinity behind that ideal lady," and refers to a "gigantic satire upon the mutations of his nymph...that seemed looming in the distance" (85). And, indeed, what he calls "the haunting minion of his imagination," or "the Phantom" (49) stays nowhere embodied for too long, and often only momentarily, residing briefly in socialites, shop-girls, actresses, and once "a dancing girl at the Royal Moorish Palace of Varieties," with whom he never exchanged a word, knowing that even a brief conversation "would send the elusive haunter scurrying fearfully away into some other even less accessible mask-figure" (51). She manifests diverse physical features (her one unalterable quality being "her instability of tenure" [52]); she can be termed "a sylph" (89), "sprite, witch, troll" (112), "Psyche" (113) and "an elf," as well as a "Goddess" of whom he makes marble images (148; no doubt he would also have made an "elf in stone"). Collectively, Pierston refers to the phenomenon of the Beloved phantoms as "his Liliths" (99), as does Humbert Humbert to describe his imaginary well-beloved— "Humbert was perfectly capable of intercourse with Eve, but it was Lilith he longed for" (*AL* 20).

The incarnations of the Beloved are "too many to describe in detail"; her first embodiment, though (Nabokov might have been struck to read), occurred "when I was about the age of nine" (*W-B* 36). "Her vehicle," at that remarkably early point, "was a little blue-eyed girl of eight or so...with flaxen hair about her shoulders"; the departure came some time after a

surreptitious (not to say precocious) kiss "in a garden-seat on a hot noontide, under a blue gingham umbrella" (ibid.). Such an early start antecedes—and by several years even—the primal adventure of Humbert Humbert with Annabel Leigh.

The three key embodiments of the eponymous Well-Beloved are indeed young, but nothing like *that* young; neither (as is usually the case with "precursors" of *Lolita*) are they as young as Annabel, or as Dolly Haze on her first appearance. Without going into too much detail of a plot which, as such (as with Hardy's relatively ponderous style), we may feel that Nabokov would have been unlikely to have admired greatly, we may say that the "action" of the novel treats Pierston's unfulfilled relations, over a forty-year period, with three generations of young women named Avis Caro (the surname, like "Pierston," is said to be one of a small number of old island family names: and *caro*, *carnis* in Latin means "flesh"): grandmother, mother, and then daughter. The first Avicé is "a young girl about seventeen or eighteen" (10); her successors, "Avicé the Second" (or Ann Avicé as she really is) and "Avicé the Third" (whose mother actively promotes her involvement), are the same, or slightly older, though not more than twenty. Avicé the Second is "Going in nineteen" [*sic*] (81) and, in any case, "a chit of a girl" (99); this may be compared to Humbert ("a forty-year-old valetudinarian") visiting Dolly Schiller, aged seventeen (*AL* 272).

Pierston, at the time of his (unconsummated, as—in the post-1897 text at least— all three relationships remain) involvement with the first Avicé is "A Young Man of Twenty" (title of "Part First"). He subsequently becomes "A Young Man of Forty" ("Part Second"; and therefore approximates to Humbert's age) and "A Young Man of Sixty" ("Part Third"). Hardy himself (other autobiographical details apart) recorded, in 1917 (then aged seventy-seven): "I was a child till I was 16; a youth till I was 25; a young man till I was 40 or 50" (*W-B* 263, note to 53). The 1892 version pits "the man of nine-and-fifty" against "Sweet-and-Twenty" (239). In any event, "Jocelyn was absurdly young for three score" (179), we are told, even though, upon

recent mirror reflection, "the person he appeared" had been "too grievously far, chronologically, in advance of the person he felt himself to be" (166).

Ironically, it may seem, Avice the Second has her own theory of lovers, which matches Pierston's notions of "the Well-Beloved":

"... What I see in one young man for a while soon leaves him and goes into another yonder, and I follow, and then what I admire fades out of him and springs up somewhere else; and so I follow on, and never fix to one. I have loved *fifteen* a'ready! ... Of course it is really, to *me*, the same one all through, only I can't catch him!" (103; italics in the original)

This, naturally, turns the tables somewhat on Pierston: "To be the seeker was one thing: to be one of the corpses from which the ideal inhabitant had departed was another; and this was what he had become now, in the mockery of new days" (104). We may think here of Humbert's post-Elphinstone situation. Moreover, what Pierston calls this "genealogical passion – if its continuity through three generations may be so described" (165) has clear echoes within *Lolita*: "at Lolita's age, Lotte [Charlotte Haze] had been as desirable a schoolgirl as her daughter was, and as Lolita's daughter would be some day" (*AL* 76). Subsequently, Humbert thinks of marrying (in Mexico) "my little Creole," who would "produce eventually a nymphet with my blood in her exquisite veins, a Lolita the Second, who would be eight or nine around 1960, when I would still be *dans la force de l'âge*"; as if this were not enough, he then ruminates on "bizarre, tender, salivating Dr. Humbert, practicing on supremely lovely Lolita the Third the art of being a granddad" (*AL* 174). Quilty, about to be shot, dangles before Humbert the proposition that his "reliable and bribable charwoman, a Mrs. Vibrissa...has daughters, granddaughters" (301).

None of this seems actually to happen in Pierston's case, but the island-inbreeding is such that Avice the Second in any

event marries an Isaac Pierston (presumed to be a distant relation), father of Avice the Third, and such implications remain – albeit less grotesquely spelled out (in either case, "the parody of incest" [*ibid.*, 287]) would have been on offer. In contrast, in true Victorian fashion, Pierston's ultimate ineffectuality, or "harmlessness," is solemnly proclaimed: "Not a woman in the world had been wrecked by him, though he had been impassioned by so many" (*W-B* 191). This may be compared with Humbert's admission, that "I have hurt too much too many bodies with my twisted poor hands to be proud of them" (*AL* 274).

Avice the Second is seen as "the copy" of "the original woman" (*W-B* 110); Avice the First, Pierston tells her successor, was "a tender woman as like you as your double" (146). When he meets Avice the Third, he thinks of "the extraordinary reproduction of the original girl in this new form" (150) – "a still more modernized, up-to-date edition of the two Avices of that blood with whom he had been involved more or less for the last forty years" (146). Pierston, observing his marble images of "The Goddess," held to "a formula, a superstition, that the three Avices were interpenetrated with her essence" (148-9). When we first meet him, Pierston, for all his island background, is already a cosmopolitan artist, "a young man from London and the cities of the Continent," and he is to become an Associate of the Royal Academy. When Avice the Second comes to his house in London (as a servant), he feels himself to be her "guardian" (124), as well as floundering in the role of suitor.

We turn now again to the question of names. If "Clare Obscure" relates at all to Jude (the Obscure), it may seem that the sexual ambivalence of "Clare" (expressly exploited, of course, within *Lolita*) as a name is a quality shared (at least to most twentieth-century readers) with "Jude" (although no doubt this name in Hardy derives from the apostle Saint Jude); much the same can be said of *The Well-Beloved's* "Jocelyn," not forgetting "Vivian" (Darkbloom). More telling, perhaps though, could be the presence within *Lolita* of two girls called "Avis," friends of Dolly's: Avis Chapman (*AL* 189) and a "fat"

(but "normal") girl called Avis Byrd (*AL* 285-6)—although Nabokov gave Appel an entomological origin for the first Avis, and Appel suggests a clear ornithological pun for the second.

If these Avises do owe something, at whatever level, to Hardy's Avices, why, one might ask, are there only two of them? This may be due to the circumstance, already mentioned, that the appearance of the second Avis corresponds to Pierston at a close proximity to Humbert's age. On meeting her, as compared to when he knew her mother, "alas! he was twenty years further on towards the shade" (*W-B* 93). This may be read alongside Humbert's obsession with Annabel: "that little girl with her seaside limbs and ardent tongue haunted me ever since—until at last, twenty-four years later, I broke her spell by incarnating her in another" (*AL* 15). "Incarnation" is a word frequently used in Hardy's novel, and it appears in three chapter titles. Pierston, in his third phase ("at the age of one-and sixty") was urged on "in the phrase of the islanders themselves, like a blindram" (*W-B* 148). Humbert, fortunately, never reaches this stage, although, as we have seen, he does speculate upon it (and, of course, did meet Annabel's reincarnation in "Ramsdale"). Pierston's "attraction to the third Avice," he acknowledges, "would be regarded by the world as the selfish designs of an elderly man on a maid," while, instead of being "a professional man's experience," his life now seemed "but a ghost story" (191). This is not to be in the case of Humbert; as John Ray informs us (*AL* 4): "The caretakers of the various cemeteries involved report that no ghosts walk."

Just as "Aubrey Beardsley" represents decadence in the 1890s (along with the town named Beardsley), the "Quelquepart Island," with which Quilty couples him among his multifarious motel register pseudonyms, may owe something to The Isle of Slingers, which had its own exotic, and erotic, connections with the Channel Islands and France. This would include Hardy's Isle among many other islands, from Gibraltar to the South Seas, as contributing to Humbert's fanciful reincarnation—"an enchanted island haunted by those nymphets of mine" (*AL* 16)—of his Riviera tryst. Avice the Second, "to the world," is "the

mere pretty island-girl," behind whom lurks "the Idea, in Platonic phraseology—the essence and epitome of all that is desirable in this existence" (*W-B* 108). "Oh the balmy days and the palmy bays," runs Humbert's poem (*AL* 256), "far far away, in the coves of evoked islands" (257), while Dolly Schiller makes "familiar Javanese gestures" (270), and Quilty too fantasizes on non-existent distant islands (302).

It may even be that John Ray, Jr. has particular claims to be pin-pointed as a Hardy *connoisseur*. His Foreword (see *AL* 3-6) contains a number of words, phrases or allusions of some Hardy-esque significance: "haze" (as noted by Dolinin), "aphrodisiac" (deriving from Aphrodite), "ghosts," and "mask." Pierston, as well as Humbert, could be said to be "ponderously capricious," and there is at least something in *The Well-Beloved* of "the wayward child, the egotistic mother, the panting maniac," even if the story proves to be slightly less than "unique." For that matter, the report "that no ghosts walk," followed on the next page by a reference to the "singing violin" of Humbert's confessional narrative to follow, may conceivably by now seem a possible borrowing from Hardy's poem "On a Midsummer Eve," in which we find the couplet: "I had not thought what ghosts would walk / With shivering footsteps to my tune." Even so, ghosts may be walking—when Humbert sees Dolly Schiller smoking: "Gracefully, in a blue mist, Charlotte Haze rose from her grave" (*AL* 275). Ray's textual interference, if we are to believe Ferger, is particularly to be felt from Chapter 28 of Part Two (in the spirit of Aphrodite, Dolly Schiller is said to have "looked—had always looked—like Botticelli's russet Venus" [270, Chapter 29]).

Other tangential Hardy echoes may also be tentatively proposable. In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, for example, the heroine's true love is one "Angel Clare"; in the penultimate sentence of *Lolita* (309), just four lines after the presence of "C. Q.," narrator "H. H.," his surviving double, is thinking of "angels" (as well as "aurochs"), while "Angel, Grace" heads the Ramsdale School class list (51).

In any event, in *The Well-Beloved*, almost the sole occupation on The Isle of Slingers was quarrying (hence the settlement of "East Quarriers"). Quilty had become Humbert's "quarry" (having been his "shadow"), but Humbert, the grandson of an alpinist and the great-grandson of Dorset parsons (one of this breed, incidentally, is represented satirically in Hardy's poem "In Church," and they are not noted for their absence from his novels), could plausibly enough have inherited something closely enough resembling "a Dorset yokel's knuckles," with his "twisted poor hands"—as could, indeed, his narrative.

(I am grateful to Ron Knowles, of the University of Reading, for bringing *The Well-Beloved* to my attention.)

—Neil Cornwell, University of Bristol



A Polynesian Vahine

THE TATTOO IS A TAHITIAN VAHINE
(*LOLITA*, Part II, Chapter 22)

Chapter 22 of *Lolita* is full of foreshadowing allusions to the flight of the nymphet: Humbert is conscious of the inevitably

tragic issue of his relationship and what's more identifies himself with the hero in *Carmen* (Proper Mérimée, 1845), i.e. Jose Lizzarrabengoa, who "as you remember, planned to take his *Carmen* to the *Etats Unis*."

This project fails since the protagonist kills *Carmen* and, condemned to death, tells the narrator the story of his tragic destiny. In the nurse who takes care of *Lolita*, Mary Lore, Humbert even sees an echo of Mérimée's tale (he insists on dark eyes and her Basque origin). This usurpation of identity seems to please Humbert who sees similarities with Don Jose, especially as a man who controls the situation—Mérimée's hero tells his tale rather coldly, including the assassination of *Carmen* and her inhumation. In the scenario that Vladimir Nabokov wrote for Kubrick, one finds an interesting variant: Humbert, immersed in old continent literature, brings several books to *Lolita*'s bedside at Elphinstone Hospital, one of which is a translated copy of Mérimée's *Carmen*. *Lolita* shows little interest in these books and returns to reading to her magazine.

When Humbert later returns to the hospital, *Lolita* has disappeared but the books are still there, piled up on a chair and being thumbed through by an old man. VN refers to another *doppelganger*: Bluebeard (Charles Perrault), notably when Mary Lore says to Humbert: "My sister Ann, said Mary, (...) works at the Ponderosa Place." "My sister Ann" is a reference to Bluebeard's sister-in-law; Bluebeard's wife, condemned to death, awaits the arrival of her three brothers and keeps asking Anne: "Anne, ma soeur Anne, ne vois-tu rien venir?". Humbert adds: "Poor Bluebeard. Those brutal brothers. Est-ce que tu ne m'aimes plus ma *Carmen*?"

In Perrault's story, Bluebeard ends up being killed by the three brothers, making him the story's ultimate victim. That's why Humbert looks at this ominous nurse with an evil eye (he prefers to fade into the association of *Lolita*/*Carmen* again) and ends by confessing: "at the moment, I knew my love was as hopeless as ever and I also knew the two girls were conspirators..."

Humbert leaves weakened from this last visit with Lolita and, drunk on gin, finds himself bedridden in his bungalow in the Elphinstone Silver Spur Court. The day before, he had had the two bags Dolores asked for delivered and was still more a «vibration rather than a solid» when Frank the truck driver knocks on his door to relay Mary Lore's question, asking if he would return to the hospital today.

The paragraphs, which precede and follow Frank's arrival, show us an ailing Humbert who is having a hard time escaping from his situation. Humbert describes Frank as «a mountain of health» in spite of a mosaic of scars and a hand (very different from the «simian» paw of HH) crippled in the fourth and fifth fingers.

HH lingers on the description of this hand, in particular on the tattoo representing a young woman with a crown of flowers on her head.

Like taboo, the word tattoo is of Polynesian origin: tattoos, before becoming fashionable, were formerly reserved for Maohi warriors, the powerful individuals in the community. Humbert's response to Frank, strange at first («[...] and would get in touch with my daughter sometime tomorrow if I felt probably Polynesian»), in fact indicates Humbert's allusion to Frank's tattoo: it represents without a doubt a Tahitian woman with a crown of flowers, and Frank's impressive stature is similar to that usually used to describe Polynesians.

Moreover, the translation of Humbert's ironic character trait "if I felt probably Polynesian" could also be the desire to assume Frank's identity and especially shed those of Don Jose and Bluebeard. Don Jose is a loser and a victim of jealousy, overcome even by the femme fatale Carmen (the alter ego of Lolita); Bluebeard, in spite of his cynicism, is hardly any better and Humbert cannot envy his tragic end. Between the roles of these two characters of French literature (which Humbert knows all too well) and Frank's herculean role with his exotic tattoo making him a robust Maohi warrior, Humbert's choice is clearly the latter, the only one capable of going to search for his vahine (Polynesian woman) and taking her to an isolated atoll.

HH writes at the beginning of the novel (Part I, chapter V): "*A shipwreck. An atoll. Alone with a drowned passenger's shivering child.*" The lost island motif returns with this vahine; Polynesia, in fact, is mainly composed of atolls and some high islands which, geologically speaking, are precursors to atolls.

HH continuously interlaces his personal tragedy with an image of the Old World through its literature; the two French tales remind Humbert of his childhood in Old Europe, in particular his failed love with Annabel, whose perfumed, visual, tactile and sensual memory haunts him up until he reincarnates her into another ("*I broke her spell by incarnating her in another*" I, IV). Frank's character with his exotic tattoo represents the only remaining destination for his frantic voyage: an atoll in the New World.

Finally, the word « Polynesian » seems to be the incoherent product of a feverish and delirious HH, but the sentence following his response («*He noticed the direction of my gaze, and made her right hip twitch amorously*») indicates clearly that Humbert is without a doubt alluding to Frank's tattoo. The story of Lolita takes place in the 1950's: one can conjecture, without fatal fatuity (to borrow a Nabokovian alliteration), that Frank could have been one of the American soldiers who was sent to Bora Bora during the second world war (in order to intercept a possible Japanese invasion which didn't, however, take place) and his tattoo is a souvenir of his Polynesian stay. This hypothesis is confirmed by Frank's mosaic of scars—for Frank, according to Humbert, "*had been blown through a wall overseas.*"

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—Alain Andreu, Papeete, Tahiti