

THE NABOKOVIAN

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Editor: Stephen Jan Parker

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NEWS

by Stephen Jan Parker

Nabokov Society News

The membership/subscription figures in 2013 are significantly lower than a year ago. And it follows now that the VN Society and *The Nabokovian* are about to make significant changes. And the basis for this is because Stephen Jan Parker is now retired. After the many, many years since he established the VN Society and created *The Nabokovian*, he has retired at the University of Kansas, and has reached the age when he can no longer work for the VN Society and keep publishing *The Nabokovian*.

It now remains to be seen what will follow. Most likely what will be is that the Society and the *The Nabokovian* will exist only on the computer. That remains to be seen.

Odds and Ends

1. "*Lolita* and the Vandals," written by Brian Boyd on January 14, 2013, is as follows:

A vandal, apparently a member of the ultraconservative "St. Petersburg Cossacks," last week threw a bottle through a window of St. Petersburg's Nabokov Museum, to protest the paedophilia in *Lolita*. He or she might as well have attacked the city's Dostoevsky Museum because of the murders in

Dostoevsky's fiction, or Moscow's Tolstoy Museum because Tolstoy depicts war as well as peace.

Before the bottle was thrown, a series of e-mails had been sent to the Nabokov Museum threatening that it should be closed down. This followed the cancellation in October of a one-man staging of *Lolita*, planned for St. Petersburg's Erarta Museum, after "Cossack" opposition to the "sinful" show. The bottle thrown at the Nabokov Museum on January 10 contained a message warning the Museum of "God's wrath" because *Lolita* is propaganda for paedophilia. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The year after *Lolita* was published, Vladimir Nabokov wrote to his friend, the critic Edmund Wilson: "When you do read *Lolita*, please mark that it is a highly moral affair." He wrote the novel for many reasons, but among them because he valued childhood innocence so highly, and because he detested manipulation of any kind, especially of the relatively powerless.

Women from around the world who work with those sexually abused as children, as well as women who themselves have been sexually abused, have contacted me over the years to express their admiration for *Lolita*. They recognize Nabokov's pioneering and penetrating insights into child sex abuse, and his perception of the damage done to victims and the resilience nevertheless possible for *some* of them.

A couple of weeks ago, for instance, Professor Lúcia Williams of the University of São Carlos in Brazil, who directs a Laboratory of Violence Analysis and Prevention focused especially on child and family violence, wrote me that she was "taken by complete surprise by how factual [*Lolita*] still is in terms of what we now know from child sexual abuse research. Since then I have acquired a small library on Nabokov, and I have been reading to understand the man who anticipated all that – there was hardly anything published on the subject in the late 40s or early 50s."

I have supervised a PhD student whose life, and love of life, had been shattered by her father's years-long abuse of her,

but who wanted to work on Nabokov because he understood abuse and incest so well. After I gave a talk on *Lolita* in Sydney a woman in the audience, Barbara Biggs, inscribed for me two of her books recounting her own amazing story. Sold off by her mother to a lawyer at fourteen, Biggs was even more able than *Lolita* herself to rebound: she became a writer, a successful businesswoman, even a successful plaintiff against the man who almost destroyed her, and a champion of sexual abuse victims.

Lolita has had a continuously bizarre fate since the day Vera Nabokov stopped her husband burning the unfinished draft: in the minds of readers who know and love the book (films, stage plays, a musical, an opera, prose rewrites, a book-cover competition and much more), and of non-readers who misconstrue and exploit or hate it. The senseless attack on the Nabokov Museum—which reminds me of the attack on a British doctor a few years ago by vigilantes who could not tell the difference between a paediatrician and a paedophile—is only the latest of the strange aftertwists of this strange story. There will be more, no doubt, but no more, I hope, of this grotesque kind.

2. A facsimile edition of the almanac "Two Paths," edited by A. Balashov and V. Nabokov (1918) is coming out in Petersburg in an edition of 300, of which 100 will be numbered (\$20). The book may be purchased by writing to the editor, Evgeny Belodubrovsky (Petersburg) at Profpnn@gmail.

And once again, as I have done for the past 34 years, I wish to express my truly greatest appreciation and gratitude to Ms. Paula Courtney for her remarkable on-going, essential assistance in the production of this publication.

NOTES AND BRIEF COMMENTARIES

By Priscilla Meyer

Submissions, in English, should be forwarded to Priscilla Meyer at pmeyer@wesleyan.edu. E-mail submission preferred. If using a PC, please send attachments in .doc format. All contributors must be current members of the Nabokov Society. Deadlines are April 1 and October 1 respectively for the Spring and Fall issues. Notes may be sent, anonymously, to a reader for review. If accepted for publication, some slight editorial alterations may be made. 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 (footnotes incorporated within the text, American punctuation, single space after periods, signature: name, place, etc.) used in this section.

THE MOVIE OF E. A. DUPONT IN NABOKOV'S NOVEL *MASHENKA*

During his years in Berlin, Vladimir Nabokov, like many other Russian emigrants, used to work as an extra for German films produced by the Babelsberg Studios in Potsdam. The subject of Russian extras in foreign movies was studied in detail by the Russian researcher Rashit Yangirov in his work *Raby nemogo. Ocherki istoricheskogo byta russkikh kinematografistov za rubezhom 1920-1930-e gody* (*Slaves of the Silent. Studies in the history of Russian filmmakers abroad in the 1920s-1930s*, Moscow: Russkii Put', 2007). In the spring of 1925, this topic was also discussed in the Russian daily, *Rul'* (*The Rudder*) (1920-1931). The article "Russkie statisty v kino" (Russian extras

in the motion pictures) reported that the German production company Terra-Film used about four hundred Russian extras for its films, since it could pay them less than German extras, who were employed by the "Paritätische Börse" ("Joint Market"). This state of affairs angered many Berliners, which compelled the German ministry of Labor to issue a special request for the studios not to employ Russians in movie-making. The reporter concluded his article with a statement defending the emigrants: "Nado skore vinit' bogatyie kinematograficheskie obshchestva, chem nishchikh russkikh statistov" ("It would make more sense to blame the rich production companies than the poor Russian extras" ["Russkie statisty v kino," *Rul'*, Berlin: Ullstein, 1925, pp. 1319, 4, my translation]).

In his first novel *Mashenka*, published in March of 1926 by the publishing house *Slovo* in Berlin, Nabokov tells the story of one of his experiences as an extra. It was in a movie in which he appeared very briefly. He emphasizes the depersonalization and the loss of identity of a Russian émigré when he/she works as an extra amongst the masses the directors fix on film. This episode was described by Nabokov's friend Ivan Lukash and is recounted by Brian Boyd in his biography of Nabokov: "One film required a theater audience, and because Nabokov in his old London dinner jacket was the only one in evening dress, the camera lingered on him" (Brian Boyd, *Vladimir Nabokov. The American Years, 1940-1977*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991, p. 205). Presumably, this episode in Nabokov's life took place in April 1923. However, one can question this date, because we are told a few lines later in the biography, that the writer will use this moment very "soon" in *Mashenka*, which he wrote in the fall of 1925 (*Vladimir Nabokov. The American Years*, p. 205). Therefore we can assume that the exact timing of this episode in the writer's life cannot be specified properly, especially as Nabokov himself admitted "not to remember the names of these movies" he took part in (Vladimir Nabokov, *Strong Opinions*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973, p. 161).

However, we can restore the missing information by analyzing the text of *Mashenka*.

In the novel, the main character, Ganin, is watching a movie in a local cinema in Berlin. The following scene is described: “A prima donna, who had once in her life committed an involuntary murder, suddenly remembered it while playing the role of a murderess in opera. Rolling her improbably large eyes, she collapsed supine onto the stage” (Vladimir Nabokov, *Mary*, London: Penguin Books, 2007, p. 24). This scene is based on the movie of the German director Ewald André Dupont, entitled *Der Demütige und die Sängerin* (*The Humble Man and the Singer*), produced in 1924 by the company Terra-Film, which premiered on April 2nd 1925 in Berlin. This movie is a screen adaptation of the eponymous novel of the German writer Felix Holländer, published in the weekly *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* (*BIZ*) in 1924.

The movie tells the story of Toni Seidewitz (performed by the famous actress Lil Dagover), a young woman with a wonderful voice who dreams of becoming a great opera singer. Encouraged by her mother, a failed actress, Toni accepts a proposal to marry the rich and brutal manufacturer Liesesang (played by Hans Mierendorff), who promises to help her start her career by paying for her singing lessons. However, once Liesesang realizes that Toni could actually be successful, he makes sure that it does not happen, for fear of losing control over her. Desperate (she tolerates Liesesang’s violence for the sake of her career), she confides in Raimundi, a young Italian who is secretly in love with her. In order to help her and to show his love, Raimundi kills Liesesang with an overdose of sedatives administered when Liesesang is sick. Toni feels guilty and rejects Raimundi’s advances. As a consequence, Raimundi commits suicide. Toni goes back to Berlin to find a job “[um] die Toten [zu] erwecken” (“in order to wake the dead” [“*Der Demütige und die Sängerin*,” *Zensurkarte*, Berlin, 18.03.1925, p. 6, my translation]). Using her voice and performance, she wants to

bring herself as well as the others back to life. She becomes the leading singer in *Carmen* and signs with the opera house, where she has to sing an opera entitled *The Murderess* for her friend and composer Wladimir Kreuzer. When Toni is to sing the lyrics “Ich bin die Mörderin” (“I am the murderess” [*Zensurkarte*, p. 8, my translation]), she collapses on the stage, overwhelmed by her feeling of guilt. According to the film critics, this scene is the best scene of the movie: “Geradezu verblüffend die Szene in der Oper” (The scene in the opera is quite amazing [“*Der Demütige und die Sängerin*,” *Lichtbildbühne*, Berlin, pp. 44, 37, my translation]).

Thus the last scene of the film definitely takes place in a theater. Incidentally, a picture of this scene was released in the film periodical *Kinematograph* (“*Der Demütige und die Sängerin*,” *Kinematograph*, Düsseldorf, pp. 916, 22). This allows us to draw a parallel between this closing scene and the scene in Nabokov’s novel, in which the author gives his personal touch when he parodies it in the following description: “Now the scene showed an aging, world-famous actress giving a very skillful representation of a dead young woman (*Mary*, p. 25).” He adds the fact that Lil Dagover is aging (she was 38 years old at the time) in order to caricature the *femme fatale*. That is probably the reason why he gives a special place to Lyudmila in this scene—she is sitting beside Ganin during the viewing of the movie. She is actually the opposite of a *femme fatale*. Furthermore, according to the writer, the young opera singer should die to pay for her fault, while Dupont’s movie has a happy ending: after she regains consciousness, Toni tells her story to her friend Wladimir, who doesn’t leave her and supports her. The composer thinks that the murder of Liesesang should be considered a “sacrifice for art,” since Toni was entitled to sing in exchange for her life. Finally, we assume that Nabokov described this episode of his life in *Mashenka* to suggest that he had not recovered from the way he was treated by the Babelsberg Studios, which apparently treated their extras with contempt. In

his autobiographical memoir *Speak, Memory*, Nabokov explains that he loses a part of his life once he writes it down: "I have often noticed that after I had bestowed on the characters of my novels some treasured item of my past, it would pine away in the artificial world where I had so abruptly placed it" (Vladimir Nabokov, *Speak, Memory: An Autobiography Revisited*, New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1966, p. 75). These special moments of his experience, then, don't belong to him anymore. It seems that he gets free from his memories, which come alive through other characters again, when he relates them to his reader. We could speculate that by describing this real episode as an extra and externalizing what happened in the studio, Nabokov performed a kind of psychotherapy, allowing him to "forget" his brief appearance in Dupont's movie. Moreover, the use of *The Humble Man and the Singer* is a way for Nabokov to emphasize Ganin's gradual transformation into a shadow on the screen and into the life of the character.

--Alexia Gassin, Paris

"DER DOPPELGÄNGER": NABOKOV, HEINE AND *THE ORIGINAL OF LAURA*

Lately there have been several attempts to examine Vladimir Nabokov's engagement with the German cultural tradition, yet little is known about the writer's life-long admiration of and strong emotional ties to Heinrich Heine (1797-1856). The writer's use of Heine's imagery is valuable in investigating Nabokov's creative employment of his German models.

The Original of Laura is a particularly pertinent case. While its aesthetic value and artistic significance are open to debate, there is no doubt that Nabokov's choices of allusions, references and echoes for what he must have realized would be his last

work are deliberate. Heine makes a seemingly incongruous, if certainly memorable, appearance at a specific point in this tantalizingly fragmentary narrative:

The position of her head, its trustful p[r]oximity, its gratefully shouldered weight, the tickle of her hair, endured all through the drive; yet she was not asleep and with the greatest exactitude had the taxi stop to let her out at the corner of Heine street, not too far from, nor too close to, her house. This was an old villa backed by tall trees. In the shadows of a side alley a young man with a mackintosh over his white pyjamas was wringing his hands. The streetlights were going out in alternate order, the odd numbers first. Along the pavement in front of the villa her obese husband, in a rumpled black suit and tartan booties with clasps, was walking a striped cat on an overlong leash. She made for the front door.

(Vladimir Nabokov, *The Original of Laura*, NY: Knopf, 2008, pp. 197, 199)

While the mackintosh the lovelorn wretch hastily throws over his pajamas does seem to be of a perceptibly Joycean cut (for its discussion as "un écho intertextuel," see Yannicke Chupin and René Alladaye, *Aux origines de Laura. Le dernier manuscrit de Vladimir Nabokov*, Presses de l'Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2011, pp. 234-236), the entirety of this episode from Nabokov's last surviving artistic work should be primarily juxtaposed to one of Heine's most famous early lyrics, "Still ist die Nacht, es ruhen die Gassen" (*Buch der Lieder* [1827], "Die Heimkehr," XX). Its relevance not only to this episode, but to *The Original of Laura* as a whole, justifies its citation *in toto*:

Still ist die Nacht, es ruhen die Gassen,
In diesem Hause wohnte mein Schatz;

Sie hat schon längst die Stadt verlassen,
4 Doch steht noch das Haus auf demselben Platz.

Da steht auch ein Mensch und starrt in die Höhe,
Und ringt die Hände, vor Schmerzengewalt;
Mir graust es, wenn ich sein Antlitz sehe, –
8 Der Mond zeigt mir meine eigne Gestalt.

Du Doppeltgänger! du bleicher Geselle!
Was äffst du nach mein Liebesleid,
Das mich gequält auf dieser Stelle,

12 So manche Nacht, in alter Zeit?

For the sake of clarity, an English trot will convey the literal meaning of the German original without claiming to capture either its crystalline beauty or its quintessentially Heinean strictly accentual meter, defined as it is by a fixed number of accented syllables per verse line (4 stresses each), in which the binary–iamb-like–combinations of unstressed and stressed syllables quantitatively prevail over the ternary (anapest-like) ones. The alternating streetlights, in other words, may well be throbbing in unison with the poem’s peculiar rhythm.

Still is the night, quiet are the alleys,
In this house lived my happiness;
She left the city long ago,
4 Yet the house still stands in the selfsame square.

There stands a man and stares upward,
And wrings his hands in violent pangs;
It terrifies me when I see his face –
8 The moon shows me my own image.

You, Double! You, pale companion!
Why do you ape my lovesick pain,
Which tormented me on this spot,
12 So many a night, in the old time?

The alleys of the town where the beloved used to live, her house (ll. 1-4), the desperate lover wringing his hands (ll. 6-8) have all been tightly integrated into Nabokov’s text, yet there can be no mistake that “Still ist die Nacht, es ruhen die Gassen” appears here for a reason, turning this grotesque situation into a meaningful parallel with Heine’s deceptively simple poem. The urban setting, the thwarted promise of amorous bliss, the multiplication of storytellers all point toward this reference’s having a higher purpose.

The “doppelgänger” motif, Jane Grayson has demonstrated (see “The French Connection: Nabokov and Alfred de Musset. Ideas and Practices of Translation,” *Slavonic and East European Review*, no. 4 [1995], p. 631), enters Nabokov’s work via Alfred de Musset’s “La Nuit de décembre,” translated by Nabokov in December 1915 and published in *Iunaia mysl’* in 1916. Nabokov, however, was not simply aware of this motif’s Heinean variety, he knew it intimately, having produced a painstakingly precise equimetrical, partially rhymed Russian replication of “Still ist die Nacht, es ruhen die Gassen” in September 1918 (for the biographical backdrop of this by no means unimportant episode in Nabokov’s artistic career see Brian Boyd, *Vladimir Nabokov: The Russian Years*, Princeton, 1990, pp. 136-160). Nabokov’s Russian rendering of the poem, it should be noted, was entitled “Dvoinik” – “The Double” – which is to say it retained the name given to it not by its author, but rather by its most famous interpreter Franz Schubert (“Der Doppelgänger”). If the mackintosh which the wretch wringing his hands on Heine Street is wearing is indeed an allusion to *Ulysses* (or rather Nabokov’s interpretation of “The Man in the Brown Macintosh” theme, per his *Lectures on Literature*,

NY, Harcourt Brace, 1980, pp. 316-320), the writer-protagonist narrating this particular episode of *The Original of Laura* may well recognize in him his grotesque doppelgänger as a prefiguration of his own fate at the hands of his cruel mistress. If we trace the Heinean constituent of this complex allusion to its point of origin, however, we see its deeper purpose and significance. In an uncanny parallel to the fate of Nabokov's last text, Schubert's universally popular *lieder* cycle, of which "Der Doppelgänger" is such a prominent feature, was published posthumously and was called *Schwanengesang* (D957 [1828]), or "Swansong." *The Original of Laura* is shot through with the theme of mortality; this multifaceted—and highly personal, one might add—Heinean, Schubertian allusion is here to remind us that the death of an artist is what this text is ultimately about.

The place allotted to "Still ist die Nacht, es ruhen die Gassen" in *The Original of Laura* is but a hint at Nabokov's strong and lasting affinity with the German-Jewish poet. Although the extent and depth of this association precludes it from being discussed here at length, its brief, admittedly perfunctory, summary may be useful.

Ideally positioned to appreciate the exilic underpinnings of the Heinean oeuvre, Nabokov quickly recognized in Heine the poet a Parnassian lodestar that was worth following, if not emulating (curiously enough, Nabokov made his own contribution to the Russian practice of imitating Heine). Heine's *odi et amo* relationship with his homeland, his fierce intellectual independence and one-man war on philistinism, coupled as they were with his importance to the Russian post-Pushkinian tradition in general and Nabokov's Silver-Age paragons in particular, were far from lost on the writer.

When Svetlana Siewert's parents put an abrupt end to Nabokov's engagement to their daughter fearing that nothing but grief would come of her union with an aspiring poet, Nabokov was quick to appreciate the painful irony of the way his predicament aped Heine's loss of his love to her parents'

philistine mindset. Irony and parody are always at hand when Nabokov the mature writer evokes Heine (see the opening paragraphs of *Look at the Harlequins!* Part Two, for example), and *The Original of Laura* is hardly an exception to this rule. In connection to the role played by Heine in Nabokov's last artistic work, it is useful to recall the well-known Nabokovian definition of parody as "a kind of springboard for leaping into the higher region of serious emotion" (*The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*). This is precisely what happens in *The Original of Laura* when Nabokov brings "Still ist die Nacht, es ruhen die Gassen" to the last round in his game of literary allusion.

* * *

Stemming from my work on *The Original of Laura* for The Estate of Vladimir Nabokov prior to its appearance in print, this note originated in my guest lecture at the at the University of Missouri, Columbia in the Department of German and Russian Studies. I am grateful to Professor Gennady Barabtarlo for his hospitality and his suggestion that I rework this material for *The Nabokovian*.

--Stanislav Shvabrin, Princeton, NJ

"THE DANGEROUS STRANGER": AMERICAN SOCIAL GUIDANCE FILMS IN THE AGE OF *LOLITA*

Lolita became such a controversial novel in part because it appeared at a time when Americans were increasingly concerned about what they regarded as an increase in sexual deviance in their country. The popularity of so-called social guidance films after the Second World War reminds us of this trend.

Short and cheaply made, social guidance films were designed

to educate American children and their parents about proper behavior and instill in them an appreciation for American values. The genre was pioneered by the prolific company Coronet Films, which in the late 1940s produced as many as four films a month (see Ken Smith, *Mental Hygiene: Classroom Films, 1945-1970*, New York, Blast Books, 1999, p. 91). Sold primarily to public schools, the films covered a wide range of topics that varied depending on the target audience. Schoolchildren watched them in class to learn about, for example, the importance of respecting adults and tips for making good friends. Teenagers were subjected to shorts about the greatness of capitalism, dinner etiquette, and dating rules. A few films carefully ventured into the realm of sex education.

One remarkable subcategory of this genre, which was ultimately exploited by many film factories that imitated Coronet, focused on the dangers that pedophiles posed to children and teenagers. The first notable film of this sort, produced by an amateur filmmaker Sid Davis, was inspired by the sensational case of six year-old Linda Joyce Glucoft, who was abducted, molested, and killed in Los Angeles in November 1949 by Fred Stroble, an Austrian immigrant and repeated sex offender. While child kidnappings were not uncommon at that time, the Glucoft murder shocked the nation by its brutality. The dramatic manhunt for the culprit and his trial were closely covered by the major American newspapers, including *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *The Hartford Courant* and *The New York Times*, nourishing Americans' sudden fear of pedophiles and compelling lawmakers to discuss stricter measures against sex offenders. A concerned citizen with an entrepreneurial spirit, Sid Davis responded to these events by producing an inexpensive short film for schoolchildren in hopes that they could learn something from that case of "the little girl in the paper." It was completed by January 1950, just as the Stroble trial was wrapping up and a few weeks before another sensational case—thirteen-year-old Sally Horner's two-year

captivity in the hands of Frank La Salle—was first reported in American newspapers. Davis gave the film an intentionally scary title, *The Dangerous Stranger*, and started selling copies to schools and police departments.

A perfect example of didactic sensationalism, the ten-minute film was meant to shatter young Americans' belief that they lived in a perfectly safe world. It opens with the image of happy children on a sunny playground as the somber voiceover cautions young viewers not to "forget what their parents and teachers tell them about strangers." "Strangers" (the word used to describe sexual predators) were represented as lurking everywhere ready to snatch careless youngsters in public parks, alleys, movie theaters, and even candy shops. To make this point unforgettably vivid, Davis played out a few common kidnapping scenarios. In one of them, a boy is abducted while playing in a desolate junkyard. In another, a seemingly respectable old gentleman offers a girl some candy in a park in an attempt to kidnap her. In the final scene, the trouble starts when a group of kids hitch a ride from school and one of them is forcibly carried away by the driver. Luckily, her companions write down the car's license plate, tell police about the incident, and the culprit is apprehended before he can do any harm to the girl.

While some educators criticized Davis's sensationalist approach, he had no problem selling *The Dangerous Stranger* to schools for as much as \$45 a copy (see Lester A. Kirkendall's review of the film in *The Coordinator*, May 1952, pp. 18-9). The filmmaker's directorial debut was a great commercial success, allowing him to start his own production company that went on to make scores of other shorts with such titles as *The Strange Ones*, *Walking to School*, *Say No to Strangers*, and *Name Unknown*, all of which were released before the country was hit by hurricane *Lolita*. By the time he produced his two most well known shorts, *Boys Beware* (1961) and *Girls Beware* (1961), his films were widely available through major educational film distributors in the country. Smith estimates

that in two decades Davis directed over one hundred and fifty films (p. 104).

Some governmental agencies, police departments, and communities not only consumed Davis's films but also produced their own shorts designed to warn Americans about predatory "strangers" in their midst. The variety of those films reminds us of how concerned the public was about this issue. Some of them, such as *Don't Talk to Strangers* (Fresno Police Department, ca. 1955) and *Child Molester* (Highway and Safety Foundation, 1964), were made specifically for parents to encourage them to caution their children against inappropriate contact with strangers. A few other extant films were made by communities and were intended for mixed audiences. *The Stranger* (1957), for example, was produced by the Sonoma County sheriff with funds raised from local businesses. A few local residents were recruited to play parts in a story about a young girl who gets kidnapped and killed because she failed to follow basic rules of interacting with strangers. The film is remarkable in that it addresses both parents and children, making it appropriate for screenings on various public occasions.



The Dangerous Stranger



Say No to Strangers

Social guidance films of that era typically portray pedophiles as at once devilishly inventive and horribly hapless. The resourcefulness of "strangers" in their pursuits was meant to amaze and terrify viewers. Like Humbert Humbert, they carefully studied children's behavior. They memorized school schedules, knew how to single out complacent children who could not resist physically, and trapped their victims with tempting gifts. Pedophiles' conniving notwithstanding, however, they were ultimately portrayed as doomed schemers whose abnormal proclivities led to their downfall. In *Don't Talk to Strangers*, the culprit is described similarly to Humbert Humbert:

He is troubled by the urging inside that even he does not understand. Deep in his subconscious mind he knows that he is wrong, but his rationalizations keep him from fighting his abnormal behavior . . . He is a dangerous and calculating criminal that knows no bounds in fulfilling his desires.

He is ill—mentally ill. Sensitive. With a wild, running imagination that would set him off at a moment's notice.

If arrested, "he is frightened, confused, and embarrassed. He can give no reasons for his actions, because he does not understand them. He is now even unable to rationalize, and his conflicted values begin to take their toll in mental anguish."

Nabokov's novel echoed many Americans' conviction that pedophilia was increasingly widespread. Humbert Humbert routinely lurks in public parks "to catch a glimpse of nymphets" (Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita*, New York, Vintage, 1991, p. 32). In his early days he even frequented "orphanages and reform schools, where pale pubescent girls . . . could be stared at in perfect impunity" (16). His Beardsley pal Gaston Godin hires neighborhood boys to do chores and then seduces them with "fancy chocolates . . . in the privacy of an orientally furnished den in his basement" (181). Clare Quilty, who proudly admits to being "very fond of children," is even bolder (296). Apparently he used to touch young girls in plain view of adults, the way he once did with Lolita when he "tugged and pulled her . . . by her bare arm onto his lap in front of everybody, and kissed her face" (272).

Humbert Humbert was clearly mindful of Americans' concern about "strangers," the word that frequently appears in his narrative to refer to sex offenders. He mentions "adorable Stella," Lolita's classmate, "who has let strangers touch her" (53). On several occasions he adopts the tone of a concerned parent and advises his stepdaughter, who "always had an absolutely enchanting smile for strangers," to be suspicious of unknown men if they express any interest in her (285). He even ends his narrative with the common advice: "Do not let other fellows touch you. Do not talk to strangers" (309). Coming from Humbert Humbert, who, as Clare Quilty aptly notices, is "not an ideal stepfather," the advice is a cruel joke (301).

It appears that Nabokov enjoyed ridiculing not only his compatriots' paranoia about "strangers" and but also the countless cautionary tales it inspired. While *Lolita* exploits the issue which many Americans found quite serious, Nabokov mocks the kind of didacticism common in social guidance films, in which the subject of sexual perversity is discussed solely to warn viewers about the dangers of the world around them. Unlike Sid Davis's productions, *Lolita* is an openly anti-didactic work. From the very first pages of *Lolita*, Nabokov mocks John Ray's naïve claim that Humbert Humbert's story was meant to "make all of us . . . apply ourselves with still greater vigilance and vision to the task of bringing up a better generation in a safer world" (6). As Nabokov commented in his afterword to the novel, he was "neither a reader nor a writer of didactic fiction, and, despite John Ray's assertion, *Lolita* has no moral in tow" (314). Even as a teacher, Nabokov was drawn to the novels which, as he told his students, "will not teach you anything that you can apply to any obvious problems in life" (Vladimir Nabokov, "L'Envoi," *Lectures on Literature*, San Diego, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980, p. 381). He believed that ideal readers do not much care about social significance of the books they read but "passionately enjoy . . . the inner weave of a given masterpiece" and appreciate what he called "aesthetic bliss, that is a sense of being somehow, somewhere, connected with other states of being where art . . . is a norm" (Vladimir Nabokov, "Good Readers and Good Writers," *Lectures on Literature*, San Diego, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980, p. 4; *Lolita*, pp. 314-5).

We have to be careful, however, to recognize that Nabokov's antipathy toward didacticism did not stop him from emphasizing the horror of sex crimes. While some of Humbert Humbert's aesthetic views are superficially similar to those of his creator, his confession gradually exposes him as an awfully cruel man who uses his amazing literary skills to mask his sexual proclivities. As Alexander Dolinin observed in his analysis of

Lolita in relation to the coverage of Frank La Salle's kidnapping of Sally Horner, at some point even Humbert Humbert realizes that his artistic talents do not make him much different from other sex offenders: "The story of Sally Horner haunts Humbert Humbert, who can't help noticing its similarity to his own tale but would never concede that, in spite of his pretensions to poetic grandeur, verbal skills, and sensitivity, he is no better than La Salle, a common criminal and 'moral leper'" (Alexander Dolinin, "What Happened to Sally Horner?: A Real-Life Source of Nabokov's *Lolita*," <http://www.libraries.psu.edu/nabokov/dolilol.htm>). One of many telling scenes that remind us of Humbert Humbert's cruelty is the one in which he observes Lolita reading a newspaper article for children on ways to avoid being kidnapped. "Would sex crimes be reduced if children obeyed a few don'ts? Don't play around public toilets. Don't take candy or rides from strangers. If picked up, mark down the license of the car," Lolita reads. If necessary, one should "scratch the number somehow on the roadside." Humbert Humbert dismisses Lolita with the response that reveals not only his sense of humor, but also his heartlessness: "With your little claws, Lolita" (165-6).

--Alexander Moudrov, New York

NABOKOV ON TOUR – PART III

I.

This is the third and final compilation of reviews, press releases and other contemporary commentary on Vladimir Nabokov's 1942 reading tour of American colleges, sponsored by the Institute of International Education. Part I (*The Nabokovian* 68, Spring 2012) included the materials I have

been able to locate, mostly in collegiate archives, on visits to Coker and Spelman colleges. Part II (*The Nabokovian* 69, Fall 2012) covered his stays at Georgia State Women's College (now Valdosta State University) and The University of the South at Sewanee. Nabokov's travels are documented in Brian Boyd's *Vladimir Nabokov: The American Years* (pp. 48-53, fnnts pp. 679-680). Letters from Nabokov to Vera in Cambridge written during this period were published in *The New Yorker* as "The Russian Professor: The Author on Tour" (June 13-20, 2011, 100-104, tr. Brian Boyd, and Olga Volonina with Dmitri Nabokov). The conclusion of Nabokov's tour involved first a Midwestern journey to Macalester and Knox Colleges, and after a brief respite back in Cambridge, a final visit to Longwood College in Virginia.

II.

After a ten-day stay at home, Nabokov set off on November 5 for Illinois and Minnesota. On the way to Macalester he visited Springfield, IL, from where he wrote Vera on November 7, with a brief and humorous description of what was at least a two day stay. He came to Springfield to address a group called the Mid-Day Luncheon Club. Nabokov's letter describes being met at the train station and escorted around Springfield's primary sights by "a creepily silent melancholic of somewhat clerical cast with a small stock of automatic questions, which he quickly exhausted" (*New Yorker*, p. 104). This individual's hobby was flagpoles, about the height of which he and VN conversed. Although unidentified in the letter, Nabokov's guide was one Elmer Kneale, who founded and served as Secretary to the Mid-Day Club, according to the *Illinois Times* (July 26, 2012; www.illinoistimes.com). Next, he briefly stopped at the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago, where he did some work in the entomology department.

By Tuesday, November 10, VN had made his way north to St. Paul Minnesota, to deliver a convocation speech at Macalester College, a small, prestigious, co-educational liberal arts institution, the first co-educational school on the tour. There is relatively little information about this stop on the tour. Ellen Holt-Werle, archivist at Macalester, supplied a notice in the student newspaper of Friday, November 6, *The Mac Weekly*, p. 5, previewing Nabokov's lecture. He is described as a "widely-known Russian author and lecturer, now visiting professor at Wellesley." Interestingly, today Macalester's library has an impressive collection of 50 first editions of Nabokov's works, a gift in 1998 of a graduate, David Wheeler, who majored in English. The first number of *Nabokov Studies* (Vol. 1, 1994) contains a sonnet by J.B. Sisson entitled "Nabokov in Minnesota" (p. 114). That poem describes the events VN wrote to Vera in a letter (November 10) cited in Boyd, *The American Years* (p. 52). On a wintery walk back to his lodging from a movie, Nabokov was overcome by a powerful sense of the loss of his opportunity to write in Russian. He describes the "grief and bitterness of my situation." Sisson writes of his being "struck with the force [sic. "force"?] of a concussion/an urge to write again in Russian/there in that distant northern state--/impossible, tormented fate." In St. Paul, Nabokov discovered he had, in Pninian fashion, not brought with him the script for his lecture, so he gave the students a quiz, in which he offered 10 definitions of a good reader, and asked them to pick the four correct characteristics. They inclined towards the emotional and socio-economic definitions, and Nabokov, of course, did not (Boyd, pp. 51-52).

III.

Knox College, in Galesburg, Illinois, is 185 miles Southwest of Chicago, and like Macalester, co-educational. It was founded shortly before the Civil War, and was an abolitionist stronghold.

Knox' archivist Kay Vander Meulen located several documents relating to Nabokov's visit there.

On November 9, 1942, the College issued a press release, sent to several newspapers in central Illinois and Chicago, announcing VN's forthcoming appearance. Nabokov is described as a "distinguished Russian novelist and lecturer," whose visit was sponsored by the John Huston Finley Memorial Foundation. The subject of the lecture is "a century of exile or the strange fate of Russian literature." The press release includes the standard biographical material disseminated by the Institute of International Education (described in Part I). It adds that "Teaching experience in Berlin and in the English Department of Wellesley College, Massachusetts, have equipped Mr. Nabokov with the international point of view which imparts keen interest to his lectures." It concludes by inviting the public as well as the college community to "attend the famous Russian's lecture."

A second preview press release (November 10) noted that Nabokov had spent the previous day on campus meeting faculty and visiting several campus buildings. It also comments that "Although the world knows him as a foremost writer, Mr. Nabokov is also a trained entomologist and research fellow at Harvard University. Hence, one of his visits was paid to the collections of beetles and butterflies in George Davis Science Hall."

The day after Nabokov's address, it was covered by the *Galesburg Daily Register Mail* (November 13, p. 2). Nabokov spoke to an audience of about 200 individuals at Beecher Chapel on campus. The newspaper observes that VN's eight Russian novels "are said to have had wide circulation and to be available in translations in other languages." His subject was "creative work of the mind," which links the rational and the irrational. The *Daily Register Mail* speculates that such "cerebration...is characteristic of Mr. Nabokov's methods in his own creative work." This report goes on to discuss VN's

comments on false common sense. The account concludes, by observing that "The visit of this distinguished man of letters to the Knox campus has been of considerable value to those whose interests are literary."

Finally, Nabokov is cited, very briefly in *The Knox Registry*, a compendium of visitors to the College from 1837 to 1963 (p. 384): "NABOKOV, VLADIMIR, B.A.; Fall, 1942; Finley Lectr., "The Meaning of American Citizenship." Refugee from Bolshevik regime; Russian novelist. Res: Ithaca, N.Y." Given the press releases and the newspaper report, VN's talk was probably on "Art and Common Sense," rather than "The Meaning of American Citizenship."

After the Knox lecture, Nabokov had been scheduled to continue his talks, working his way east for another month or so, but he was weary and depressed by his labors, came down with a bad case of flu, cancelled the next engagements, and returned to Cambridge on November 18.

IV.

At the beginning of December, 1942, Nabokov set off again for the last leg of his lecture tour, making his way to Farmville, Virginia, home of Longwood College. Along the way he stopped first in New York, where, Boyd reports, he visited friends and visited as well the American Museum of Natural History, where one of the butterflies he had caught was displayed as the "original description" of its species. On the train from New York to Washington, he wrote the poem "On Discovering a Butterfly" in response. In Washington, he stopped briefly at the Smithsonian Institution's entomology collection.

In concluding his tour at Longwood, Nabokov was returning to a woman's college, like Coker, Spelman and Georgia State Women's College. It began as Farmville Female Seminary, and become coeducational in 1976. Today it is Longwood University, and enrolls about 5,000 students. Longwood's

archivist Lydia Williams located three articles in the student newspaper *The Rotunda*, one preceding Nabokov's appearance, and two following it.

The issue of November 25 previewed the lectures in Farmville. In this article, VN's name is spelled throughout as "Nobakov." It announces that his visit was sponsored by the local honorary English society "Beorc Eh Thorn." The article includes an un-candid studio profile photo of Nabokov (taken in 1938; see pp. 446-447 in Brian Boyd's *Vladimir Nabokov: The Russian Years*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990). It relays with little editorial alteration the biographical and bibliographical materials distributed by the Institute of International Education. The article announces a lecture on the evening of Monday, December 7 on "A Century of Exile," and one the following morning, addressing the student body, at chapel, on either "The Art of Writing" or "Short Stories."

In the Wednesday, December 9 issue of that same student newspaper, Nabokov's name is spelled correctly, and the reporter attempts to recapitulate the "A Century of Exile" lecture (at which she was clearly present, and taking notes). This story is entitled "Nabokov Declares World Should Give Russia Right of Way." VN made the "dramatic assertion" that Russia, even under "governmental and ecclesiastical oppression," has developed in one century a literary tradition that would take other nations many centuries to evolve. Pushkin's poetry with its "light motif of exile" is an example. The reporter cites Nabokov as saying that the bitterness of Russians in exile towards their homeland in 1942 "has been blasted by German bombs." (I speculate that it is a bit hard to believe that this is what VN actually said, and not what the reporter wanted to hear...) Russian literature is filled with the "aimless longing" of exile. Yet, in Pushkin's works there is a "freedom of thought" which gives evidence that "art cannot but triumph in the end in spite of oppression." The report goes on to state that Nabokov denounced Germany and all things German, and he hopes for the annihilation of that

Axis power. It concludes by mentioning that Nabokov read some of his short stories in chapel the morning following his major lecture.

A second article of interest to Nabokovians appears in the same edition of *The Rotunda*. This is not a report of a formal lecture VN delivered, but apparently the result of an interview he granted to the student reporter, detailing some of his idiosyncrasies. The reporter, clearly, is working with Nabokov's willing aid, to present him as an interesting and very human individual. This piece is entitled "Russian Scientist-Wrtier [sic] Began Career Because of Family Envy." Nabokov explains that he began writing poems "because my cousin was something of a rimester." He was about thirteen at the time. He tells the reporter that he learned English from his governesses. He reveals that he was paid \$5 for his translation of *Alice in Wonderland* from English to Russian, but does not recall what he received for translating Rupert Brooke. The reporter describes Nabokov's "profession" as an entomologist, and notes that his father collected butterflies before him. What are his pet peeves? Writing letters and going to the post office. Also unpleasant are the sensations of cotton and silk wool. He has some uncomplimentary things to say about American advertising, too. His "likes" on the other hand are more numerous. He is fond of all sorts of sports and "At one time he was a professional tennis player." He is also fond of chess, soccer, skiing and swimming ("The Russian swimming is very fast, but not at all graceful" VN is quoted as remarking.) And he enjoys sunbathing ("Oh, I could lie in the sun for hours"). He also likes American food, and "among his favorites are French fried potatoes, milk and ice cream, and all sorts of juices." (Nabokovians will recall other, less favorable, references to French fries...) Moving from gastronomic to literary tastes, Nabokov declared that the best short story in the world is Washington Irving's "The Stout Gentleman." He said his favorite authors are Shakespeare, Marcel, Proust [sic – the reporter apparently believed that

"Marcel" and "Proust" were two different writers], James Joyce, and Pushkin. The reporter asked him about his move to America, and he notes that he arrived on the ship "Champlain," had no trouble getting permission to enter America, but had a difficult time acquiring the proper papers to leave France. Eventually, he reveals, he resorted to bribery, which "worked a little faster." The article concludes by noting that Nabokov has begun the process of becoming a naturalized American citizen.

In mid-December, Nabokov returned to Cambridge, where Vera Nabokov was in the hospital with pneumonia. Overall, Nabokov's collegiate lecture tour lasted, in fits and starts, nearly three months--in effect, the fall semester of 1942. It was not a financial success, and often, on the road, Nabokov had been ill or glum. Never again did he attempt such a venture.

V.

It is a perilous task to try to draw conclusions from these sketchy materials, drawn mostly from student and local newspapers, collegiate press releases and personal letters, all over 70 years old. But I am led to a few general observations based on the materials in all three parts of this recounting of Nabokov's 1942 lecture tour.

It is obvious that Nabokov worked very hard, and successfully, to be not only stimulating, but personally charming during this undertaking. The evidence from student accounts and from Presidents Reade (Valdosta) and Read (Spelman) suggests that his audiences and those with whom he conversed found him a winning personality. Certainly the public persona of the later Nabokov as somewhat aloof and imperious was not seen or reported at this time, in these places.

Although it is impossible to prove, it appears that VN was a bit more of a hit at women's colleges than at men's or at coeducational schools. It is possible that this impression may be just the result of a somewhat more gushy style of reporting

in women's college student newspapers of the mid-century. But, given what we know of Nabokov's time at Wellesley, I suspect that this is in fact the case. As an exotic, learned author he was perhaps received with more overt admiration at Coker, Spelman, Longwood, and Georgia State Women's College than at Macalester, Knox or Sewanee. Perhaps like many of us, when he knew he was charming his audience, VN worked a bit harder to be even more winning.

Based upon his letters, and accounts of his activities, one suspects that he enjoyed more the entomological opportunities afforded by his travels than his own literary lectures. Especially at the earlier, Southern stops on the tour, he took every opportunity to botanize, and on the later stages, he made it a point to visit museum entomological collections whenever possible.

Although all the evidence available suggests that the colleges Nabokov visited enjoyed having him there, it does not appear that he much enjoyed many parts of this venture: the travel, dinners, chapel services, and club appearances were obviously trying to one who was never a "joiner" or a social gadfly.

On the other hand, several hundred people, mostly college students, had a chance to hear, meet, appreciate, and learn about Vladimir Nabokov in 1942. Who can say that such a pebble in the pond is not still producing ripples today?

--Samuel Schuman, Asheville, NC

NABOKOV'S LECTURE AT WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

A footnote to Samuel Schuman's third installment on Nabokov's lecture tours of 1942, filling a lovely lacuna

In Nabokov's pocket diaries for 1942 in the Berg collection, he notes

Thurs Dec 3,
Wesleyan University
Middletown, Conn.
Subject "The Art of Writing," Hour: 9:00pm
\$50.00 + hospitality

"Springfield-Meriden-Middletown (buses) arr.
Middletown 5.00pm

Get off at corner of High and Washington St/Thomas
W. Bussom Director of Honors College/Leave
Middletown by bus

Leave Meriden for New York over New Haven

Tooth powder
Cream for the hands
Kraska dlia gub [Cyrillic]

The Wesleyan *Argus* (December 7, 1942, Vol. LXXVI, No. 20, pp. 1, 4) reported Nabokov's visit with the headline, WRITER STATES HIS CRITERIA FOR GOOD LITERARY WORK; Well-Known Author *Emphasizes "Ivory Tower" As Best Aid for Novelist.*

The "ivory tower" here refers to an individual's intense personal experience which evolves from introspection, a "blinding flash" which makes a writer a great thinker only if he is able to communicate his ideas to others through the medium of his books (p. 1). Nabokov is quoted as saying, "The capacity to wonder at trifles is the highest sense of observation," the essential delight of the intellectual mind. The article concludes, "...the novelist stated that his personal interpretation of the creative process depend[s] on two conditions: 1. The complete

dissociation of what is termed matter, and 2. its recreation in a new form” (p. 4).

Such a near-miss—three months old, I was unable to meet *that* same bus which later brought another wave of Russian émigré writers to Wesleyan.

--Priscilla Meyer, Middletown, CT

IRINA GUADANINI'S GIFT

The Gift

Kak otblesk zhizni predydushchei
i ekho vysshikh vdokhnovenii
ostalos' razve tol'ko oshchushchen'e...
Ruki moi—tebe.

I otrazhen'em glaz, kak v zerkale zovushchikh,
--kak chashei polnoiu nezdesnikh otrazhenii—
glaza polny lish' ten'iu voploshchen'ia...
Ochi moi—tebe...

Mel'kan'em snov, prozrachnykh, neobychnykh,
Struen'em slov, liubimykh slov privychnykh,
Dusha napoena v vostorge voskhishtchen'ia...
Serdtshe moe—tebe

---Irina Guadanini

Like the reflection of a former life
And the echo of the highest inspirations

There remains perhaps only a feeling...
My hands are for you.

And by the reflection of eyes, as [if] summoning in a mirror
--as with a vessel full of unearthly reflections—
my eyes are filled with only the shadow of an
incarnation...
My eyes are for you...

With the flickering of dreams, transparent, extraordinary,
With a flow of words, beloved customary words,
My soul is drunk with an ecstasy of delight...
My heart is for you.

In March 1962 in Munich, the modest Bashmakov Russian publishing house published a postage stamp-sized collection of poems entitled “Letters.” The dark grey paperback cover, the whitish yellow paper and the unimposing, as if timid, font--everything corresponded to the epistolary “postal” title of the collection. As did its essentially lyrical contents: simple, warm Russian poems with a shade of nostalgia, not without anguish and pretensions to some kind of otherworldliness and, God forbid, philosophy. They are poem-epistles to a particular person («dedicatee»), a male lover, over many years and experiences.

Recently we learned the name of the addressee of Irina Guadanini's verse-letters—Vladimir Nabokov (Sirin). They met in pre-war Paris in the spring of 1937, were inseparable, could not live a day without the other, hiding in hotels, in the metro, avoiding relatives and friends. But already by the end of the fall they parted forever. The romance almost deprived Nabokov of both family (a young and truly happy one) and of his future writing career (at that time, the best in the Russian emigration; even the jealous and bilious Bunin, true, without enthusiasm, recognized Sirin's superiority). And only thanks to Vera Evseevna, a wise woman dedicated to Nabokov—his

wife and and the mother of their long-awaited, passionately loved son (Dmitri was already three years old), the danger of separation passed. The passion gradually cooled, the novel *The Gift* was finished, life (not without distress, displacements and losses) went back to normal: Nabokov, thanks to his wife, strong family and original artistic talent, reached the height of literary acclaim and world recognition.

As for Nabokov's beloved (he left her suddenly, simply ran away, not keeping the word he had given the day before, in short, left her without explanation), Guadanini to the end of her days (she died in Paris in 1976), despite her short marriage, poverty, daily exhausting work at "Voice of America" and "Radio Liberty" in the USA and in Munich, remained true to her love. For many years she collected Nabokov's interviews, reviews of his books, articles and essays about him, and pasted them into separate albums. She particularly carefully preserved a dozen of Nabokov's most open love letters to her written during their affair. Still in Paris (almost immediately after the break and many years later), Nabokov tried through friends to get her to return his letters to his "illegal comet," but had no success (his letters together with the poetess's diaries are in a private collection in the US).

Our republication of Guadanini's book "Letters" (*Renome*, St. Petersburg, 2012, print run 500) commemorates the events in Paris at the time of her love for Nabokov (under the sign of Mnemosyne).

Irina Guadanini, née Kokoshkina, was born in Tambov in 1904.

--Evgenii Belodubrovksy, St. Petersburg, Russia (trans. Priscilla Meyer)

Annotations to *Ada*, 37:
Part 1 Chapter 37
Brian Boyd

Forenote

At Ardis the Second Van and Ada have been intensely together, even if sometimes, to Van's frustration, in company with many others, or with just Lucette. Now Van feels the greyness of a whole day without Ada.

He also feels the strangeness of a prolonged scene with his mother, Marina, who thinks *he* thinks her only his aunt. This scene continues the established comedy of Mlle Larivière's misdirected suspicion of Van's overfondness toward Lucette and her blindness toward his actual ardor for Ada, and of Marina's virtually ignoring her children until she remembers to play her "role" as mother. While Ada has learned ways to silence her mother, "to prevent Marina from appropriating the conversation and transforming it into a lecture on the theater" (62.31-32), Van has not, and after the comedy of *his* panicked misapprehension that Mlle Larivière must have seen him with Ada, we witness the comedy of Marina's unstoppably and skittishly playing the actress, the concerned aunt-mother, the rakish Zemski girl, the jilted woman, the emotional stage sage.

Van's greyness does not lift on Ada's return. His suspicion that her trip to Kaluga was more, or less, than a visit to a gynecologist to see whether she is pregnant infects their reunion and his narration, and seems almost confirmed by her false notes in acting the injured party. Van could hardly stop Marina talking; Ada for once has little to say.

The chapter also introduces in passing the theme of the beginning of the Crimean War (Antiterra's Second Crimean War, that is), which will help shape the near future for Ada and Van, although how is not yet clear: *was* Van "serious when