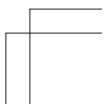
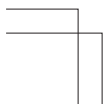


**Revising Nabokov Revising**

**The International Nabokov Conference  
in Kyoto, 2010**



**The Nabokov Society of Japan**





## **Revising Nabokov Revising**

# **The International Nabokov Conference in Kyoto, 2010**

**March 24 - 27, 2010  
at Conference Hall, Co-op Inn Kyoto, Kyoto, Japan**



**The Nabokov Society of Japan  
Supported by the Japan Foundation**

## **Program**

***March 24***

**16:00 – 18:00  
18:00 – 20:00**

**Registration and Book Display  
Opening Reception and Buffet  
(at Restaurant Patio on the 1st floor)**

**March 25**

**9:00 – 10:30 Presentations**

1. Andrei Babikov (The Culture Center of Ukraine in Moscow)  
"Nabokov's Revisions of *Lolita* in the Screenplay"
2. Jacqueline Hamrit (Université Charles-de-Gaulle, Lille3)  
"Generic Glidings and Endless Writing from *The Enchanter* to *Lolita*:  
A Screenplay through *Lolita*"
3. Julian W. Connolly (University of Virginia)  
"Nabokov Revising Nabokov: The *Lolita* Screenplays"

**10:30 – 11:00 Coffee Break**

**11:00 – 12:30 Presentations**

4. Shun'ichiro Akikusa (University of Tokyo)  
"Nabokov's 'Natural Idiom': From 'First-rate' Russian to 'Second-rate'  
English"
5. Marie C. Bouchet (University of Toulouse)  
"Vladimir Nabokov, or How to Turn Exile into Art"
6. Ljuba Tarvi (Helsinki University)  
"Female Protagonists in Nabokov's Russian Novels: No Stars in the  
Cast?"

**12:30 – 13:30 Lunch Break**

**13:30 – 14:30 Plenary Speaker: Maurice Couturier**

**"*Lolita* Revisited by a New Annotator"**

**14:30 – 15:30 Presentations**

7. Tadashi Wakashima (Kyoto University)  
"Another Road to *Lolita*: A Transatlantic View"
8. Catharine T. Nepomnyashchy (Columbia University)  
"Revising Nabokov Revising the Detective Novel: Vladimir, Agatha,  
and the Terms of Engagement"

**15:30 – 16:00 Coffee Break**

**16:00 – 17:00 Presentations**

9. Maya Medlock (Yamaguchi University)  
"*La Figlia che Piange*—Tears in *Lolita*"
10. Akiko Nakata (Nanzan Junior College)  
"Some Spiritual Subtexts Hidden in *Transparent Things*"

**March 26**

**9:00 – 10:30 Presentations**

11. Leland de la Durantaye (Harvard University)  
"Bend Sinister's Mad Dash or How to Impersonate an Anthropomorphic Deity"
12. Kazunao Sugimoto (Aichi Shukutoku University)  
"Nabokov's Orpheus Stories"
13. Maxim D. Shrayer (Boston College)  
"Saving Jewish-Russian Émigrés"

**10:30 – 11:00 Coffee Break**

**11:00 – 12:30 Presentations**

14. Maria Alhambra (University of East Anglia)  
"Time Camouflaged, or the Riddle of the Map: Paratextual Elements and Temporal Structure in the 1966 Revision of *Speak, Memory*"
15. Siggy Frank (University of Nottingham)  
"Revis(it)ing Memories: Images in Nabokov's Autobiography"
16. Ellen Pifer (University of Delaware)  
"Folding His Magic Carpet: Nabokov's *Speak, Memory* and *Lolita*"

**12:30 – 13:30 Lunch Break**

**13:30 – 14:30 Plenary Speaker: Brian Boyd  
"Nabokov as Psychologist: Routes for Exploration"**

**14:30 – 15:30 Presentations**

17. Nobuaki Kakinuma (Kobe Shoin Women's University)  
"From the *Onegin* Commentary to *Pale Fire*: Comparing the Annotations of Nabokov and Lotman"
18. Mitsuyoshi Numano (University of Tokyo)  
"On Stylistic Exuberance of *The Gift* as a Russian Novel"

**15:30 – 16:00 Coffee Break**

**16:00 – 17:00 Presentations**

19. Jean-Pierre Luauté (Psychiatrist, Romans, France)  
"Was Nabokov a Psychologist?: About *Despair* and Nabokov's Inflexible Criticism of Freud's Doctrine"
20. Susan Elizabeth Sweeney (College of the Holy Cross)  
"'Almost Completed but Only Partly Corrected': Enacting Revision in Nabokov"

***March 27***

**9:00 – 10:00 Presentations**

21. Maria Malikova (Pushkinskii Dom)  
"A Phantom Russian Poet: Vladimir Nabokov's Poetics and Position  
in the Late 1930s – Early 1950s"
22. Masataka Konishi (Tokyo Gakugei University)  
"Nabokov's Paradox"

**10:00 – 10:30 Coffee Break**

**10:30 – 12:00 Presentations**

23. Stephen Blackwell (University of Tennessee)  
"Nabokov's (Dostoevskian?) Loopholes"
24. Yuri Leving (Dalhousie University)  
"Nabokov and Hemingway: The Fish That Got Away"
25. Sam Schuman (University of Minnesota)  
"‘The Sun's a Thief’: Nabokov and Shakespeare – A Quantitative  
Approach"

**12:00 End of Conference**

**12:00 – 13:30 Lunch Break**

**14:00 – 16:30 Short Tour  
(Ginkakuji, Shisendo and Philosopher's Walk)**

**16:30 – 21:00 Closing Ceremony and Banquet  
(at Hakusasonso)**

**(17:30 – 18:30) Keynote Speaker: Michael Wood  
"The Afterlife of Sebastian Knight"**

## Nabokov's Revisions of *Lolita* in the Screenplay

Andrei Babikov

The *Lolita* screenplay, initially written by Nabokov in 1960 for Stanley Kubrick, further was elaborated and published as a separate writing in 1973, showing a unique example in Nabokov's oeuvre of numerous revising of his own conception. Genesis and evolution of *Lolita*'s conception went through a variety of metamorphoses, providing opulent matter for a comparative study of Nabokov's narrative and compositional devices in various genres. From the first sketchy essays in story "Volshebnik" (*The Enchanter*), the drama "Izobretenie Val'sa" (*Waltz Invention*, scenes with the Annabelle character), the unpublished continuation of "Dar", referring to the late thirties, in the final evocation in the script of 1973, the theme of fatal affinity of adult man to adolescent girl became more vivid and consequential in Nabokov's writings (this theme emerges again in his very last and unfinished novel). It is also unique that compared with other works by Nabokov this plot was the only one to go through progress and was reconsidered by the author in various genres such as drama, story, poem, novel and screenplay. Therewith *Lolita*'s conception went through reconsiderations and alterations firstly in Russian ("Volshebnik"), then in English (*Lolita*), again in Russian (author's translation of *Lolita*) and once again in English (*Lolita: a screenplay*).

The work we have done while translating the *Lolita* screenplay into Russian has shown different aspects we need to research. These aspects are: which motives and allusions missing in the novel were introduced in the screenplay; what were the new approaches, dealing with genre peculiarities, found by Nabokov; how Quilty, who became in the screenplay an actual character, changed, etc. The other range of questions is connected with another topic. The point is that unlike the novel, where narration is conducted in the first person, in the screenplay the plot becomes objective (while a corresponding transition occurs from past time in the novel to the present time in the screenplay). All this partly represents a return to narration conducted from the third party as in *The Enchanter*.

It would be a mistake to consider the idea embodied in the novel in its entirety being simplified in the screenplay. In the foreword to the screenplay Nabokov qualified it as "a vivacious variant of an old novel." Indeed, a comparison of the novel and the screenplay shows that in spite of a notorious lack in idioms immanent to the drama form as a whole and to the screenplay in particular, Nabokov managed to express in the latest his initial conception with equal strength. In some particular scenes he even succeeded in depicting characters' psychological portraits more vividly, strengthening some essential motives and even introducing new ones. To the latter first of all regarding Edgar Poe's primary statement, expressed in "Drake-Halleck Review" (1836): "Poesy is the sentiment of Intellectual Happiness here and the Hope of a higher Intellectual Happiness hereafter." Nabokov gives the first part of this statement in the screenplay but not in the novel and the interested reader (or scholar) should find its ending by himself. The conclusion of the statement gives light to Humbert's final words: "I'm thinking of aurochs and angels, the secret of durable pigments, prophetic sonnets, the refuge of art. And this is the only immortality you and I may share, my *Lolita*."

Our contemplation of the *Lolita* screenplay shows us that Nabokov aimed to create a synthetic genre – creation, possessing the literary values of a novel and having the ability to be represented as a motion picture in the meantime. In this regard Michael Wood mentioned the following: "Literal and practical in his intentions in writing the screenplay, Nabokov ultimately invented a subtle new genre: the implied film, the work of words which borrows the machinery and landscape of film as a dazzling means to a literary end."

All this is the range of questions supposed to enlighten manifold in the present report.



**Generic Glidings and Endless Writing**  
**from *The Enchanter* to *Lolita: A Screenplay* through *Lolita***

**Jacqueline Hamrit**

From Nabokov's own commentary on the process of revising as illustrated in the preface to *Speak, Memory* where he writes: "This re-Englishing of a Russian re-version of what had been an English re-telling of Russian memories in the first place, proved to be a diabolical task" (*Speak, Memory*, Penguin, [10]), I first would like to analyse the theoretical stakes of the process of revising as it raises the issue of repetition and its deformations (see Kierkegaard's *Repetition*, Deleuze's *Repetition and Difference*, and Derrida's notion of iterability with its analysis of the same and the other) as well as trans-formation with its suppressions, destructions, additions, supplements and renewals.

I then wish to problematize the issue by studying a corpus made of *Lolita* with its original text, *i.e.* *The Enchanter* -- what Nabokov called his 'pre-*Lolita* novella -- and its sequel, *i.e.* *Lolita: A Screenplay* and more particularly certain passages -- such as the description of the nymphet in the park, which appeared in the three versions (with her skates and her curls) or the first apparition of *Lolita* in the novel and the screenplay. I would like to show how Nabokov's cross-generic writing -- from the novella to the novel to the screenplay -- allows an analysis of the functions and performances of literary devices such as dialogue, narrative and image-making, how it enables the study of not only the difference between telling and showing but also the passage from telling -- as in narrative -- to showing -- as in the cinema. I also wish to wonder about the stylistic and hermeneutic effects of formal modifications, such as the shift of the third person narrator in the novella to the first one in *Lolita* as opposed to the conservation of the mother-child-husband scheme.

I then intend to conclude by first, expanding on the similarities, differences and specificities of the three literary genres that the corpus gives example of notably from the point of view of enunciation and, secondly showing how the issue of revising questions -- as if from a metatextual perspective -- the very nature of meaning and its constant regeneration as expressed in Derrida's 'Il n'y pas de hors- texte', as well as writing, being indeed an endless process, as expressed in Blanchot's *The Literary Space* or *The Endless Conversation*.





## Nabokov Revising Nabokov: The *Lolita* Screenplays

Julian W. Connolly

This paper will reexamine Nabokov's revision (and re-envisioning) of *Lolita* as he worked to transform it from novel to film. The process of trying to write a screenplay that would suit himself and film maker Stanley Kubrick proved complicated, and the final results—both Kubrick's film and Nabokov's published screenplay—do not reflect the full complexity of Nabokov's labor on the project. This reexamination will take into consideration both the long screenplay that Nabokov originally wrote for the Kubrick film, and the shorter version which evolved from revisions he made to try to suit Kubrick's requirements and which formed the basis for the 1974 published version. This analysis will of course look at how Nabokov handled the changes necessitated by a shift from a verbal medium to a verbal-visual one. These changes included the diminution of Nabokov's exquisitely crafted language, with its palpable lyricism and abundant word play; the toning down of the sexual element; and the loss of Humbert's dominating first-person narrative perspective, with its distortions and elisions. On the other hand, these losses were matched by the opportunity to explore the possibilities offered by cinematic technique with potentially stunning visual effects (one notes, for example, how strangely Nabokov's screenplay handled the famous parenthetical explanation of the death of Humbert's mother: "picnic, lightning").

The paper will also consider changes that may not have been necessitated by the essential change in the artistic medium, such as a rearrangement in the order in which key events are presented, the addition of new scenes not found in the original novel, and perhaps most importantly, the representation of characters' personalities, ranging from John Ray, Jr. to Clare Quilty and Dolly Haze. Nabokov gives John Ray a larger role, and the contribution Ray makes to voice-overs is one of the more startling emendations crafted by the author. Also in the screenplay, Clare Quilty and Dolly Haze step out of the shadow of Humbert's narrative to become more distinct, rounded characters, and the relationship between the two is treated in more depth. We will give particular attention to Dolly Haze, and consider how the image of the girl that emerges from the screenplay relates to and perhaps differs from the Dolly glimpsed in the novel.







**Nabokov's "Natural Idiom":  
From "First-rate" Russian to "Second-rate" English**

**Shun'ichiro Akikusa**

Who is a superior writer—V. Sirin (his nom de plume as a Russian writer) or Vladimir Nabokov? It is an eternal problem among scholars of Nabokov. Indeed, his works in his later English period have left a strong impression on English readers and contributed to today's widely accepted image of Nabokov. However, in "On a Book Entitled *Lolita*," Nabokov lamented the loss of his "natural idiom" and thought that his Russian was superior to his English.

In this presentation, I venture to regard Nabokov's "natural idiom" literally as a "set phrase or idiomatic expression" in a narrow sense of the word and explore its stylistic characteristics in such works as *The Defense* and "Breaking the News" by comparing them with his English self-translations. When Nabokov translates his own works, he slightly revises the texts and deliberately changes the details, and his "natural idiom" is no exception. Scrutinizing his self-translations and probing how he translated them leads us to understand how he wrote them, because Nabokov's sophisticated writing did not end simply at the level of style but reflected the whole story in minute detail.

Although these examples only represent a very small portion of his complete works, we can understand that Nabokov has already "magically [used his natural idiom] to transcend the heritage in his own way" at least in the 1930s. In my opinion, the unique feature of his Russian style is the fact that he deliberately utilizes the grammar, usage and idiom, which native speakers internalize unconsciously. His Russian style brings out all the idiomatic possibilities of the Russian language. In contrast, his English style often violates the rules of English idiomatic usage.



Moreover, through this comparison, we can show that he remodeled them by self-reference and tricky word play to meet his self-image as an English writer, though he partly retained the mechanism of his Russian style. It seems to be the strategy of Nabokov as an English writer in the critical stream of post-modernism. When he translated his early Russian works, his consciousness as an English writer made him customize them to his later manner. Comparing his English and Russian works, we also gain a more profound view about his English style.

We may proceed from the aforementioned argumentation to the provisional conclusion that one of the tendencies of the Russian versions is comparatively economical, polysemantic and untranslatable, and one of the tendencies of the English versions is comparatively translatable.



## Vladimir Nabokov, or How to Turn Exile into Art

Marie C. Bouchet



Nabokov scholars often feel estranged either from the world of Russian or American Studies because they study a writer who changed language, and who lived most of his life elsewhere than in the country to which his literature belongs. I would like to demonstrate how the experience of exile is crucial to Nabokov in terms of creation. Being a stranger all his life—the term “stranger” etymologically refers to being “outside of something”—the notions of distance and limit shaped his consciousness, and gave this very particular tinge to his writings in Russian, French, and English. In his novels and shorts stories, many foreign characters are to be found, as main focalizers or first-person narrators, who are forever estranged, due to geographical borders, temporal distances or linguistic barriers. Nabokov mastered three languages, and therefore questions the very concept of a “foreign” language. His English, which he claimed was merely “second rate”(1), is indeed not conventional, but it has a unique poetic flavor. Maybe because he “did not think in any language, but in images”(2), his condition as a foreigner was not as alienating. Unlike most of his characters, hybridization seems to have been a powerful source of his creativity, as displayed in his linguistic virtuosity and his constant play with words. In order to illustrate how displacement can be seen as a key to Nabokov’s works and aesthetics, this paper develops analyses along two lines: first, it focuses on the recurrence of displacement throughout his works in terms of characterization, structure, and language. Secondly, it analyzes the function of the many foreign words to be found in his writings and the type of semiotic displacement they engage, and which sometimes makes us feel we are reading some unmastered foreign language.

(1) Vladimir Nabokov, “On a Book Entitled *Lolita*”, *The Annotated Lolita*, New York: Vintage, 1995, 316.

(2) Vladimir Nabokov, *Strong Opinions*, New York: McGraw Hill, 1973, 14.

## **Female Protagonists in Nabokov's Russian Novels: No Stars in the Cast?**

**Ljuba Tarvi**


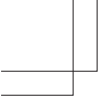
The present study, a part of the project “Vladimir Nabokov: One Writer, Two Languages. One Style?”, has resulted from the style-related question asked by a student of mine, “Why do Nabokov’s female protagonists seem to be strangely ‘unpleasant’ even when they are acting ‘pleasantly’?” Reformulated as “How does Nabokov stylistically create the ‘sub-feeling’ of a concealed disregard?”, the question is the subject of this paper.

The analytical method, rooted in the notion of a descriptive structural metaphor (hereafter DSM), is applied to Vladimir Nabokov’s (VN) nine Russian novels as regards his female protagonists (FP). The method is based on three explanatory hypotheses pertaining to the nature of creativity in general and style in particular: style as gestalt, style as a conceptual metaphor, and style as a set of stylistic options. My hypothesis is that VN’s Russian FPs produce an ‘unpleasant’ impression because the DSMs used to describe them are predominantly negative. My second hypothesis is that most of the DSMs scattered in the texts to depict FPs are what Milic calls ‘stylistic options’ (unconscious choices) and, hence, eligible for classification.

The textual traits chosen for analysis are the seven aspects of DSMs VN used to describe the outward appearance of his FPs. They are the impressions obtained from the organs of perception: (1) the eye – body/gestures, hair/hairdo, face/mime, eyes/look, clothes/shoes, (2) the ear – voice/laughter, (3) and the nose – scent/smell. Only the FPs depicted in at least six aspects out of the chosen seven are considered eligible for analysis, which limits the number of the analyzed FPs to twenty.

The pool of the obtained data makes it possible to assert that the considered FPs can be grouped into two major blocks of DSMs: stable, i.e. remaining unchanged in terms of positive/negative traits throughout the narrative, and dynamic, i.e. displaying changes in certain traits from positive to negative or vice versa. As is revealed by analysis, the FPs in the Russian novels can be classified into at least seven DSM classes: predominantly positive stable DSMs: Luzhin’s aunt (TLD) and Luzhin’s wife (TLD); predominantly negative stable DSMs: Luydmila (M), Luzhin’s mother (TLD), Matilda (TE), and Marianna (TG); mixed stable DSMs: Klara (M), Martin’s mother Sofia (G), and Alla (G); predominantly positive stable DSMs with implied negative traits: Vanya (TE), Marthe (ItaB), and Olga Sokratovna (TG); predominantly negative stable DSMs with implied positive traits: Elisabeth (LitD), and Lydia (D); dynamic DSMs evolving from positive to negative traits: Mary (M), Martha (KQK), and Sonia (G); and the ‘Child – Woman’ DSM: Margot (LitD), Emmie (ItaB), and Zina (TG). There are reasons to believe that the last mentioned type of DSM can be viewed as a mega-metaphor.



The analysis has confirmed both hypotheses. No conclusion, however, could be final until the fully symmetrical English-language half of VN’s novelistic oeuvre is studied along the same lines.



## ***Lolita* Revisited by a New Annotator**

### **Plenary Speaker: Maurice Couturier**



Alfred Appel, Jr.'s annotated edition of *Lolita* has amply served its purpose, but, since it first appeared in 1970, our understanding of that novel has been immensely enriched by the Nabokovian community. The present annotator, who is also the translator of *Lolita* and the chief editor of Nabokov's novels in the prestigious Pléiade series known for its copious critical apparatuses, has tried to bring his own contribution to this gigantic enterprise. In this paper, he doesn't try to itemize all his discoveries but focuses his attention on two sets of his annotations in that edition. First, he analyzes the contents of Nabokov's cards deposited at the Library of Congress, the only proper manuscripts at our disposal for this particular novel, going over the ample material gathered by Nabokov from newspapers, magazines, and books on such topics as the development of a girl's body at puberty, sex, teenage slang, legal jargon, and literary references, and he also examines the fragments of manuscripts Nabokov toyed with at some point. In a second section, he concentrates on intertexts which hadn't been unearthed yet, like Vigneau's *Lolita*, or *Nocturnal Revels* where Nabokov obviously dug out the name of Charlotte Haze, and many echoes of French literary works he passed on to his French-speaking narrator. These two sets of annotations tend to show that desire and sex are much more important in this novel than Alfred Appel, Jr. suggested in his annotated edition.





## Another Road to *Lolita*: A Transatlantic View

Tadashi Wakashima





There is no question that *Lolita*'s status as one of the great masterpieces of modern fiction owes not a little to Graham Greene. Asked by the London *Sunday Times* to give his choice of the three best books of 1955, he slipped in *Lolita*, an almost unknown book in UK at that time. This generous gesture from a distinguished writer like Greene offered Nabokov the much-needed moral support, and Greene's farcical skirmish with the *Sunday Express* editor John Gordon, who condemned *Lolita* as "the filthiest book I have ever read" and "sheer unrestrained pornography," served as an ideal publicity for promoting *Lolita* in America. Nevertheless, what Greene actually saw in *Lolita* remains a mystery. Even if we learn that the other two books Greene selected were *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Italy, Corsica, and France, 1765-1766* (W. Heinemann) and *The State of France: A Study of Contemporary France* (Secker and Warburg) by Herbert Luthy, the fact does not help us much. These three certainly make an odd trio, and all we can say is that they share France as a common denominator. In his letter to Nabokov dated January 1957, Greene praised *Lolita* as a "superb book," but did not give any specific reason why it was so (*Selected Letters* 198). When they dined together in London for the occasion of the publication of the British edition in November 1959, it was discovered that Greene had mistaken Nabokov for a Catholic convert like Humbert Humbert from a passage in *Lolita* (Boyd, *American Years* 398). This curious misreading throws much doubt whether Greene read *Lolita* as we read it now. Furthermore, Greene later tried to sell the Olympia Press first edition inscribed to him, which reveals that the book was not so dear to him (Gekoski, *Nabokov's Butterfly* 1-12).

The evidence above strongly suggests that the reason why Greene admired *Lolita* must be sought in his own taste and interest. My main concern here is to find what was there behind the Greene-Gordon controversy. Particularly, I will explore the so-called "mushroom jungle" – a horde of lurid paperbacks which proliferated and gained a large popularity in postwar Britain – and see how *Lolita* could be mistakenly considered as a typical product belonging to that genre. In other words, this paper will attempt to provide a transatlantic counterpart to Alfred Appel Jr.'s pioneering cultural study *Nabokov's Dark Cinema* which lovingly depicts how the background of American popular culture in the first half of the twentieth century paved the way for the appearance and acceptance of *Lolita*.



## Revising Nabokov Revising the Detective Novel: Vladimir, Agatha, and the Terms of Engagement

Catharine Theimer Nepomnyashchy



In the spirit of the announced topic of the conference, I would like to take a deeper, revisionist look at the way Nabokov “revises,” that is, incorporates the detective novel into his works, with particular attention to his transformation and incorporation of Agatha Christie’s works into his own fictions. In his October 11, 1944 letter to Edmund Wilson—in which he responds to Wilson’s *New Yorker* article, “Why Do People Read Detective Stories?”—Nabokov maintains that, “Of course, Agatha is unreadable.” Yet read her he did, as evidenced most famously by his listing of Christie’s 1950 novel *A Murder is Announced* among the holdings of the library of the prison in which Humbert Humbert is incarcerated. As Alfred Appel points out in *The Annotated Lolita*, this reference to Christie’s novel, in which the victim turns out to be the murderer in the end, appears just before a murder is indeed announced in Nabokov’s novel. I would suggest, however, that this, seemingly tongue in cheek reference to Christie’s work represents something more than a slight contribution to the intertextual jouissance of *Lolita*. I will develop my argument by looking at other appropriations of Christie in Nabokov’s works, most particularly in *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* and *Despair*, to examine how Nabokov engages the popular form of the detective novel to pose profound questions about the function of literature. In this context, I am less interested in the way *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*, as has hitherto been noted by critics, follows the trajectory of a detective novel in its narrative conception, than in the function of Sebastian Knight’s “own” novel *The Prismatic Bezel*, with its “through the looking glass” juxtaposition of a Russian country estate with a detective fiction indebted to Agatha Christie, in which the murder victim G. Abeson turns out at the end to be alive in the guise Old Nosebag (a mirror image, G. Abeson spelled backwards). Here, as in *Despair*, Nabokov presents us with the challenge of a text that is constructed on a fundamental tension between two apparently incompatible modes of literary practice. Following from this observation, I will argue that Nabokov engages Agatha Christie and the detective novel in his works, as he does other twentieth-century cultural phenomena that pose challenges to traditional conceptions of the boundaries of “high” literature, in order simultaneously, to appropriate popular fiction’s power to seduce the reader and to pose the problem of the function of literature in an age when it is challenged by politics and competing forms of culture.





## ***La Figlia che Piange: Tears in Lolita***

**Maya Medlock**

As Fyodor Konstantinovich in *The Gift* finds in his biography of Chernyshevski what he calls “the theme of tears”, we can easily find the same theme also in *Lolita*. We will examine how this theme could enrich our reading of this novel.

First we will focus on the theme of water, a wider theme of which the tear theme is a subsidiary. It goes without saying that water is a recurrent and important image in this novel and appears in all kinds of forms.

It is obvious that the image of water is principally linked with Charlotte, but it seems also to work as a medium that connects main characters. Humbert and Lolita are connected by tears, our chief concern here. Although we pay attention to Lolita’s tears and sobs, we do not give much thought to Humbert’s tears. He often tries to impress the reader as a tremendous crier and likes to describe his “ability” to shed tears. It might be fair to say that Humbert has at least the sense to tell us about Lolita’s tears and sobs, not hiding her sorrow, pain and helplessness from our eyes. What is wicked about him, however, is that he also does not forget to mention his own tears and sobs, which almost overwhelm those of Lolita.



The purpose of his referring to Lolita’s tears is to equalize her and himself. Tears are what they share and what make them resemble each other. When Humbert explains his perfect relationship with Annabel he mentions “affinities”, suggesting that true and ideal love should be based on two people’s having affinities. Humbert and Lolita, completely different from each other in many ways, could not be united with any affinity. Humbert still makes his vain efforts to find a kind of affinity and tears are what he believes makes them resemble each other. By producing his own image as a character shedding profuse tears, Humbert believes he can be closer to his nymphet and then be an ideal lover to her.

Charlotte and Lolita transform themselves in this novel, but Humbert does not, stuck in his own despicable male character forever. We notice his hidden desire to transform himself into someone else who is remotest from himself and very close to Lolita. When we read the beginning of chapter 27 of Part 2, where “transformation” is one of its features, we are able to detect one desperate desire for transformation. The following, rather mystifying, phrase “as I leant against an adjacent urn, almost my own” (261), might be read as a very subtle allusion to T. S. Eliot’s “*La Figlia che Piange*”, in which the poet chants “Lean on a garden urn-- / Weave, weave the sunlight in your hair--”. Although “the girl who weeps” should be Lolita, here Humbert steals the role from her. Humbert’s attempts to get himself as close as possible to the image of a crying girl end up in increasing his grotesqueness.



## Some Spiritual Subtexts Hidden in *Transparent Things*

Akiko Nakata

In *Transparent Things*, Nabokov's biographical and bibliographical implications, literary allusions, word plays, and repetitiously appearing images and properties form some multi-layered themes relating with each other below the surface of "reality" of the novella. For example, as I have written before,<sup>(1)</sup> in "Amilcar" in Chapter 26, we see a Carthaginian military commander rendered as the protagonist of *Salammbô* by Flaubert, one of the authors Nabokov highly evaluated and lectured on at Cornell; the brand name of French sports cars popular in the 1950s and 1960s; a driving lady with a little dog on the back seat obviously alluding to Chekhov's "The Lady with the Little Dog" and its Nabokovian version, "Spring in Fialta." Moreover, Hannibal, who was literally born from "Amilcar," his father, functions as a kind of hub connecting some episodes such as Hugh's climbing the Alps, Hugh's father's agonizingly clambering huge blocks in his nightmare, an African nun touching her first clock of dandelion, Hugh and Armande talking about the region Savoie, and several deaths in/concerning fire in the work. Hannibal also reminds us of Abram Gannibal, Pushkin's great-grandfather, on whom Nabokov has written an essay. Thus "Amilcar" centers some subtexts and stories on various levels of the novella.

In this presentation, I am going to focus on some spiritual subtexts hidden in the work. Nabokov fills the text with references and allusions to death, the dead, ghosts, the possibility of being after death and messages from the hereafter. Probably in the first place, he means to draw the reader's attention to the identity of the mysterious narrators. Brian Boyd calls the uniqueness of the narrative strategy "a story behind the story." Moreover, there exist subtexts alluding to spirituality, which we could call, following Boyd, "stories behind the story behind the story."<sup>(2)</sup> An example is "the Boston strangler," only once mentioned by the narrator. This simply seems to hint at Hugh's strangling his wife; however, we can find another connection between a serial murder in Boston in the early 1960s and the novella. A psychic with clairvoyance was invited to Boston to investigate the case with the police. His extrasensory perception allegedly enabled him to see someone's past, present and future, that is, what the ghosts-narrators in the novella are supposed to do. A few other subtexts, a story of Sherlock Holmes and "The Vane Sisters," also provide the spiritual layers under the surface of the work. They not only have to do with something spiritual, but also reveal the fundamental way the novella is devised. The difficulty for the readers to notice these indirect quotations from the subtexts convinces us that these subtexts are chosen and hidden by the author, who wishes them to be found out and, at the same time, remain unaware, as he often does with the theme of death.

(1) Akiko Nakata, "Some Subtexts Hidden in Nabokov's *Transparent Things*." *Ivy Never Sere*. Ed. Mutsumu Takikawa, et al. Tokyo: Otowa-Shobo Tsurumi-Shoten, 2009. 220-23.


(2) Brian Boyd, "Nabokov as Storyteller." *The Cambridge Companion to Nabokov*. Ed. Julian W. Connolly. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005. 40.






***Bend Sinister's* Mad Dash  
or How to Impersonate an Anthropomorphic Deity**

**Leland de la Durantaye**



Vladimir Nabokov's books end surprisingly. In some cases the surprise takes the form of sudden and suffusing warmth, as in *Lolita*, whereas in others there is a valedictory distancing like the blurb which ends *Ada, or Ardor*. In still others, the final surprise radiates back through all that precedes it, casting the novel in a new light. *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*, for instance, ends with Sebastian's half-brother and biographer declaring, "I am Sebastian, or Sebastian is I, or perhaps we both are someone whom neither of us knows." Many clues have been strewn along the way which might lead us to believe that this is a literal lowering of the mask—that the novel is to be understood as Sebastian Knight writing a novel in the form of a faux-biography. And yet it is equally possible that Sebastian's brother is as real a character as Sebastian, and that he is expressing a particularly intense form of imaginative identification—or of incipient insanity. In a more complex variation on the theme of authorial identity, *Pale Fire* famously ends with a series of still more startling suggestions. No ending in Nabokov's oeuvre, however, is so strange or so strongly encourages its reader to see the preceding in a new light as *Bend Sinister*. I propose to discuss the image of creator and creation to be found at the end of this work and to relate it to larger aesthetic and ethical questions in Nabokov's writing.







## Nabokov's Orpheus Stories

Kazunao Sugimoto

Among the works of Nabokov, there are stories in which the protagonist loses his beloved woman, mostly by death, and struggles in vain to find a way to get her back. This is considered to be one of Nabokov's favorite ways of creating fiction, and here I will call his works of this type, Orpheus Stories.

Even in his earliest works, several Orpheus Stories can be found, among which "The Return of Chorb," a short story, describes the most obvious Orpheus pattern. The protagonist, Chorb, tries to recreate his deceased wife by recollecting her images and fragments while traveling backward through memories of their honeymoon, struggling against the irreversibility of time. As with Chorb, the protagonist of *Mary* also reconstructs the fragments of the past, to make a piece of literature that can be appreciated. In this sense, it can be said that the two protagonists are both able to get back their lost lovers by becoming authors of their own stories for all that they are characters of third-person narrative.





The protagonist of Nabokov's last Russian piece, "Ultima Thule," performs the most sorrowful Orpheus role. After his beloved wife dies in pregnancy, he tries to get her back in several ways. First, by writing a long letter to his wife, he dreams of establishing virtual correspondence with her. Second, through a long dialogue with an insane prophet, he attempts to obtain the very secret of 'the other world' to which his wife belongs. And finally, he thinks of creating a story in an imaginary country in an imaginary age, a story named "Ultima Thule," in which his lover will live a second life. Here again, the last attempt to get back the lost beloved appears to be the act of becoming the 'author' of a story.

*Lolita* could be considered the finest of Orpheus stories. After reviving his lost love, Annabel, through the body of another girl, Lolita, Humbert Humbert (HH) is doomed to lose even Lolita to Quilty, the playwright who is actually controlling and 'creating' the story of HH and Lolita. HH kills Quilty, but murdering the author does not bring his love back to him. In order to get her back and 'own' her completely, HH has to rewrite the story and become its second author. Therefore, the prose style of HH should be one of the most valuable arguments to justify HH's Orpheus role when scrutinizing *Lolita*. We have to observe closely how HH's words and style recreate the initial story and turn it into his own wonderland.



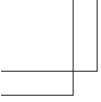


## Saving Jewish-Russian Émigrés

Maxim D. Shroyer



In a series of English- and Russian-language essays published in 1997-2001, I argued for the centrality of Jewish characters, themes, and predicaments to Nabokov's biography and artistic vision. I have previously suggested that Nabokov had been negotiating Jewish questions in his personal and professional life throughout his Berlin-based 1920s and 1930s before turning his attention to principal Jewish characters in the fiction of the 1930s, especially *The Gift*. In this paper I would like to present further textual evidence for Nabokov's Jewish concerns and Judaic explorations, this time drawn from Nabokov's Russian short fiction. At the center of my analysis lies one of the finest stories of the middle period, "Perfection" ("Sovershenstvo," 1932), where a Russian émigré tutor saves a Jewish-Russian boy. I will argue that in "Perfection," composed in Berlin less than two years before the birth of Nabokov's son Dmitri, Nabokov already anticipates the horrific scenario of Jewish loss while charging his privileged representative Ivanov, an idealized Russian *intelligent*, with the task of rescuing David not only from physical death but also from assimilation and loss of a dual, Jewish-Russian identity. The story "Breaking the News" ("Opoveshchenie," 1934), written in Berlin over a year after the Nazi takeover of Germany, offers a stark contrast to both "Perfection" and to what Nabokov the novelist would attempt in *The Gift*. In "Breaking the News" Nabokov cannot protect an émigré Jewish mother from losing her son; yet he must find a way of being a messenger of history. Nightmarish visions travel with Nabokov across the Atlantic to reach a crescendo in "Signs and Symbols." Burdened with the memory of the Holocaust, in America the émigré Nabokov seeks and finds—with the greatest perfection in *Pnin*—a formula of making art from the misplaced baggage of Russia Abroad. In this baggage, the ashes of European Jewry are strewn over the yellowing pages of émigré culture, and Nabokov cannot forget Jewish-Russian children even though he can no longer rescue them from his fiction.





**Time Camouflaged, or the Riddle of the Map:  
Paratextual Elements and Temporal Structure  
in the 1966 Revision of *Speak, Memory***

**Maria Alhambra**

My paper looks at paratextual revisions in the 1966 edition of *Speak, Memory*. Some of its components, for instance the photographs, have received critical attention; but my intention is to explore the paratext as a whole, using Gérard Genette's theory in order to understand its function and influence in the readerly experience, specifically in relation to the book's patterns and temporal structure.

The first incarnation of the text, published in 1951, had almost no paratextual elements, apart from the title page and a short 'Author's note'. Its only aim was to ensure the text was read as an autobiography. Since the posthumous publication of Chapter 16 we are aware that Nabokov also intended to provide exhaustive guidance to the book's thematic patterns for his readers; but one could speculate that this chapter was not published because it was redundant, as the book's structure is explained inside the text.



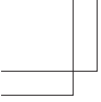


The paratext of the 1966 edition combines the functions of the original paratext and of chapter 16, but it uses a different strategy than the unpublished mock review. All the elements perform both functions at the same time. They describe of the history of the text and the reasons behind its rewriting, and illustrate different aspects of it. But they also hide riddles and unexplained allusions which reveal different aspects of the book's pattern. These riddles are formulated through dimensional games, presenting distorted mirror images of different aspects of the temporal structure.

The paratext becomes in 1966 an integral part of the book's structure, illustrating its concerns and guiding the reader through its sometimes conflicting demands. The verbal elements, the index and the foreword present the memoir as an edifice in which its patterns create a sense of eternal delay and infinity. One of these mystery allusions (which links the cornerstone chapter of the autobiography with the present moment of writing in a shared view of the same lake) offers a concise example of Nabokov's spiral temporal patterns and the mysterious prolepses of his future in his past.

The visual elements, on the other hand, highlight the shadow, the reverse of this edifice. The photographs offer a silent mirror image of the book's structure which brings chronological order into focus. The map, with its curious reversal of its cardinal points, is a surprisingly enigmatic comment on the relation between space and time. The apparently objective image of Vyra is actually seen from the direction of his memories (coming from St Petersburg). Static space is traversed by time and becomes mobile and finite. It is ultimately linked to the reoccurring theme of jumping into a picture, representing the memoir itself as an attempt to jump into the picture of his past.

Ultimately, Nabokov's revision of the paratext of his autobiography offers the reader a fragmented, but solvable, jigsaw puzzle which illuminates the text's complex temporal arrangement.





## Revis(it)ing Memories: Images in Nabokov's Autobiography

**Siggy Frank**

Nabokov returned several times to the initial version of his autobiography, *Conclusive Evidence* (1951), developing a Russian variant, *Drugie berega* (1954), as well as another English version, *Speak, Memory: An Autobiography Revisited* (1966). In this last reworking of his personal memoir, Nabokov made substantial changes apart from textual revisions, by including a map, family photographs, and a reproduction of a painting. The addition of these 'visual texts' was not just an afterthought, as Nabokov's correspondence with his publisher Walter Minton at G. P. Putnam's sons demonstrates (held at the Berg Collection, New York Public Library). Here Nabokov carefully stipulated the exact order and appearance of the illustrations, indicating that in his thinking the included images are a deliberate and integral part of this final version of his autobiography.

This paper looks at Nabokov's visual revisions to *Speak, Memory* and investigates the role they play in the process of revising, remembering and creating the past. I will also explore the way in which the images interact with the written text, in particular with the captions Nabokov wrote for each image. As well as discussing the way in which Nabokov extends his written text to encompass a whole visual space, this paper argues that through his use of images Nabokov locates his memoir at the intersection of reality and imagination.







## Folding His Magic Carpet: Nabokov's *Speak, Memory* and *Lolita*

**Ellen Pifer**

“I confess I do not believe in time,” Nabokov states in his memoir. “I like to fold my magic carpet . . . in such a way as to superimpose one part of the pattern upon another.” Skimming through half a century and over landscapes divided by vast seas, Nabokov’s magic carpet introduces “timelessness” into the very fabric of *Speak, Memory*. Such folds in the pattern are displayed throughout the text—where a sought-after butterfly or battered suitcase travels through space and time, linking elements of the remote past to the writer’s present.

In the deeper recesses of *Speak, Memory* less obvious folds of the pattern also emerge: folds that not only interleave memorable phases of the author’s life but share significant facets of his artistic vision. At the midpoint of the twentieth century, Nabokov was simultaneously composing two seminal works of his literary career. In conjunction with his memoir recalling “the legendary Russia” of his boyhood and youth, he was, as he says in the afterword to *Lolita*, “inventing America” in the novel that would make him internationally famous. The contrast between the respective settings of these disparate works, not to speak of their narrators, could hardly be more striking. Yet the close kinship between *Speak, Memory* and *Lolita* produces a distinctive tonal as well as thematic resonance—seamlessly interweaving the Russian and American patterns of Nabokov’s life and art.

The index to *Speak, Memory* mentions *Lolita* only twice, each time referring to the period of the novel’s composition; the text of the memoir yields more telling correspondences. Describing the many children’s parties that he attended as a youth, Nabokov singles out, on more than one occasion, “this or that graceful little girl” who had “bewitched” him as a boy. While such images hint at the shimmering presence of *Lolita*’s nymphet in the consciousness constructing *Speak, Memory*, they only begin to suggest the rich interplay of themes uniting these two works. In the memoir as in the novel, the triumph of memory over time’s arrow is often tinged with remorse. Wincing at the careless acts of cruelty he committed in pursuit of his personal “gratification,” Nabokov looks back at his youthful conduct with a sense of shame that finds amplified echo in Humbert’s guilt-laden memory. When, moreover, Nabokov recounts his early infatuations, beginning with Colette at the age of ten and culminating in his love affair with Tamara, he exposes the nature of his romantic obsession in a way that sheds light on Humbert’s own. His adolescent worship of the “nymphan” Polenka, daughter of the Nabokovs’ head coachman, is a case in point—one that has received little attention thus far. In *Speak, Memory*, as I intend to show, Nabokov’s account of his youthful infatuation with Russian Polenka sheds light on Humbert’s relationship to Dolores Haze and his adoration of *Lolita*.







## Nabokov as Psychologist: Routes for Exploration

### Plenary Speaker: Brian Boyd

Nabokov once responded to Robbe-Grillet's claims that his fiction eliminated psychology by calling them "preposterous. . . . the shifts of levels, the interpenetration of successive impressions and so forth belong of course to psychology—psychology at its best." Reminded of this in another interview, and asked "Are you a psychological novelist?" he answered: "All novelists of any worth are psychological novelists."

Perhaps it is time to revise or refresh or expand our sense of Nabokov by considering him as a serious (and of course a playful) psychologist. He applied his scientific curiosity, his gift for precise observation and his artistic inventiveness to psychology. Indeed much of his famous antipathy to Freud derived from his passion for psychology. To what extent does Nabokov replicate or anticipate findings in abnormal, clinical, personality and social psychology, in the psychology of perception, attention, emotion, memory, and imagination? What precursors in fictional psychology (Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Proust, Joyce?) does he emulate or challenge? What can we learn from both the psychology implicit and explicit in the characters of his fiction and other creative work, and from the psychology implicit in his relation to his readers? How does the tension between Nabokov as scientist and moralist ("a filthy murderer with the brain of a tapeworm") affect his psychological analysis? What suggestions in his work might psychology pursue?

This will be no definitive map of the terrain, just a suggestion that it will be worth exploring and that we would need to explore at least the paths I will point to.



## From the *Onegin* Commentary to *Pale Fire*: Comparing Annotations of Nabokov and Lotman

Nobuaki Kakinuma

Vladimir Nabokov's *Pale Fire* can be broken down into the following three components. First is the completed verse text written by author John Shade, whose meaning is absolutely unfathomable. The possibility that the original text might have been rewritten by annotator Charles Kinbote is not excluded. Second is John Shade's original creative outline. Third is Kinbote's free imagination about Shade's original plans. In other words, the novel comprises three factors: the author's primary literary intentions, the "defective text" (usage by Lotman in Russian) wherein a plot line is not necessarily obvious to the reader, and the annotator's imagination used to reconstruct the author's unclear plot line. Nabokov's idea that such an interrelation is dominant in the structure of the novel is a product of his long-term research on Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*.

Pushkin's novel in verse can be considered an imperfect (defective) text. Pushkin discarded the main part of *Onegin's Journey*, and destroyed Chapter X, which deals with the Decembrist movement, for fear of again becoming entangled in political trouble. As a result, the chronological sequence of the story was disturbed, and some of the actions and events the protagonist was involved in remained enigmatic. On the basis of the text, it is unknown where Onegin was 1) for the three years and several months between June 3, 1821 and the late summer or autumn of 1824 when he again met Tatiana; 2) for approximately eight months from the spring (April?) of 1825 to December 14, 1825, the fatal day of the uprising. Due to this omission, a dispute occurred between Nabokov (1899–1977) and Yuri Lotman (1922–1993) regarding the probability of Onegin's travel in Western Europe and his involvement in the Decembrist movement. Both critics investigated Pushkin's real plans through the testimonies of the poet's contemporaries and miscellaneous verse fragments.

Nabokov first published a translation of *Eugene Onegin* with the commentary in 1964. In 1980, around 20 years later, Lotman, a leader of the Tartu structural semiotics school, released Pushkin's last annotated masterpiece, scrutinizing Nabokov's 1964 publication. I take Lotman's annotation to be a criticism of Nabokov's notes. Comparing the two books, I find Nabokov's explanations in the notes to be intertwined with subjective assumptions; in other words, Nabokov as a writer exercises pure imagination for the creative development of Pushkin's ideas. For example, while Nabokov implies that Onegin may have witnessed the December 14, 1825 uprising after the refusal by Tatiana and his ensuing Melmoth (a hero of Charles Robert Maturin's work *Melmoth the Wanderer*)-like travels around Western Europe, Lotman advances the possibility that Onegin may have stopped his tour of Russia and sailed from Odessa to Western Europe in 1823. Nabokov intentionally denies this viewpoint, but does not have enough evidence. On the other hand, Lotman insists that what Pushkin thought about the protagonist's further destiny in connection with the Decembrist revolt is indistinguishable to an annotator. In contrast with Nabokov, Lotman is so circumspect and deliberate regarding the author's original concepts that he steers clear of stating definite points.

Nabokov's annotations on *Eugene Onegin* are far from being strictly scientific and philological. The ambiguities of Pushkin's original compositional directions provide extreme stimulation to the unbridled imagination of Nabokov as a writer. The plot holes in the imperfect text tempted Nabokov to reproduce these conditions in his own literary work. A writer can introduce an unreliable annotator–narrator (Kinbote) as a protagonist into the novel who even has the right to alter the preceding text. This strange trilateral interaction among the author, the imperfect text, and the annotator is what is behind the extravagant construction of *Pale Fire*.





## On Stylistic Exuberance of *The Gift* as a Russian Novel



Mitsuyoshi Numano

The existing secondary literature on *The Gift* is already enormous, and I have no ambition at all to add to it any drastically new interpretation or discovery. My purpose is rather humble: to share with my colleagues some observations on the salient stylistic characteristics that came to the fore in the process of translating the novel from Russian into Japanese.

Working on the translation (which is scheduled to be published in April, 2010), I always compared four basic Russian texts (the serial publication in *Sovremennye zapiski* 1937-38, Chekhov Publishing House 1952, Ardis 1975, and Symposium 2000) and also consulted not only the English translation in three editions (Putnam 1963, Vintage 1991, and Penguin 2001), but also the German, French, and Polish translations.

The stylistic characteristics that turned out most difficult to cope with in translating the novel into Japanese are:

- (1) Extremely long sentences and convoluted syntaxes with frequent use of relative pronouns and participles.
- (2) Phonetic effects with frequent alliterations that sometimes sound too excessive and *de mauvais goût*. (In some cases, Nabokov even seems to give priority to sound rather than to meaning.)
- (3) Difficult metaphors almost incomprehensible to careless readers.



Another aspect which puzzles the translator is that there sometimes appear inconsistencies in details within the novel and subtle differences in meaning between the Russian original and the English translation. Are they intentional or just careless mistakes (although the latter seems improbable for such a careful writer as Nabokov)? The translator must face this difficult question.

In my paper, I focus my attention on such stylistic aspects, comparing the Russian original with the English and some other translations and elucidating the nature of peculiar difficulties in translating the novel into Japanese. I do this with the hope that we may thus approach the formidable stylistic exuberance of *The Gift* as a Russian novel

**Was Nabokov a Psychologist?:  
About *Despair* and Nabokov's Inflexible Criticism of Freud's Doctrine**

**Jean-Pierre Luauté**

Since coming across a novella of his known in French as *L'aguet* (*The Eye*) many years ago, I have been an ardent reader of Nabokov (with a preference for his European period). What struck me at first was the aesthetic quality of his prose and his humour, but I was also attracted by the original use he made of the classical theme of the double. It happens that, as a psychiatrist, I have chosen to study the various clinical conditions in which the phenomenon of the double appears --- currently designated as the Delusional Misidentification Syndromes (DMS) --- and that I am something of a specialist in this area.

In 1993, I published with Professor Christodoulou of the University of Athens a review of what he had termed in 1978 the "syndrome of subjective doubles" (see Jean-Pierre Luauté, George Christodoulou, "le syndrome du double subjectif" *Psychiatrie Française* 1993, 3 pp 76-87). At the end of the paper, we suggested that the first discoverer of the syndrome was in fact Vladimir Nabokov since Hermann's main delusion in *Despair* is its exact description avant la lettre. We thus concluded that Nabokov had the fine intuition of a true psychologist and further noted that "the syndrome of subjective doubles" deserved to be renamed "Nabokov's syndrome" (which would have surely pleased the lepidopterist). Unfortunately, a "Nabokov's syndrome" had already been described by P.-L. Assoun (see "Le 'syndrome de Nabokov' clivage et apraxie" *Synapse* 1990 décembre pp 72-77). In his study, Prof. Assoun had given a Freudo-Lacanian interpretation of Nabokov's allegedly impaired mental-spatial representation, as it is lengthily and pleasantly described in *Look at the Harlequins!*

For me, Nabokov was an astute psychologist since he had early on understood the erroneous nature of many Freudian assumptions, including the wide use made of sexual symbolism, and of Freud's claim that he could cure patients by relying on such assumptions. (There is a parallel here to Nabokov's opposition to Marxism and communism). But there is another motive for Nabokov's long-lasting hostility towards Freud. As a reader of Freud, he must have noticed how close his style was to that of Freud, another literary magician, and his irritation in front of his popular success (now restricted to literature departments) can also partially explain his enduring attacks against the "Viennese quack".

The paper I would like to present in Kyoto is entitled "Was Nabokov a psychologist? About *Despair* and Nabokov's inflexible criticism of Freud's doctrine." In the first part I briefly compare Hermann's case in *Despair* to the "syndrome of subjective doubles." Then, I discuss some of the works that have demolished the clinical basis and the therapeutic value of Freud's works but nonetheless have acknowledged the eminent literary qualities of their author.

## **“Almost Completed but Only Partly Corrected”: Enacting Revision in Nabokov’s Novels**

**Susan Elizabeth Sweeney**

In addressing the theme of this conference, I am less interested in Nabokov’s composition, editing, translation, adaptation, and rewriting of his works than in how he represents the process of revision within them. In *Speak, Memory*, for example, he compares his father’s neatly written manuscripts to “my own mousy hand and messy drafts, to the massacious revisions and rewritings, and new revisions, of the very lines in which I am taking two hours now to describe a two-minute run of his flawless handwriting” (178). Portraying his father’s prose and penmanship turns into an account of his own composition of this passage. His description of his manuscript as “mousy,” “messy,” and “massacious” emphasizes how much revision it requires to express what he wants to say. Indeed, the present perfect tense (“I am taking”) and the temporal markers conveying extended duration in the present (“two hours now”) indicate that its rewriting still continues.

This passage from Nabokov’s memoir exemplifies, in miniature, how his novels represent revision. References within the work to various stages of composition—rough drafts, fair copies, dictation, copyediting, proofreading—remind readers of the author’s presence, his habits as a writer, and the text itself as something made. Allusions to misspellings, mistakes, and misprints imply that the text—no matter how exquisitely crafted it seems—remains flawed. While Nabokov’s novels always refer somehow to their own construction, these self-conscious gestures occur more often, and more insistently, when the protagonist is a writer. Most of his novels, in fact, present themselves as manuscripts still being composed by a first-person narrator.

Remarkably, these novels conclude before the protagonist can finish revising his manuscript. At the end of *Bend Sinister*, for example, the narrator stretches amid “a chaos of written and rewritten pages” (240); in *Ada*, Van receives an “ideally clean” copy of the text, which is “immediately blotted out by a regular inferno of alterations in red ink and blue pencil” (587). Nabokov’s first-person narrator—approaching the end of both his physical life and its textual representation—often pauses to reread his manuscript, thus prompting readers, too, to recall the preceding pages. He finds, however, that his manuscript is marred by an inherent “blunder” in *Despair* (203), “a fatal philosophical flaw” in *Look at the Harlequins!* (214), or simply “the bits of marrow sticking to it, and blood,” in *Lolita* (308). As “a fair copy of his thought,” to borrow a metaphor from *Speak, Memory* (178), the manuscript fails to convey what he intended—but there’s not enough time left to fix it or finish it.

Nabokov’s novels often end, then, by presenting a narrator’s manuscript as flawed and unfinished, even though readers have encountered it in that very form. At best, such a novel is an “almost completed but partly corrected book,” as the narrator remarks in *Ada* (587). What does it mean for Nabokov to depict his own work as still undergoing a process of revision that will never be completed? My paper suggests some possible answers to this question.

All page references are to the first edition or to the Vintage collected series.

**A Phantom Russian Poet:  
Vladimir Nabokov's Poetics and Position  
in the Late 1930s – Early 1950s**



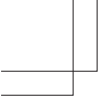
**Maria Malikova**

The “Shishkov cycle” in Nabokov’s oeuvre – poems published under the pseudonym “Vasilij Shishkov” and the eponymous short story (1939-40), as well as his retrospective auto-commentary made in the American years – are considered here as a literary fact-palimpsest, that is analyzed by way of ripping off later layers. Nabokov’s autobiographical legend originally dating from 1949-50 that limits the Shishkov cycle to a vindictive practical joke triumphantly played by Nabokov on the most famous and influential Russian émigré literary critic Georgij Adamovich who, out of sheer partiality, had consistently dismissed Sirin’s poems and enthusiastically welcomed basically the same type of poetry when Nabokov put on the mask of Shishkov, is refuted by way of collating it with the context of Russian émigré literary life on the war eve, far removed from old “party” clashes, and with the content of the hidden dialogue between Nabokov and Adamovich.

The pragmatics of creating this autobiographical legend is seen in Nabokov’s effort to fictionalize émigré literary history by putting himself, as a poet, *post festum*, into Paris, that is, in Russian émigré geography, the metropolitan, literary context -- while in the real Russian émigré reception Sirin as a poet (unlike his prose double) remained a marginal figure both in terms of poetics and geography.

When one reads Adamovich’s reviews without recourse to Nabokov’s later version of vindictive practical joke and the critic’s subsequent offense, one is stricken by Adamovich’s acute insights into the essence of Nabokov’s later Russian poetics, especially his notion of Nabokov’s disposition towards a special kind of parody as dramatizing a very personal poetic dictum through speaking in different voices, as an actor in a play. This reading also makes clear the fact of the hidden dialogue between Nabokov and Adamovich and the former’s growing closeness, in 1939, to the latter’s idea of émigré literature, though under the mask of public mockery and even insult.



The analysis of Shishkov’s poem *The Poets* per se shows not only allusions to the art and personality of the late Vladislav Khodasevich, that put this poem within the tradition of “the death of the poet” type of obituary poetic text, but also towards émigré disputes about the young émigré generation. Pseudo-allusions to virtual poetics of Khodasevich’s non-existent disciple employed by Nabokov in *The Poets* allow to consider the Shishkov cycle as part and parcel of Nabokov’s later trend of creating virtual eclectic poetics, presented by fragments of pseudo-quotations and anti-parodies, and employing them as his own “real” poetic pedigree. All these phantom poetics – acmeistic neoclassicism of Godunov-Cherdyntsev and Koncheev in *The Gift*, synthesis of “pure poetry” and Nekrasov’s note of “social pity” in the art of another imaginary Russian poet, Konstantin Perov from the short story *A Forgotten Poet* (1944), -- are genetically linked to poetics and position of Vasilij Shishkov, “a Russian Rimbaud”, who, in his turn, was created by Nabokov largely through appropriation of Adamovich’s ideas, no matter how carefully he obscured this fact in the later legend.



## Nabokov's Paradox

Masataka Konishi

Nabokov often used mathematical motifs in his novels from the end of the 1930s to the mid-1940s. In "Ultima Thule," for example, Grelling's paradox (a type of semantic paradox) is mentioned, and Falter – who has resolved "the riddle of the universe" and conducts a dialogue with the narrator-protagonist – is set up as his former mathematics tutor. "The biggest number" referred to by Alexander Chernyshevski in *The Gift* reminds us of Georg Cantor's transfinite number. Krug in *Bend Sinister* carries out a thought experiment involving the creation of a Klein bottle in his imagination. The important point to note is that it is logic and space bent by self-reference that especially attracted Nabokov. In the case of Grelling's paradox, which has a form similar to that of Russell's paradox in set theory, one cannot decide whether the adjective "heterological" (a term referring to an adjective that does not describe its own properties) is heterological or not; the idea of transfinite numbers (infinite sets with cardinality) leads to Cantor's paradox; the Klein bottle is a form that can be realized only in the fourth dimension and whose inside and outside surfaces are one.



Why, then, was he attracted to such strange mathematical conundrums? Of course, self-reference is part of the metafictional aspect of his novels; this is an important point to stress. However, there is evidently another reason, which stems from his interest in the otherworld. Indeed, it is when he discusses this concept that the mathematical motifs outlined above appear. His image of the otherworld is not important for the moment; rather, what matters here is how he attempted to verify its existence. Mathematically formalizing it, Nabokov considered the otherworld as something whose existence one cannot prove without falling into contradiction or paradox. To take a simple example, supposing it is true that the otherworld exists, the sentences "I am dead" or "The dead are alive" must be read in the literal sense of the words. In this case, it becomes impossible to decide whether those who say, "I am dead" are in fact dead or alive. However, Nabokov never draws the conclusion that the existence of the otherworld is doubtful from paradoxes such as this. On the contrary, he believes that it exists through such paradoxes. Although the details are too complex to examine here, in *Bend Sinister*, as we have seen, he attempts to give the image of the Klein bottle to the paradox of the otherworld. Another example can be found in Busch's "Novel" in *The Gift*.

We may note in passing that Nabokov's interest in mathematics is not an isolated case in the context of Russian literature. Even before him, mathematics had attracted Russian writers from Bely and Khlebnikov onward. In this respect, Nabokov's works also fall within the tradition of Russian literature.





## Nabokov's (Dostoevskian?) Loopholes

**Stephen Blackwell**

Nabokov's dismissals of Dostoevsky are nearly as famous as his denunciations of Freud. Over the years, critics have demonstrated various ways that Nabokov engages, challenges, or revises certain Dostoevskian lines of thought or composition. Eric Naiman's playful, even exhilarating rereading of *The Double* through Nabokov's pen dramatizes the extent to which our own readings of earlier authors are revised by our familiarity with Nabokov. Freed of ideological content (as *The Double* was by chronological definition), Dostoevsky's novels and stories presented an extraordinary first step in the examination of the boundaries and frailties of human mental life—themes frequently at the center of Nabokov's artistic interest.

Julian Connolly and Alexander Dolinin have each explored the evolving nature of Nabokov's attitude toward his predecessor, showing how the earlier Nabokov was more likely to echo some aspects of Dostoevsky affirmingly, while in later works and especially in interviews, he was apt to disparage the author whose stature in the west resembled hero worship. In this paper I would like to examine a significant pattern of features in Nabokov's Dostoevskian moments—features that give a sense of what was important for him in the earlier writer's art, a common thread that also links many of Nabokov's own works.

One tool I will use to tease out this thread will be Mikhail Bakhtin's thought on Dostoevsky. Whether or not Nabokov read *Problems of Dostoevsky's Creative Work* (which appeared in 1929 and was reviewed the next year by Pyotr Bitsilli), Bakhtin's focal points reveal an uncanny affinity with the devices and themes that Nabokov appears to have valued in Dostoevsky and sought to elaborate or revise in his own fiction. These elements concern specifically the relation of an individual (a protagonist, or hero) to his or her containing narrative, audience, and narrator or implied author; to the incommensurability between one's desire for self-definition and that of others to define one; to the inescapable tendency of all narration, all words, to impinge upon the freedom of individuals to define and create themselves. If Dostoevsky first brought the world a heightened sensitivity to the finalizing power of language, through characters that continually seek to transcend their own and others' narratives about them, Nabokov extended that project by crafting narratives that extrude and dramatize their own entrapping potential.



## Nabokov and Hemingway: The Fish That Got Away

Yuri Leving

Vladimir Nabokov was “revising” and revisiting his complex relationship with Ernest Hemingway for almost two decades since the 1940s. In his *Playboy* interview of 1964, the *Lolita* author was asked: “Is it true that you have called Hemingway and Conrad ‘writers of books for boys’?” Nabokov confirmed: “That’s exactly what they are. Hemingway is certainly the better of the two; he has at least a voice of his own <...> And the description of the iridescent fish and rhythmic urination in his famous fish story is superb.” The publication of *The Old Man and the Sea* in 1952 played a crucial role in the development of Hemingway’s critical reputation worldwide. It is Nabokov’s remark about the “famous fish story,” from the above-mentioned interview, which will be the focus of my paper.

Although it has been claimed that “with the exception of Poe and James, almost all of the American classics were for Nabokov a world of illusory values, a kingdom of banality, sad evidence of the triumph of vulgar tastes” (A. Zverev, *The Garland Companion to Vladimir Nabokov*, 1995), Nabokov’s real attitude toward American achievements in literature was neither black nor white. On some occasions he praised the younger generation of authors like Updike, Edmund White, and Salinger. Ernest Hemingway presented a different kind of contemporary – a cultural icon whose fame rested not only on provocative stories, but just as firmly on mythologized reports of his lifestyle and adventurous deeds.

The success of *The Old Man and the Sea* brought Hemingway the world’s most prestigious literary award, the Nobel Prize, in 1954. It seemed natural to introduce Hemingway’s latest creation to Russian-language readers, but the political landscape of the post-Stalin reality proved to be more complicated (between 1939 and 1955 Hemingway’s writings were banned in the USSR). In 1954, the émigré Chekhov Publishing House proposed that Nabokov undertake a possible translation of this novella. Contrary to the associate editor’s fears, Nabokov did not reject the idea with “indignation” and he seriously considered translating Hemingway’s masterpiece into Russian. This is striking not only because he was warned about the lower than usual remuneration, but also because he was working on *Pnin* at the time and was involved in intensive negotiations with publishers over the manuscript of *Lolita*. Available documents testify to Nabokov’s quite genuine personal interest in Hemingway’s short novel.

Despite the fact that Nabokov’s Russian translation of *The Old Man and the Sea* never materialized, the unpublished correspondence at the Berg Collection, NYPL, sheds new light on this unrealized project.

In the mid-1960s, Nabokov, it seems, became slightly envious of his peer’s posthumous fame. While totalitarian censorship had capriciously spared Papa Hemingway in the Soviet Union, Nabokov’s own Russian translation of *Lolita* still had no chance of making it through the Iron Curtain. Thus, half-jokingly, he reduced Hemingway’s name to an impossible and funny transliteration “Gemingvei” – against an accepted (and correct) rendering in contemporary Russian adaptations as “Heminguei” – in his “Postscriptum” to *Lolita* Russian émigré edition (New York, 1967).

## **“The Sun’s a Thief”: Nabokov and Shakespeare – A Quantitative Approach**

**Sam Schuman**

Many students of Nabokov, including myself, have noted and written on VN’s extensive use of Shakespearean materials in his works. In some cases, Shakespeare is central to the understanding of a Nabokov novel, for example, the role of *Hamlet* in *Bend Sinister*, or *Timon of Athens* in *Pale Fire*; in other situations, Nabokov’s Shakespeare is clearly casual, for example the Shakespearean life dates on the license plate of Quilty’s car in *Lolita* (WS 1564; SH 1616). Of course, an added element of interest and “coincidence” is that Shakespeare and Nabokov (and Shirley Temple) share the same birthday.

Thus far, Nabokovians, including myself, have taken either a somewhat impressionistic approach to VN’s Shakespeareanisms, or have focused on a very particular and limited sampling thereof. I am currently engaged in a somewhat different critical tactic, working to quantify the entire body of Shakespearean references in all of Nabokov’s English prose. This is a work in progress. At this point, I have completed scanning all the novels, and some of the poems, plays, stories, and miscellaneous prose.

I am annotating every reference to Shakespeare in the Nabokov English canon, by Shakespearean drama (or poem, or, in many cases, by non-specific reference, e.g., those license plates). It is clear that this approach will yield a number of interesting, statistically verifiable, results. Some of these will, of course, confirm what we have already concluded about Nabokov’s uses of Shakespeare. Others, however, may be somewhat surprising.

Thus, for example, while citations of *Timon of Athens* are, as one would expect, the most frequent in *Pale Fire*, (13, not counting simple mentions of the title) they are far from dominating the novel’s Shakespearean references, of which there are a total of 47, including 6 of *Hamlet*, 8 general references (e.g., to the avenue of Shakespearean trees in New Wye), 3 each to the sonnets, *Coriolanus*, *The Tempest* and *Macbeth*. Also mentioned are *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Midsummer-Night’s Dream*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *As You Like It*, and *Twelfth Night*.

My presentation will present such information as:

- Total number of citations of each Shakespearean work in the English Nabokov canon;
- Patterns of usage (e.g., is there a general progression of Shakespeare citations throughout the author’s life; do certain of Shakespeare’s works become more, or less, important as his creative life progressed, and the like?)
- What is the ratio of citations of comedy, tragedy and history plays (note that there are no references to history plays in *Pale Fire*)?
- What we can learn about Nabokov’s understandings of Shakespeare in his more general references to the Bard.

Obviously, this is an ongoing project, but it is already clear that it will yield interesting and, in some cases, definitive results, which I am eager to share with the international Nabokov community of scholars.






## The Afterlife of Sebastian Knight

### Keynote Speaker: Michael Wood

One form of the afterlife of Sebastian Knight begins within the book that bears his name, and indeed the novel suggests at times that his afterlife may be more real than his elusive 'real life' -- just as the narrator's imaginary communion with the wrong person yields more than simple error. Real, unreal: these terms are never merely relative for Nabokov, never meaningless either. But nor are they ever settled in their usage, safely filed away. They are always in question, always matters of urgency.

The talk will seek to describe the structure of inquiry Nabokov establishes in *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*, and pursue its recurrence in some detail through his later novels and stories, especially 'Ultima Thule', 'Solus Rex', *Bend Sinister* and *Ada*. We may briefly wonder too whether the notion of the 'original' of Laura may not be designed precisely to recall the 'real life' Sebastian Knight may or not have. The point is not to suggest that *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* is a source or model for Nabokov's later work; only that it provides a distinctive theoretical framework through which much of that work may usefully be seen.



The last part of the talk will look at another kind of afterlife, the one represented by a number of writers whom we may think of as disciples or followers of Sebastian Knight, or more substantially as novelists working in a line of fiction suggested by the narration of Sebastian Knight's life and death. I have in mind such authors as Paul Auster, John Banville, Donald Barthelme, and J M Coetzee. All of them investigate the real by placing it at a vanishing point in fiction.

