
VLADIMIR NABOKOV AND THE FICTIONS OF MEMORY

The University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Warsaw, Poland would like to invite proposals for presentations at an international conference devoted to the problem of memory in the works of Vladimir Nabokov. The conference will take place on **22-23 September 2016** in Warsaw.

Almost 40 years after Nabokov's death his texts continue to function as literary Fabergé eggs in which scholars keep finding hidden surprises and previously overlooked details. As Nabokov wrote in *Conclusive Evidence*, "the unravelling of a riddle is the purest and most basic act of the human mind." However, readers and critics are divided on the issue of whether Nabokov is a postmodern riddle-maker enjoying the game itself without enabling the player to reach the ultimate solution, or whether the riddles are solvable by a reader astute enough to follow all the sophisticated patterns and allusions which point to Nabokov's metaphysical convictions.

One of the greatest riddles of Nabokov's art is memory. From his very first poems and his first novel *Mary* to the unfinished manuscript of *The Original of Laura*, Nabokov's writings abound in characters haunted by their past. This preoccupation is not simply a feature of loss and nostalgia characteristic of emigrant experience in general, but an attempt to examine the mechanisms which control the functions of human consciousness. While Nabokov explores his own remembrances, transferring his experiences to the characters of his fictions, it is never entirely clear how much of what is being recalled is in fact a construct of the imagination.

Memory becomes an obsession for many of Nabokov's heroes, who may often be described as mnemonic deviants, their crimes resulting from a falsified perception of reality which they constantly filter through the lenses of the past. Conversely, there are characters ennobled by their devotion to every fleeting detail of their existence, whether past or present.

What is the function of memory in Nabokov's texts? Is Nabokov really interested in objectively recalling the past or would it be more apt to say that he artfully constructs remembrance in order to deal with trauma, loss and disappointment? To what extent is the past reshaped through literary models and intertextual props? Does the past control us, as in

Freud's theories, detested and summarily dismissed by Nabokov, or is it possible to control the workings of memory and manipulate it in literary discourse?

We invite presentations addressing the following, and related, issues in the context of Nabokov's works:

- fictitious biographies and autobiographical writings
- forgetfulness vs. memories of loss and trauma
- emigrant experience: nostalgia and the traps of memory
- memory as fabulation, memory as narrative
- speaking memory, memory and delusion
- memory and philosophy
- memory and psychoanalysis
- narration(s) of the mind
- visual memory (cinematography, photography)
- anticipatory memory, proleptic memory and "future recollection"
- return to/of the past in Nabokov's poetry
- bilingualism and remembrance
- comparative perspectives
- memory in political contexts: Revolution, exile, repatriation
- synesthetic metamorphoses:
 - trivialities, souvenirs, memories
 - symbolic correspondences
 - realities beyond appearance
- Nabokovian allusions, echoes and inspirations.

Confirmed Keynote Speakers:

Stephen Blackwell, Professor and Chair, The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Russian Program. Stephen Blackwell teaches Russian literature and language. He is the author of *Zina's Paradox: The Figured Reader in Nabokov's Gift*, *The Quill and the Scalpel: Nabokov's Art and the Worlds of Science* and co-editor of the forthcoming *Fine Lines: Vladimir Nabokov's Scientific Art*.

Leona Toker, Professor in the English Department of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. She is the author of *Nabokov: The Mystery of Literary Structures* (Cornell University Press, 1989), *Eloquent Reticence: Withholding Information in Fictional Narrative* (University Press of Kentucky, 1993), *Return from the Archipelago: Narratives of Gulag Survivors* (Indiana University Press, 2000), *Towards the Ethics of Form in Fiction: Narratives of Cultural Remission* (Ohio State University Press, 2010), and numerous articles on English, American, and Russian literature. She is the editor of *Commitment in Reflection: Essays in Literature and Moral Philosophy* (Garland, 1994) and co-editor of *Rereading Texts / Rethinking Critical Presuppositions: Essays in Honour of H. M. Daleski* (Peter Lang, 1996) as well as of *Knowledge and Pain* (Rodopi, 2012). She has founded and is editing *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas*, a semiannual academic periodical published by Johns Hopkins University Press.

We invite proposals of individual 20 minute papers or 3-paper panels. Please submit proposals (up to 400 words) by **30/05/2016** to the organizers:

Dr. Mikołaj Wiśniewski, University of Social Sciences and Humanities,
mwisniewski@swps.edu.pl

Dr. Irena Księżopolska, Independent Scholar, iksiezopolska@swps.edu.pl

The languages of the conference are English and Russian.

Conference fee: 100 EUR / 120 USD or equivalent in PLN.

Acceptance confirmations will be sent before **14/06/2016**.

Selected papers will be considered for publication.

Conference website: <http://www.swps.pl/warszawa/wydzial-nauk-humanistycznych-i-spoecznych/archiwum-konferencji/13033-vladimir-nabokov-and-the-fictions-of-memory>