

NABOKOV & BLOK:

A chip off the old Blok¹ on *Other Shores* and “Twilight, Twilight Spring”

Alexander Blok’s Poem Сумерки, сумерки вешние / “Twilight, Twilight Spring” captures well Vladimir Nabokov’s Russian title of *Other Shores*, for his Russian semi-translation of his semi-autobiography, *Conclusive Evidence*. Or did VN capture well Blok’s poem to convey his sense of distance and exile, *cries from the other shore*, to his Russian readers for *Other Shores*?

As a well-known admirer of Blok’s verse, fellow St. Petersburgian Vladimir Nabokov, simply pluralized the noun in the repeated phrase of “on the other shore” from Blok’s poem, “Twilight, Twilight Spring” to convey the greater distant difference away from Russia, now continents away.

“Twilight, Twilight Spring” is the Title Template for *Other Shores*.

Poem in Russian – English on the next page.

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¹ Blok: (Block idiom) was older than Nabokov by 19 years.

Сумерки, сумерки вешние / *Twilight, Twilight Spring*
By Alexander Blok (1901)

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Дождешься ль вечерней порой <i>Dozhdesh'sya l' vecherney poroy</i>	Will you wait for the evening at times?
Опять и желанья, и лодки, <i>Opyat' i zhelan'ya, i lodki,</i>	Again and desires, and boats,
Весла и огня за рекой? <i>Vesla i ognya za rekoj?</i>	Of oars and fires across the river?
Фет	Fet ²

Сумерки, сумерки вешние, <i>Sumirki, sumirki veshniye,</i>	Twilight, Twilight Spring,
Хладные волны у ног, <i>Khladnyye volny u nog,</i>	Cold waves at the feet,
В сердце - надежды нездешние, <i>V serdtse - nadezhdy nezdeshniye,</i>	At the heart of — hopes otherworldly,
Волны бегут на песок. <i>Volny begut na pesok.</i>	Waves running on the sand.

Отзвуки, песня далекая, <i>Otzvuki, pesnya dalekaya</i>	Echoes, a distant song,
Но различить - не могу. <i>No razlichit' - ne mogu</i>	Yet to distinguish — I can not.
Плачет душа одинокая <i>Plachet dusha odinokaya</i>	A lonely soul is crying
Там, на другом берегу. <i>Tam, na drugom beregu.</i>	There, on the other shore.

Тайна ль моя совершается, <i>Tayna l' moya sovershayetsya</i>	My mystery commits,
Ты ли зовешь вдалеке? <i>Ty li zovesh' vdaleke?</i>	Do you call in the distance?
Лодка ныряет, качается, <i>Lodka nyryayet, kachayetsya</i>	A boat dives, rocks,
Что-то бежит по реке. <i>Chto-to bezhit po reke.</i>	Something running along the river.

В сердце - надежды нездешние, <i>V serdtse - nadezhdy nezdeshniye,</i>	At the heart of — hopes otherworldly,
Кто-то навстречу – бегу . . . <i>Kto-to navstrechu – begu</i>	Someone comes towards me – I am <i>running</i> . . .
Отблески, сумерки вешние, <i>Otbleski, sumerki veshniye,</i>	Reflections, Twilight Spring,
Клики на том берегу. <i>Kliki na tom beregu.</i>	CRIES on the other shore.

² Fet: Epigram is from the last three lines of Afanasy Afanasyevich Fet's poem:
In the distance, the light across the river / Вдали огонек за рекою (1842).