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The New Nabokov

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Unburied Memory

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INTRODUCTION

This first Focus section of *CoSMo* collects essays that have been commissioned in an attempt to address the question "What is 'New' in Nabokov Studies". Following a conference organised in May 2014 at the University of Torino, where several of the papers appearing here were presented at various stages of early research, the editors are attempting to generate debate on the status and direction of the extremely productive field of Nabokov studies.

Whereas more traditional reception of Nabokov's work focused, on the one hand, on the writer as magician, the wordsmith, the champion of postmodern wordplay and self-reflexivity or, on the other hand, on Nabokov's apparent preoccupation with a transcendent realm that, some have claimed, lies at the core of his aesthetic and ethical stance, more recent interpretations have looked elsewhere.

Newly translated and newly published works from the Nabokov archives have brought up new issues in the canon. We are thinking in particular of Nabokov's unfinished *The Original of Laura*, which was published in 2009, thirty years after Nabokov's death, Thomas Kashan's edition and translation (with Anastasia Tolstoy) of *The Tragedy of Mister Morn*, and the very recent *Letters to Vera,* edited by Olga Voronina and Brian Boyd. Although only some of these latest additions to the corpus of Nabokov's production are addressed in the essays collected here, most of these papers lay claim to that "other" gaze into Nabokov's oeuvre, and address the new research avenues subsumed in the more recent additions to the canon.

Historical thinking lies at the heart of Siggy Frank's "'The Shadow of Fool-Made History': History as Narrative in Nabokov's Work", which presents a first attempt to examine Nabokov's notion of the writing of history in relation to the overtly fictional narrative in *Pnin*, remarking Nabokov's strategy of using the inherently anti-historicist, self-reflexive mode of his work to engage with historical issues.

In "Portrait of the Artist as an Old Man: Nabokov's Evolving Body Paradigm", Lara Delage-Toriel explores ways in which Peter Brooks' notions of the semiotization of the

body and of the somatization of story may furnish hermeneutic keys to Nabokov's works. The article focuses on Nabokov's non-fictional writings from the 1920s to the 1960s, as well as some of his novels – notably *Lolita*, *Ada* and especially *The Original of Laura* – so as to examine how the paradigms of Agon and Eros operate in the writer's figuring of the reader and in his elaboration of embodied narratives. Despite its abstract formulation, Delage-Toriel's enquiry rests on very concrete questions (such as: how does Nabokov handle bodies? What meanings emerge from these bodies? How do they signify? How do readers' bodies affect their reading experience of Nabokov?), which may lead to a possible "aesthetics of narrative embodiment".

In "Nabokov and Metapsychology" Beci Carver offers a way of thinking beyond Nabokov's antagonism towards Freud by casting him as a self-ironising Freudian. Carver argues that, rather than just parodying Freud in his work, Nabokov practices an innately provisional form of psychology widely known in mid-twentieth century America as "metapsychology" (or "pseudopsychology"). The paper understands Nabokov to follow Edmund Wilson's example in proposing Freudian analyses in a non-committal and playful manner, while also encouraging Wilson to be more sceptical. Nabokov's own mode of psychoanalytic thinking includes his scepticism about Freud by insisting on its own fictitiousness.

The issue of sexuality and its Russian and American contexts lie at the core of the next two essays. Andrea Carosso's "Nabokov's Cold War Novels and the Containment of American Sexuality", focuses on the ever-present subtext of Cold War culture in Nabokov's narratives and tries to identify the complex elaboration of "subversive sexuality" in Nabokov's key novels of the Long 1950s. Both *Lolita* and *Pale Fire* speak against the grain of that decade's pursuit of contained normative citizenship. In the latter case, the problematic presentation of homosexuality as politically subversive points to America's most pervasive Cold War obsessions with Communist infiltration.

In "Left Side of the Moon: Nabokov's Personal Terminology of Homosexuality" Alexander Etkind traces up Nabokov's coming to terms with the subject of homosexuality – which, during his lifetime, was seldom openly addressed – as well as the uncertain, tentative terminology he used in alluding to it. In his essay – translated from the Russian by Giuliana Ferreccio and Massimo Maurizio – Etkind stresses the possible influence that Rozanov's conservative description of homosexuals as "The People of the Moonlight" may have exerted on some of Nabokov's works and highlights both overt and more or less disguised occurrences by means of a skilful close reading of *The Gift*, *Pale Fire*, and *Bend Sinister*, among other works. Once more making fun of psychoanalysis, Nabokov arguably seems to deal with a shrewd version of the notion of Freudian projection.

Other essays try to provide fresh perspectives on reading Nabokov from angles that have so far been strong suits of his critical reception. The relationship between Russian

and Anglo-American modernism and postmodernism and his practice of translation are at the core of the last three articles.

Annalisa Volpone's "'Not Text, but Texture': Nabokov and the Joycean Momentum" focuses on the influence of Joyce's writing on Nabokov in terms of both style and themes. The first part discusses the impact of *Ulysses* on Nabokov's novel *The Eye* (*Soglyadatai*, 1930) – his last "European text" – while the second part considers the possible analogies between *Finnegans Wake* and *Pale Fire* (1962), and in particular the ways in which both Nabokov and Joyce create a specific idiolect and linguistic universe for their own characters. As a result, such a comparison discloses a series of complex and ingenious interconnections for which perhaps the term influence is inadequate. Volpone argues that, when taking on Joyce systematically, Nabokov is "definitely formed and immune to any literary influence", but Joyce's "noble originality and unique lucidity of thought and style" may have permeated his imagination.

Maddalena Grattarola's "Nabokov's Literary Legacy: Bridging Russian and American Postmodernism" aims to highlight the importance of Nabokov's oeuvre in shaping some aspects of selected Russian and American postmodern novels. Indeed, according to Grattarola, Nabokov's modernist metafiction has evolved into something new, which may show that postmodernism emerges in a continuum with modernism, a logical evolution of the previous literary movement and a physiological reaction to contemporary society. Moreover, Nabokov may not only represent a bridge between modernism and postmodernism, but also the essential link between Russian and American postmodern literatures. By focusing on V. Pelevin's *The Sacred Book of the Werewolf* and T. Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*, the essay sets out to demonstrate how "the New Nabokov", and his unique style, may in fact be seen as the keystone to the arch of Russian and American postmodernisms.

In "'Hypotranslating' and 'Hypertranslating' Theories in Nabokov's Translations of *Alice in Wonderland* and *Eugene Onegin*" Michele Russo means to discuss the development and the applicability of Nabokov's theories of translation in *Anja v strane čudes* (1922) and *Eugene Onegin* (1964). By using both Steiner's and Newmark's approaches, the essay shows that, in Carroll's work, Nabokov aims at a communicative translation, i.e. a "hypotranslation", thus trying to make the text accessible to a Russian readership. Conversely, Nabokov uses a literal translation in *Eugene Onegin*, thus rendering the target text "awkward". Such technique creates a sense of "foreignness" in Russian readers, stemming from a metaphorical "hypertranslating" process, which generates "overtranslating" elements, and foregrounds, for cultivated readers, the clash separating the Russian and the Anglo-Saxon worlds.

The essays collected here prove that Nabokov scholarship is alive and well and that Nabokov's oeuvre, both in Russian and in English, continues to generate ever expanding, rich and productive interpretations. We would like to thank all contributors for their generous work and friendship. Our thanks also go to Thomas Karshan, for the

invaluable advice he gave in preparing last year's conference and the original presentation he delivered, which we regret not being able to include here. We are especially grateful to Diana Osti, our assistant editor, for her precious contribution throughout the whole editorial process.

Torino, December 2015.

SIGGY FRANK

"THE SHADOW OF FOOL-MADE HISTORY"

History as Narrative in Nabokov's Work

Nabokov's self-professed indifference to history and the political and social circumstances of his time is legendary. Indeed, it seems counterintuitive to talk about history in relation to a writer who famously proclaimed: "I confess I do not believe in time. I like to fold my magic carpet, after use, in such a way as to superimpose one part of the pattern upon another. Let visitors trip" (Nabokov 1969, 109). With this notorious statement, Nabokov transforms his art into a vehicle (quite literally a fairy tale vehicle) to step out of linear time and onto his magic carpet, soaring into the air above the petty struggles, tedious politics and dull concerns of contemporaneous humanity. In a similar vein, Nabokov sought to keep his work pure and intact – "timeless" so to speak – untainted by the immediacy of contemporaneous events and developments. In the 1965 foreword to *The Eye* (1930), for instance, Nabokov speaks of his "indifference to [...] the intrusions of history [into his work]" (Nabokov 1968, 8) – a perhaps feigned "indifference" which would be translated into the frequent and forceful injunctions against historicist or political readings of his work. Yet despite Nabokov being such an evasive and ephemeral subject who developed various strategies to avoid capture by time and history, his works have a clearly historical dimension. Since the inception of Nabokov studies in the mid-1960s scholars have tended to heed his warnings and avoided overly political or historicist readings of his work. It is only recently that scholars have started to place greater emphasis on the reconstruction and analysis of the historical contexts of Nabokov's work (see Dragunoiu 2011; Norman 2012; also Dolinin 1999 on the cultural context of Nabokov's ahistorical stance). In these readings, Nabokov's writing is no longer seen as the self-contained, self-reflexive art of a modernist, but as part of his engagement with the political, ideological and historical contingencies of his time. This paper does not aim to offer anything like a comprehensive analysis of the significance of the notion of history or of specific historical events and developments in Nabokov's work. Rather, this paper presents a first attempt to examine Nabokov's notion of the writing of history in relation to the overtly fictional narrative in *Pnin*, noting Nabokov's strategy of using

the inherently anti-historicist, self-reflexive mode of his work to engage with historical issues.

Given his extreme exposure to the vagaries of history in what, following Joseph Brodsky, could be called the century of "displacement and misplacement" (Brodsky 1988, 16), it is not surprising that, despite Nabokov's insistence on the ahistorical nature of his writing and thinking, history seeps into his fiction which is less hermetically sealed than Nabokov wants us to believe. In contrast to Nabokov's ideal of "timeless" art, his works are firmly anchored in the times and places where they were conceived. Already his very first full-length narrative work, the play *The Tragedy of Mr Morn* (written 1923-24) transposes the violence of the Russian revolution into a fairy tale realm, posing complex questions about political engagement, courage and escape from political struggles – issues which had a timely relevance for the Russian émigrés who had just fled the Russian Revolution and the ensuing Civil War (see Frank 2012, 106). The majority of Nabokov's works from the 1920s and 30s, including *Mary* (1926), *The Man from the USSR* (written 1926), *The Defense* (1929-30), *The Eye* (1930), *Glory* (1931) and *The Gift* (1937-38), paint a detailed picture of Russian émigré life abroad, depicting the social, cultural, economic and political realities of the Russian exile community in Berlin during the first part of the century. From the end of the 1930s onwards, few of Nabokov's works can avoid the imprint of contemporary political developments on their pages, or what Nabokov calls elsewhere "the shadow of fool-made history" (Nabokov 1969, 234), namely the rise of authoritarian states and fascism in Europe. Stories such as "The Leonardo" (1933), "Cloud, Castle Lake" (1937) or "Tyrants Destroyed" (1938) while addressing wider questions about the nature of individuality are also clear responses to the worrying developments Nabokov observed in contemporary society in Nazi Germany. Equally, works like *Invitation to a Beheading* (1935-36), the play *The Waltz Invention* (1938) and *Bend Sinister* (1947) rework the very essence of the two big European totalitarian systems of Nabokov's time, the Soviet Union and Nazi German, into absurd fantasy states the protagonists are trapped in. There are also those works where history or historical events are not the focus of the work, but provide an essential background to the fictional events; for example the mass flight to the South from the German army invading France in the Second World War is the chaotic backdrop against which the confusing story of lost wives and dogs is played out in "'That in Aleppo Once…'" (1943). Later, the Holocaust adds yet another tragic dimension to "Signs and Symbols" (1948) where the mother remembers "Aunt Rosa, a fussy, angular, wild-eyed old lady, who had lived in a tremulous world of bad news, bankruptcies, train accidents, cancerous growths – until the Germans put her to death, together with all the other people she had worried about" (Nabokov 1997a, 601). The Nazi concentration camps recur unexpectedly in *Lolita*, tucked away in a nightmarish subclause, where Humbert dreams of "the brown

wigs of tragic old women who had just been gassed" (Nabokov 1995, 254).[1] The Holocaust is also a haunting memory in *Pnin* (1957) where Mira, Pnin's first love, dies again and again a horrific imagined death in a German concentration camp. Even *Pale Fire* (1962), despite its celebration of metafiction and art as play, is actually unthinkable and largely incomprehensible without the wider context of the Cold War. This cursory list of examples is of course not exhaustive, but it indicates the way history and historical events have shaped Nabokov's writing.

Key events in the turbulent history of twentieth-century Europe – the October Revolution, the rise of Nazi Germany and the Second World War – directly marked, disrupted and dislocated Nabokov's personal life, transforming him and his family repeatedly into stateless refugees, at the mercy of their faceless host countries. Nabokov – in a rare admission of powerlessness – describes the concrete and frequent humiliations inherent in this politically, geographically and psychologically uncertain condition in his autobiography:

> Our [the Russian émigrés'] utter physical dependence on this or that nation, which had coldly granted us political refuge, became painfully evident when some trashy "visa", some diabolical "identity card" had to be obtained or prolonged, for then an avid bureaucratic hell would attempt to close upon the petitioner and he might wilt while his dossier waxed fatter and fatter in the desks of rat-whiskered consuls and policemen [...] The League of Nations equipped émigrés who had lost their Russian citizenship with a so-called "Nansen" passport, a very inferior document of a sickly green hue. Its holder was little better than a criminal on parole and had to go through most hideous ordeals every time he wished to travel from one country to another, and the smaller the countries the worse the fuss they made. (Nabokov 1969, 212)

The same events that condition his exile, are also closely linked with the violent death of close relatives and friends: his cousin Yurii Rausch in the Russian Civil War, his father in an assassination attempt on another émigré politician in 1920s Berlin, and his brother Sergey and dear Russian-Jewish colleagues and friends (including Ilya Fondaminsky) in Nazi concentration camps. Given this personal experience of the violent trajectory of the twentieth century, it is not surprising that history in Nabokov's work emerges mainly as an impersonal destructive force which disrupts the even course of people's personal histories (see Norman 2012, 58), robbing them of everything that

[1] Will Norman argues that "Humbert's whole narration is shadowed by unspoken knowledge of the Holocaust" (Norman 2012, 119) and that Humbert's "narrative positions him simultaneously as both Jew and Nazi, enmeshed disorientatingly in the oppressive historical networks of power, violence and victimhood associated with the Holocaust" (Norman 2012, 126).

is precious to them, their home, their country, their loved ones. "The history of man is the history of pain", as Pnin, beset by a series of never-ending misfortunes, notes (Nabokov 1997b, 141). History appears regularly as an uncontrollable, violent force, which strips individuals of agency, subsumes individual fates and lives, and leaves wreckage in its path. *Pnin* can be read as a case study of the individual at the mercy of history – or at least at the mercy of a narrative of history. It is indicative of the central theme of the novel that it is neither Pnin nor Mira who decide to end their relationship. Instead the reader is informed, that "The Civil War of 1918-22 separated them: history broke their engagement" (Nabokov 1997b, 112).

History as sequential eruptions of violence then is, in Nabokov's thinking, closely connected with loss. It is only through the deliberate re-creation of the past as narrative or written history that this loss can be resisted. Nabokov's mother, the keen mushroom hunter prefiguring Nabokov's own lepidopteral passion, is in *Speak, Memory* the key figure to insulate Nabokov against loss. "'*Vot zapomni*' [now remember]", (Nabokov 1969, 33) she advises her son, encouraging him to catch and retain the beautiful details of his surroundings: "a lark ascending the curds-and-whey sky of a dull spring day, heat lightning taking pictures of a distant line of trees in the night, the palette of maples leaves on brown sand, a small bird's cuneate footprints on new snow" (Nabokov 1969, 33). This collection of precious memories creates "an exquisite simulacrum – the beauty of intangible property, unreal estate – and this proved to be a splendid training for the endurance of later loss" (Nabokov 1969, 33). This understanding of history as a creation of personal memory is uniquely bound up not with the past but with the future and as a written narrative is directed towards a future readership, including Nabokov himself as a future reader of his own history. A parody of this transformation of the present into a future memory appears in a later passage where Nabokov describes a game he plays with his cousin Lidia after their flight from St Petersburg:

> The idea consisted of parodizing a biographic approach projected, as it were, into the future and thus transforming the very specious present into a kind of paralyzed past as perceived by a doddering memoirist who recalls, through a helpless haze, his acquaintance with a great writer when both were young. For instance, either Lidia or I [...] might say "The writer liked to go out on the terrace after supper", or "I shall always remember the remark V. V. made one warm night: 'It is', he remarked, 'a warm night'" [...] – all this delivered with much pensive, reminiscent fervor which seemed hilarious and harmless to us at the time; but now – I catch myself wondering if we did not disturb unwittingly some perverse and spiteful demon. (Nabokov 1969, 191-92)

The actually harmless premise of the game takes on a sinister overtone as soon as it comes in contact with history, the "perverse and spiteful demon" who takes revenge for this subversion of history's linear time-keeping, obliterating the Russia of Nabokov's

childhood and youth, the details of which Nabokov had fortunately already safely stored away as future memories.

The impulse to historicize the fleeting moment of the present in the creation of future memories has profound implications for Nabokov's concept of history as a narrative shaped and moulded by the observing writer: "If 'history' means a 'written account of events' (and that is about all Clio can claim), then let us inquire *who* actually – what scribes, what secretaries – took it down and how qualified they were for the job" (Nabokov 1990, 138). History exists for Nabokov neither as a logical progression of events in chronological order nor as a reliable record of past events. Instead history exists only in the process of being written. Elsewhere Nabokov denies an intrinsic meaning to historical events and facts, suggesting that facts only exist as part of a created context or narrative. Explaining another writer's creative crisis, Nabokov claims that Gogol "believed that facts may exist by themselves. The trouble is that bare facts do not exist in a state of nature, for they are never really quite bare" (Nabokov 1961, 119). If we remember his famous statement that he does not believe in time, we should not be surprised that he has similar sentiments in regard to history: "I do not believe that 'history' exists apart from the historian. If I try to select a keeper of record, I think it safer (for my comfort, at least) to choose my own self" (Nabokov 1990, 138). In a typical sleight of hand, the perceived limitation of history, the unreliability of its scribes and secretaries, is turned into the writer's gain. By reducing history to its narrative whose existence is dependent on the existence of its writer, Nabokov claims agency and re-establishes control over the arbitrary forces of history.[2]

This strategy of controlling history as a narrative, is entirely in accord with Nabokov's general aesthetics which revolve around questions of authorial control. Despite Nabokov's vehement opposition to any form of totalitarianism, his aesthetics are articulated through the vocabulary of autocracy.[3] Presuming an ahistorical,

[2] The concept of historiography and by extension history as either a factual record (empiricist science) or a constructed narrative is a central question in the Philosophy of History. Hayden White's groundbreaking and controversial work in this area in the 1970s sparked a wide-ranging and continuing debate about the very nature of history and history writing, one permutation of which emerged as the New Historicism in the 1990s. See Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973); Robert F. Berkhofer, *Beyond the Great Story: History as Text and Discourse* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995); Hans Kellner, *Language and Historical Representation: Getting the Story Crooked* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989); Ann Rigney, *The Rhetoric of Historical Representation: Three Narrative Histories of the French Revolution* (Cambridge University Press, 1990). See also *Tropes for the Past: Hayden White and the History / Literature Debate*, ed. Kuisma Korhonen (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006); *Philosophy of History After Hayden White*, ed. Robert Doran (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

[3] Norman notes Nabokov's "tendency to align authoritarian political power directly against the literary artist" (Norman 2012, 25).

contextless space, created by his consciousness alone, Nabokov is confident in his own powers, declaring himself the omnipotent dictator in his fictional universe with the fictional characters cast in the notorious role of the "galley slaves" (Nabokov 1990, 95) at the mercy of their God-like author. In this Chinese-box model of miniature worlds mirroring each other, the author becomes history or history becomes the author writing life stories. Nabokov then transforms the complex relationship between historical realities and narratives into a primarily aesthetic concern. It is at the juncture of history and narrative, that we find at least part of an explanation for Nabokov's resistance to empiricist notions of history and his concern about the limits of historical narratives. If history is just another narrative, as Nabokov rather flippantly suggests, then Nabokov seeks to keep control of his own place in this history. Like in his fiction he retains his position as the creator of the narrative and resists becoming a character, a galley slave, in somebody else's history. Defying any form of contextualization more generally, Nabokov denies artistic or literary influences and insulates his work and himself against the loss of (narrative) agency. And for Nabokov, "[a]gency is all", as David Bethea reminds us (Bethea 1994, 38). It is the (unattainable) ideal of and desire for control, agency and autonomy which defines Nabokov's various attempts in life and fiction to escape the shadow of history.

The limits of notions of history as narrative and narrative as the determinist history of the author's "galley slaves" are probed in what might be Nabokov's most historical novel, *Pnin*. Like Cincinnatus from *Invitation to a Beheading* and Vasiliy Ivanovich from "Cloud, Castle, Lake" before him, Pnin is one of Nabokov's quintessential victims, one of those small, child-like, vulnerable men whose inner world is constantly under attack by a hostile outside force. Pnin, pathetic and comic in his exile, has lost his country, his wife and is just about to lose his newly adopted home and academic job ("I have nofing left, nofing, nofing", Pnin cries at some point in the novel (Nabokov 1997b, 51). Apparently insulated against loss is Pnin's inner life, large parts of which remain untranslatable and illegible to his American surroundings: "Directing his memory [...] toward the days of his fervid and receptive youth (in a brilliant cosmos that seemed all the fresher for having been abolished by one blow of history), Pnin would get drunk on his private wines as he produced sample after sample of what his listeners politely surmised was Russian humour" (Nabokov 1997b, 11). The violation of this private space is equated with extinction: "Man exists only insofar as he is separated from his surroundings. The cranium is a space-traveller's helmet. Stay inside or you perish" (Nabokov 1997b, 17). Pnin's personal memories of pre-revolutionary Russia are a precious part of this inner world. In a beautifully nostalgic scene in the novel, a summer evening spent at a country house in New England with other Russian émigrés becomes submerged in Pnin's intense memories of a summer evening several decades earlier in the Russian countryside when he was waiting for his first love Mira, creating the effect of a double-exposed photograph. Reminiscent of Nabokov's collection of details for the creation of future memories, Pnin thinking of his first love, remembers small details

about her, like the "artistic snapshots she used to take – pets, clouds, flowers, an April glade with shadows of birches on wet-sugar snow, soldiers posturing on the roof of a box-car, a sunset skyline, a hand holding a book" (Nabokov 1997b, 112). The privileged status of private history created through the preservation of details is entirely in accord with Nabokov's general memory aesthetics, but during the course of the novel, this very notion of personal memory comes under attack.

If taken as a realist novel, *Pnin* relates the tragedies of its hero as the direct consequences of historical events, the October Revolution, the German invasion of France which forces Pnin to flee to America, and the Holocaust. Yet during the course of the novel, the realist convention of the novel is made explicit and examined. Elements lingering in the background come gradually to the fore: the initially impersonal narrator emerges as a major player in Pnin's life and tale, while concealed narrative structures underlying this – at first sight – straightforward story, become visible in the last chapter which transforms the seemingly realist narrative into a metafictional experiment in narrative control and story-telling. The reliability of the first-person narrator, Vladimir Vladimirovich, becomes predictably a principal concern at this point. The truthfulness of the narrator's account of Pnin's life in the first six chapters of the book, related in the manner of realist fiction, is undermined in the last chapter when the fictional character Pnin turns against his own narrator, accusing him of lying: "Now don't believe a word he says, Georgiy Aramovich. He makes up everything. He once invented that we were schoolmates in Russia and cribbed at examinations. He is a dreadful inventor (*on uzhasnïy vïdumshchik*)" (Nabokov 1997b, 154-55). The narrator on the other hand dismisses Pnin's denials, explaining that the novel's protagonist is "reluctant to recognize his own past" (Nabokov 1997b, 150). Pnin's past becomes here the subject of rival narratives (a frequently used narrative structure in Nabokov's novels), drawing attention to the novel's narrative as an artificial construct and the precariousness of Pnin's fictional existence at the mercy of the narrator.

As a Russian émigré writer and lepidopterist, teaching Russian literature at an American university, the narrator shares a number of notable features with the novel's author, including his Christian name and patronymic. Nabokov explained that "at the end of the novel, I, V.N., arrive in person to Waindell College to lecture on Russian literature" (Nabokov 1989, 143). The blurring of the line between the narrator and the author – or this "impersonation of the author" (Wood 2009, 242) – suggests a high level of control over the fictional world on the part of the narrator (even if, outside the novel, this remains a narratological impossibility). Akin to the "anthropomorphic deity" (Nabokov 1974, 11) which comes into view at the end of *Bend Sinister*, the narrator plays an ambiguous role in the novel, portraying himself as Pnin's friend while emerging

as an increasingly malicious force, who delights in relating Pnin's numerous mishaps.[4] Through the very act of telling Pnin's story, he narrator appropriates his protagonist's personal past and drags his private concerns, disappointments, desires and frequent humiliations into the limelight of a public narrative, ignoring Pnin's pleas for privacy and private space ("Why not leave their private sorrows to people? Is sorrow not, one asks, the only thing in the world people really possess?" (Nabokov 1997b, 43). Entering the world of the novel in the final chapter, the narrator eventually takes Pnin's position at the university, effectively re- and dis-placing Pnin from his new-found home and ultimately the novel. The narrator then emerges as one of Nabokov's literary dictators, whose destructive invasiveness aligns him with Nabokov's conception of history as a violent devastating force. In the overtly fictional world of *Pnin* then, history translates into narrative, which comes to determine its characters' fate.

The metafictional framework of the novel raises complex questions about the ways history is instrumentalized, perhaps even manipulated by the narrator. Who is responsible for actual events and their impact on individual characters in fiction? In a world where everything is narrative does the distinction between narrator and author, fiction and history still matter? Is it the narrator's appropriation of history, his writing of historical events that shapes Pnin's life? Returning to the example of Pnin's doomed first love, is it history that breaks off their engagement or does the narrator decide to have history end their relationship? The so far primarily aesthetic concerns relating to the nature of fiction and reality become complicated when set against an event like the Holocaust.

Pnin's nostalgic recollections of his first love are interrupted by recollections of a different kind in a passage which, in its staggering juxtaposition of tenderness and brutality, is worth quoting in full:

> In order to exist rationally, Pnin had taught himself, during the last ten years, never to remember Mira Belochkin […] because, if one were quite sincere with oneself, no conscience, and hence no consciousness, could be expected to subsist in a world where such things as Mira's death were possible. One had to forget – because one could not live with the thought that this graceful, fragile, tender young woman with those eyes, that smile, those gardens and snows in the background, had been brought in a cattle car to an extermination camp and killed by an injection of phenol into the heart, into the gentle heart one had heard beating under one's lips in the dusk of the past. And since the exact form of her death had not been recorded, Mira kept dying a great number of deaths in one's mind, and undergoing a great number

[4] Michael Wood argues that the function of the author's persona is 'to perform cruelty […] so that we shall see Pnin's own impeccable kindness – to Liza, to squirrels, to Liza's son, to his students and his guests – for the artless thing it is' (Wood 2009, 242-3).

> of resurrections, only to die again and again, led away be a trained nurse, inoculated with filth, tetanus bacilli, broken glass, gassed in a sham shower-bath with prussic acid, burned alive in a pit on a gasoline-soaked pile of beechwood. (Nabokov 1997b, 112-13)

In the context of the Holocaust, memory is no longer nostalgic but traumatic. Memory inflicts a frightening wound which Pnin cannot ignore – strangely reminiscent of the dental trauma of his toothless mouth: "all there existed was a great dark wound, a *terra incognita* of gums which dread and disgust forbade one to investigate" (Nabokov 1997b, 32) – and which corrupts the formerly secure space of personal memory. As a response to the industrialized mass murder of the Nazis, the detailed creation of personal memory as a strategy of resisting history is inverted or even perverted. Forgetting rather than remembering becomes Pnin's way of dealing with Mira's atrocious death. It is the very attention to detail in this passage that creates an unbearably real memory of Mira's death in its unrealized possibilities. Historical memory invades and irreparably corrupts Pnin's personal history.

The unbearable horror of this imagined memory pierces a moment which is the closest Pnin comes to feeling, if not happiness, then at least a contented sense of belonging. Akin to the disruption of the Arcadian idyll in Poussin's ambiguous painting *Et in Arcadia ego* (also known as *Les bergers d'Arcadie*, 1637-38), the shadow of Mira's death (or the shadow tail of her name) or the "shadow of fool-made history" falls on the rural idyll, Pnin's personal memory and by extension the whole narrative.[5] It is significant that briefly before Pnin has given an impromptu lecture on the chronology of *Anna Karenina*, demonstrating Tolstoy's tight control over history and time in his (realist) novel. The narrator's description of Mira's death is painful, but it is also another violent intrusion into Pnin's private sorrow; through the very act of skilfully evoking our sympathy for Mira and Pnin, the narrator also defiles Pnin's precious memories. The Holocaust as an integral part of narrative manipulation has a weirdly disorienting and disturbing effect and raises wider questions about the limits of literary representations of history.

Nabokov's examination of a historical event which defies all ethical conventions and categories in a metafictional framework, is not an act of historicist relativism in which the historical knowledge of the Holocaust is reduced to just another narrative. The scene of Mira's deaths is not an actual representation of her death, instead it is a triple-removed act of imagining her death: the reader imagining the narrator imagining Pnin imagining her death. The self-reflexive elements here mark the surrender of fiction as a

[5] To Edmund Wilson Nabokov explained that "my source for understanding *et in Arcadio ego*, meaning 'I (Death) (exist) even in Arcady,' is an excellent essay in Erwin Panofsky's THE MEANING OF THE VISUAL ARTS, Anchor Books, New York, 1955" (Nabokov, Wilson 2001, 354).

realist representation in the face of the Holocaust. Nabokov's self-reflexive narrative sets against the certainties of realist fiction the uncertainties of knowing and the approximation of knowledge. Nabokov suggests a way to negotiate the epistemological disparity between the reality and the unknowability of the experience of victims and survivors, between the events and their (always inadequate) representation. As such, *Pnin* participates in a historical enquiry, one in which historical knowledge becomes endlessly deferred and which in its admission of its own inadequacy finds an adequate and perhaps only possibility to remember the unimaginable.

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LARA DELAGE-TORIEL

PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS AN OLD MAN

Nabokov's Evolving Body Paradigm

The basic contention behind this essay is that body matters, particularly when one sets about reading Nabokov, and that research on this author has in general devoted too little attention to this, perhaps because reading and studying are traditionally conceived primarily as matters of the mind, and not of the body, or much less so, since the body often appears as a fall from verbal language, its reality either defeating language, or lacking the articulateness one associates with words. My essay is part of an ongoing inquiry into the possibility and usefulness of envisaging a semiotization of the body, along with, or leading to, a somatization of story, in the wake of the theories propounded by Peter Brooks in *Body Work: Objects of Desire in Modern Narrative*. My inquiry is underpinned by a cluster of questions, among which: how does Nabokov handle bodies? What meanings emerge from his bodies? How do they signify? What narratives do they nourish? In what ways may the body furnish a creative matrix for the fiction-maker? How do readers' bodies affect their reading experience of Nabokov? Is there any such thing as an "aesthetics of narrative embodiment" (Brooks 1993, 25) able to mine new hermeneutic ways towards Nabokov's fictional world? In order to approach these questions, I shall first present certain specific bodily motifs in Nabokov's pronouncements on writing and reading, before discussing examples from his fiction and, ultimately, giving extra thought to the last, incomplete 'leg' in his corpus, *The Original of Laura*.

One of the signal places from his childhood that Nabokov chooses to revisit in his autobiography is his father's library, a seminal site of literary lust and leisure. In chapter nine of *Speak, Memory*, it is this one room that he remembers dashing to after school; only the bait is not a good book, but a good duel, between his "big, robust" father and a "wonderful rubbery Frenchman, Monsieur Loustalot", his "agile" boxing and fencing instructor". "The place", as he recalls it, "combined pleasantly the scholarly and the athletic, the leather of books and the leather of boxing gloves" (Nabokov 1969a, 141). After his father's death, Nabokov retained a strong appetite for boxing, which he expresses in his 1925 piece, "Igra" ("Play"). Its concluding sentences provide an

eloquent celebration of the special elation a boxing match may elicit in its audience: "a feeling of dauntless, flaring strength, vitality, manliness, inspired by the play in boxing. And this playful feeling is, perhaps, more valuable and purer than many so-called 'elevated pleasures'" (Nabokov 2000, 754).[1]

It is this very vigour and pugnacity that our writer allegedly aimed to summon in his reader: "a good reader is bound to make fierce efforts when wrestling with a difficult author, but those efforts can be most rewarding after the bright dust has settled". (Nabokov 1990, 183). What immediately strikes one here is the agonistic, or even andromachic connotation Nabokov invests in his relationship with the reader by playing upon the literal and more figurative meanings of "wrestling". Moreover, the consonance in [f] – "*f*ierce e*ff*orts", "di*ff*icult", "e*ff*orts" – brings home the intense physicality of the sparring partners' engagement. This calls to mind an oft-quoted image from "Good Readers and Good Writers" which also yokes together intellectual ability and physical prowess: that of the reader climbing up a steep slope and meeting the author at its top. In a less known evocation, Nabokov privately explains to one of his publishers the challenge involved in finding a competent translator, that is, a man (for it can only be a man) "who has enough Russian to understand my writings and at the same time can turn his English inside out and slice, chop, twist, volley, smash, kill, drive, half-volley, lob and place perfectly every word" (Nabokov 1990, 42). This string of verbs is recognizably culled from the cant of tennis, a sport out of which Nabokov was able to make a partial living during his Berlin years. One can sense in these lines the vivid pleasure he derives from the sport's lexical palette, as when in his 1925 piece he enumerates the various moves that constitute the art of boxing – "lunges, sidesteps, bobbing, [...] hooks, jabs, uppercuts".[2]

[1] Nina Berberova once witnessed Nabokov's enthusiasm for this sport, without quite partaking in the manly elevation, when she visited him in 1940. He was recovering from the flu, but his weakened state did not prevent him from playing with his six year-old son Dmitri: "Nabokov took a huge boxing glove and gave it to the boy, telling him to show me his art, and Mitya, having put on the glove, began with all his child's strength to beat Nabokov about the face. I saw this was painful to Nabokov but he smiled and endured it. This was training, his and the boy's. With a feeling of relief I left the room when this was over." (Berberova 1996, 368-69; 1970, 231).

[2] Translation made using the revisions to Karshan and Tolstoy's translation, as proposed by Tim Harte (2009/11, 147). The lexical palette of tennis was also helpful to Nabokov when drawing up a typology of his Swiss governess's slaps: "*Plus tard vint aussi ce qu'elle appelait, selon le degré de force, tape, soufflet ou camouflet; ce dernier, exécuté à toute volée, ressemblait à ce que les joueurs de tennis appellent un revers smash, et atteignait généralement l'oreille* (Nabokov 1936, 156). In Thirlwell's translation: "Later there also came what she called, according to the degree of force used, a tap, slap or blow; this last, executed at high speed, resembled what tennis players call a backhand smash, and generally reached the ear (Thirlwell 2009, 10).

My belief is that the attention our writer devotes to these sports' language is not mere lexical delight, or metaphorical play. In fact, physical skill epitomizes the role Nabokov very often assigns both the reader and himself, that of the performer. Reading, just as writing, is for Nabokov a performance. One of the most prominent examples of this particular paradigm can be found in Mascodagama, Van Veen's acrobatic alter ego, whose name conjures up the Portuguese explorer's wildly perilous exploration of unknown territories, but also, as Brian Boyd has suggested, a music instrument, the "viola da gamba", which in Italian, means the viol of the leg, or leg viol, so that "Mascodagama" could mean "leg mask";[3] and indeed, Mascodagama's main feat is "maniambulation" or "brachiambulation" (Nabokov 1969b, 185;82), the ability to make his hands and arms walk and thus act, or masquerade, as legs. The description of the pleasures afforded by this spectacular ability is quite unambiguous in its comparison with Nabokov's own art:

> The essence of the satisfaction belonged rather to the same order as the one he later derived from self-imposed, extravagantly difficult, seemingly absurd tasks when V. V.[4] sought to express something which *until* expressed had only a twilight being. [...] It was the standing of a metaphor on its head [...]: a triumph, in a sense, over the ardis of time. Thus the rapture young Mascodagama derived from overcoming gravity was akin to that of artistic revelation in the sense utterly and naturally unknown to the innocents of critical appraisal, the social-scene commentators, the moralists, the idea-mongers and so forth. Van on the stage was performing organically what his figures of speech were to perform later in life – acrobatic wonders that had never been expected from them and which frightened children. (Nabokov 1969b, 184-85)

The true magic of Van's performance lies in its ability to simultaneously achieve an organic, aesthetic and metaphysical bid to transcend the ordinary laws of nature, language and time. Moreover, as Eric Naiman observes, "Van's vaudeville performances in *Ada* [...] are a hyperbolic model not just for authorial creativity but for adequate interpretive performance of the Nabokovian text" (Naiman 2010, 127). By resorting to the term "adequate", Naiman reminds us that establishing a model is a highly normative act; and indeed, the surest sign that Van's performance stands as a model is its erection *a contrario*, in opposition to Nabokov's counter-models, that is, all those attitudes to art

[3] This gloss is part of Boyd's "Adaonline" annotations: http://www.ada.auckland.ac.nz/. Accessed May 2014.

[4] It is of course not for nothing that Van Veen shares his initials with his creator, Vladimir Vladimirovich Nabokov.

– the social-scene commentators etc. – that he glibly dismisses. Only then can the protagonist's body, in its wondrous beauty, strength and suppleness, serve as a paradigm for his author's ideal of writerly and readerly performance.

What are the leading features of this body's paradigmatic performativity? Let us take a quick look at other Nabokovian characters who are endowed with a meaningful mastery of the body. Take Pnin, the otherwise oft-derided Professor in exile, who is literally "transfigured" when playing croquet: "From his habitual, slow, ponderous, rather rigid self, he changed into a terrifically mobile, scampering, mute, sly-visaged hunchback" (Nabokov 1957, 130). As the allusion to Shakespeare's archetypal villain implies, Pnin's dramatic transmogrification is not restricted to physical qualities, it also shows in his strategic know-how, verging on the devious and even on "brutal indifference" (*Ibid.*, 131), traits that seem utterly out of character and are more in keeping with his author's own conception of chess-problem art, as expressed in *Speak, Memory*: "Deceit, to the point of diabolism, and originality, verging upon the grotesque, were my notions of strategy (Nabokov 1969a, 222). A similar artistic metamorphosis thanks to physical prowess occurs to Hugh Person, who has devised an inimitable tennis shot, the "Person Stroke", having "an element of art-for-art's sake about it" (Nabokov 1972, 57) since it never enables him to win a match – a quality he shares with Lolita's tennis game, described as "an absolutely perfect imitation of absolutely top-notch tennis – without any utilitarian results" (Nabokov 1993, 231). Here, Nabokov's anti-Darwinian view of evolution merges with his aesthetic creed, as when he celebrates mimicry in *Speak, Memory*: "I discovered in nature the nonutilitarian delights that I sought in art" (Nabokov 1969a, 98). Besides, he underlines the aesthetic significance of the nymphet's tennis game in his afterword to *Lolita*, where he ranks it among the "nerves of the novel […], the subliminal co-ordinates by means of which the book is plotted" (Nabokov 1993, 360). In this remarkable passage, the nymphet becomes a protean artist, part-musician, part-poetess, as well as a jeweller and a wildcat-tamer or cowgirl, as is underscored by the myriad metaphors evoking her magical skills.[5] Among these, most noteworthy is the "cosmos" (Nabokov 1993, 232) which she is able to create by the mere act of serving – the mark of a true artist in the Nabokovian sense.

Most importantly for my argument, Lolita's tennis game foregrounds another virtue of physical performance, one that is not so much characterized by muscular power than by alluring sensuousness. Unlike Pnin's gift for croquet, Lolita's art is sterile and does not allow her to win against her opponent, however it does win her spectator's heart. Humbert's ecstasy is palpable in the "pulsating" bench he sits on while contemplating his nymphet, a hypallage which constitutes an objective correlative for his sensual

[5] I study the poetic rhetoric of this passage at greater length in my book on *Lolita* (Delage-Toriel 2009, 97-102).

response to the girl's seductions;[6] but it is especially manifest in his style, which displays that merging of "the precision of poetry and the excitement of pure science" (Nabokov 1990, 10) which characterizes art in Nabokov's eyes. In the same way that a racket in Lolita's hands becomes "an instrument of precision" and her game a mathematical entity, with a "geometry" and a "trajectory" of its own, Humbert's pen traces and adheres to its object with the painstaking passion of a scientist having discovered a wondrous butterfly. Let us consider, for instance, this one segment: "my very loins *st*ill *t*ingle with those *p*ist*o*l re*p*or*t*s re*p*ea*t*ed *b*y *c*risp e*ch*oes and Ele*ct*ra's *c*ries" (Nabokov 1993, 232). The semantic load of the sentence is already freighted by the presence of "loins", the term that ends the novel's memorable opening sentence and which only recurs two other times in the novel, as well as "tingle", a notion frequently employed in Nabokov's *ars poetica*, as I shall further evidence below. Just as Lolita's back and forehand drives are "mirror images of one another", Humbert's prose is an exact reflection not only of his own sensation but also of the poetry of this game, which he scans through a regular pattern of plosives (now and then combined with an [r] or an [s]) that echo to perfection the sound of the ball's impact. Thus bench, loins, racket and indeed the whole texture of Humbert's description pulsate in unison; this is a poetics that turns the text itself into a fully aroused and arousing body. Once semiotized, the nymphet's body allows the text to become a somatic entity with which our own bodies may resonate, like chambers of echoing desires.

Like Pygmalion, and thanks to Nabokov, Humbert creates a female body that not only kindles erotic desire but also fuels the creative desire to know and to make. Brooks reads the story of Pygmalion and Galatea as proof that "in essence all desire is ultimately desire for a body" (Brooks 1993, 24). In my view, the desire that innervates the story of Humbert and Lolita, and this tennis scene in particular, is a perfect illustration of Brooks' contention that "the desiring subject is always also the creator of the narrative, whose desire for the body is part of a semiotic project to make the body signify" (Brooks 1993, 25). Moreover, this creative desire forms a powerful nexus between writers and readers, so that the desirable body becomes part of an "epistemophilic" project: epistemophilic in the sense that stories work because they provoke and meet readers' curiosity, their desire to know. And as Freud's theories of the birth of the epistemophilic urge in the child's curiosity about sexuality have exposed, there is an inextricable link between erotic desire and the desire to know.

Nabokov's diatribes against Freud notwithstanding, there is no denying that Nabokov's construction of the reader-writer relationship is based on a paradigm that is

[6] I loosely borrow this coinage from T.S. Eliot, who in his essay, "Hamlet and His Problems" writes that "the only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an 'objective correlative'; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion." (Eliot 1960, 100).

both agonistic and erotic. The latter trait is manifest when he urges his students to "caress" or "fondle" the details of a book (Nabokov 1980, 1). Particularly eloquent is the sensuously mimetic way in which Nabokov is remembered to have expressed this: "'caress the details', Nabokov would utter, rolling the r, his voice the rough caress of a cat's tongue, 'the divine details!'" (Wetzsteon 1970, 245). Another phrase that comes to mind is the "tingle in the spine" which, in his words, "really tells you what the author felt and wished you to feel". (Nabokov 1990, 41). In his essay entitled "Good Readers and Good Writers", this tingle is flanked by the epithet "telltale", (Nabokov 1980, 6) as if to remind one that the reader's physical thrill is intimately bound to narrative thrust, and, to answer John Ray Jr., that senses not only make sense but also make stories. The term appears again at the beginning of his lecture on Dickens' *Bleak House*:

> All we have to do when reading *Bleak House* is to relax and let our spines take over. Although we read with our minds, the seat of artistic delight is between the shoulder blades. That little shiver behind is quite certainly the highest form of emotion that humanity has attained when evolving pure art and pure science. Let us worship the spine and its tingle. (Nabokov 1980, 64)

The erotic quality of Nabokov's pleasure in reading Dickens comes to the fore when he compares his relative discomfort with Austen to the ease with which he is now ready to "embrace Dickens". He claims that whereas he "had to find an approach to Jane Austen", with Dickens, "there is no problem of approach [...] no courtship, no dillydallying. We just surrender ourselves to Dickens's voice" (*Ibid*., 63). In other words, the problem with Austen is that one must spend too much time in foreplay, whereas to enjoy Dickens, one may simply yield to the seductiveness of his appeal.

So far we have found that the body offers two paradigms to qualify the dynamics of writing and reading: that of the athlete and that of the mistress or lover. In both cases, the author is always figured as having the upper hand for he is the one who sets the rules, daunts us with his devilish devices, and entices us with his dainty *doigté*. Although the body of his works is of unequal strength, there is a remarkable coherence in its overall design and effect, owing to the author's careful supervision of its publication. What, then, is one to make of its last leg, *The Original of Laura*, which he neither completed nor wished to publish in its present state? Do these paradigms still hold? To state the obvious, one of the most interesting aspects of this posthumous publication is the fact that for the first time, the wider audience is made privy to the genesis of Nabokov's work: readers are invited into the heart of the writer's studio, thanks to the facsimiles of one hundred and thirty four mostly penciled index cards making up his final opus in progress. A new degree of proximity with the author's actual body is granted by one's coming face to face with his handwriting, neat and firm at the

beginning, growing sketchier and fainter as the draft becomes more rough, but also perhaps as the author's physical and even mental abilities were declining. What these scribblings and smudges and deletions trace is the portrait of the artist as an aging man, whose fumblings and gropings are fully exposed.

Both *Pale Fire* and *Ada* had staged, in their metafictional workings and through the example of their aging artist protagonists, the fate of a work when faced with its creator's diminishing powers, but except for its last line, John Shade's poem is complete when he dies, and by some kind of Cartesian trick, his "misshapen body" (Nabokov 1991, 8) and "the bags under his lusterless eyes" seem somewhat redeemed by his genius, Kinbote considering them as mere "waste products to be eliminated from his intrinsic self by the same forces of perfection which purified and chiselled his verse". (*Ibid*., 23) Van, for his part, most certainly dies half-way through revising his manuscript. If Nabokov does refer more graphically to the burdensome failings of his body, there again, these are treated on a somewhat whimsical mode, as if they offered a new and intriguing encounter with himself: "he looked forward with juvenile zest to the delightful effect of a spoonful of sodium bicarbonate dissolved in water that was sure to release three or four belches as big as the speech balloons in the 'funnies' of his boyhood" (Nabokov 1969b, 570). Both instances display a distancing from the grossly material humiliations imposed by old age, a manner of maintaining some – intellectual at least – measure of control over the body. *The Original of Laura,* and especially those sections dealing with Philip Wild and the Medical Intermezzo, seems to present us with the opposite aim since it offers close-up views of the body stripped bare of all intellectually compensatory make-up. We are spared neither the crude reification of Wild's "enormous stomack" into a "trunkful of bowels" nor young Flora's unflattering view of "poor old harmless Mr Hubert"'s "fat porous nose with red nostrils full of hair", nor even Dr. Aupert's clinical report of his patient's "globular shadow of an adenoma [that] eclipsed the greater part of the whitish bladder" (Nabokov 2009, 99; 67;175).

If the aging body no longer seems to act as a pleasantly compelling model in the conventional sense, I do believe that it continues to play a significant role in our compulsion to read. Of course I would be hard put to appraise in any depth the quality of this fragmentary work's narrative drive as a whole, but the recurrent, even obsessive concern with the body certainly elicits one of the main dynamics in the novel's present state. Here is an example from the "Medical Intermezzo" section: "the delight of getting under an ingrown toenail with sharp scissors and snipping off the offending corner and the added ecstasy of finding beneath it an amber ab[s]cess whose blood flows [,] carrying away the ignoble pain" (*Ibid*., 183). Here, gruesome though the picture may be, the discovery of the abscess fulfills that very epistemophilic urge I discussed above; its hyperbolic reward, "delight" and "ecstasy", is comparable to that which is sought in a desired, eroticized body. Within this rhetoric of excess, the evocation's very gruesomeness becomes part and parcel of an aesthetics of the grotesque or, to use a

more recent notion, a trash aesthetics. Throughout a large part of this novel, Nabokov's epistemophilic project is carried out by the relentless ardour with which bodily self-destruction is plotted, and it is worth noting, as I have done elsewhere, that ecstasy is associated with self-mutilation, or even "auto-dissolution", no less than five times.[7]

As Joshua Witty has shown, Wild's bodily depletion has an incremental value in that it paradoxically strengthens his sense of himself; comparing Wild's condition to that of R in *Transparent Things*, who declares, "The more I shrivel the bigger I grow", Witty explains that these characters' "mental identities [...] only become more energetic as their bodies are destroyed" (Wittig 2010, 96-97). He also points to another salient way in which the body may constitute a narrative motor, namely, the detailed depiction of Flora, which was presumably meant to open the novel and thus plays a key role in setting the plot astir and provoking, then sustaining, the reader's desire for the story. He notes that "with the body of Flora shown in such vividness before us, our relationship with her seems to approach one of physical contact – even though we are of course only touching the fibers of page" (*Ibid.*, 91). This of course is reminiscent of the tactile delights, that tell-tale tingle, which Nabokov's style characteristically elicits when portraying other young girls – in *Speak, Memory*, *Mary*, *Lolita*, *Ada* and *Look at the Harlequins!*. Yet in *The Original of Laura*, the female body is not merely an object for representation. From the very first chapter, Flora's body actually provides the form, the compositional matrix for the novel *My Laura*: "Her exquisite bone structure immediately slipped into a novel – became in fact the secret structure of that novel, besides supporting a number of poems" (Nabokov 2009, 15). And since *The Original of Laura* is rife not only with anatomical and sexual features, but also with elements of *mise en abyme* and mirror images, one might surmise that this comment ranges further than *My Laura*, to include *The Original of Laura* as a whole. Actually, Nabokov confirms the overarching metafictional dimension of the body's inscription within the novel only three cards later, with two rather dense and rambling sentences:

> Only by identifying her with an unwritten, half-written, rewritten difficult book could one hope to render at last what contemporary descriptions of intercourse so seldom convey, because newborn and thus generalized, in the sense of primitive organisms of art as opposed to the personal achievement of great English poets dealing with an evening in the country, a bit of sky in a river, the nostalgia of remote sounds – things utterly beyond the reach of Homer or Horace. Readers are directed to that book – on a very high shelf, in a very bad light – but already existing, as magic exists, and death, and as shall exist, from now on, the mouth she made automatically

[7] See my article, "Nabokov's Last Smile," in which I also note that self-mutilation or self-destruction is "described in far more lyrical and hyperbolical fashion than any of the sex episodes in the novel" (111).

while using that towel to wipe her thighs after the promised withdrawal. (*Ibid*., 21-23)

These sentences are a fitting illustration of how to effect an ellipsis by means of digression. The ellipsis concerns sexual intercourse, the traces of which are literally "wiped" off the body of the text by digressive considerations on the evolution of literature. Their main quality, then, is a certain elusiveness springing from the very nature of their discourse: the impersonal pronoun "one" does not allow a specific identification of the speaker, but it is likely to represent the narrator, who is also Flora's lover (although it remains unclear whether he has in mind his own sexual experience or whether this scene is drifting towards another level of fiction, that of his novel *My Laura*). The sentence coils on itself in möbius-like fashion, and the reader is easily lost by the narrator's meandering logic, that seems to telescope contemporary and ancient art while pointing to a virtual book in the making, the existence of which is conditioned by the arresting presence of the female body, made to signify, metonymically, through its mouth – the part of the body where eros and logos converge. The text thus acts as a veil, pointing to an orifice, a gaping hole, while simultaneously covering it up with graphite. Indeed, Nabokov has thoroughly crossed out with his pencil the three lines of text coming right after the indeterminate pronoun "what": that which was initially supposed to follow is therefore left in limbo. The tantalizing incompleteness implied by the conditional "could" and the three epithets "unwritten, half-written, rewritten" might be perceived as a token of the aging Nabokov's resignation in front of his own fate, as Maurice Couturier suggests when writing that "all that is left here is the dregs of a desire left hanging" (Couturier 2010, 132).[8] My feeling, however, is that Nabokov is still fully in control here. Whether or not his endeavour is successful is of course matter for debate, but in any case the rambling circumvolutions of the passage appear to me as a deliberate enactment of the very point he means to make. A point that is in fact very similar to that which he presents in the Mascodagama passage from *Ada*. Striking rhetorical resemblances may indeed be noticed: both focus metatextually on the difficulty of genuine creation, which seeks to flesh out, magically, the airy stuff of one's imagination – or, as this passage puts it, "to express something which *until* expressed had only a twilight being". And such difficulty, the province of the happy few, is, he insists, utterly unknown to, or beyond the reach of, a certain category of artists, who are hemmed in by the shortcomings of their time. The semiotization of Flora's body, which becomes a vehicle for Nabokov's aesthetic creed, entails a somatization of the story, which not only affects the nature of the text, but also the way in which it is read.

[8] "Il ne reste là que les scories d'un désir en souffrance" (my translation).

The passage's acrobatic incompleteness can indeed be perceived as a mere ploy, the better to hold the desiring reader within the text's grip by holding at bay what Brooks terms "the death of desiring, the silence of the text". The narrative's reticence and indirection in depicting this physical scene effectively "has to do with the dynamic temporality of desire in narrative, the way in which narrative desire simultaneously seeks and puts off the erotic denouement that signifies both its fulfillment and its end" (Brooks 1993, 15). Thus, by indicating, in a conditional mode, a sexual moment that, in Michael Wood's words, "can't fully exist until it has become history and memory" (Wood 2013, 60), by denying the reader the right to indulge, in the present of reading, in voyeuristic sexual participation, Nabokov cunningly pursues his exploitation of the epistemophilic drive. Missing a projected, hypothetical textual body that is already part of literary history, the reader has no choice but to continue his quest for further knowledge, for an end that will never be.

To put an end that *will* be to this essay, let us turn to a piece by Paul Ricoeur, also part of a very fragmentary and posthumously published work, in which the philosopher tries to define what dying may mean when one is not yet dead:

> It is the time of retirement, in the existential sense of *retirement*, the time of *disappearing*.
> This is the time I'm in. I still participate in the torments and joys of creation, like a twilight end of season; but I feel in my flesh and my mind the scission between the time of the work and the time of life; I am moving away from the immortal time of the work and I withdraw into the mortal time of life: this moving away is a kind of dispossession, a laying bare of mortal time in the sadness of having-to-die, or perhaps of the time of the end and of the poverty of the spirit. (Ricoeur 2009, 60)[9]

Ricoeur speaks here of his own sensations and feelings on the eve of his life and it's possible that Nabokov shared some of this experience, notably that "scission between the time of the work and the time of life" he may have felt when he proved unable to physically transpose onto paper the novel that was already complete in his mind. My hunch is that he didn't fully accept, as Ricoeur seems to have done, the sadness of this "dispossession" and the apparently inevitable poverty of the spirit. In his final contest

[9] "C'est le temps de la retraite, au sens existentiel de *retraite*, le temps du *disparaître*. C'est le temps dans lequel je suis; je participe encore aux tourments et aux joies de la création, comme dans une arrière-saison crépusculaire; je ressens dans ma chair et dans mon esprit la scission entre le temps de l'oeuvre et celui de la vie; je m'éloigne du temps immortel de l'oeuvre, et je me replie sur le temps mortel de la vie: cet éloignement est un dépouillement, une mise à nu du temps mortel dans la tristesse de l'avoir à mourir ou peut-être le temps de la fin et la pauvreté d'esprit" (Ricoeur 2007, 96-97).

against time, Nabokov promises no withdrawal from his work; on the contrary, the physical ailments proper to his ebbing mortal life largely contaminate this last and maybe immortal work, which, unsurprisingly, is so much concerned with dying. By figuring the body as a potent signifier able to create desire, both writerly and readerly, Nabokov thus allows himself to retire and disappear not "*into* the finished book", (Nabokov 1969b, 587) as Van had wished, but into the unfinished book.

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BECI CARVER

NABOKOV AND METAPSYCHOLOGY

Bearing in mind that, as Geoffrey Green writes in *Freud and Nabokov,* Nabokov "sustained the grandest and most extravagant contempt for psychoanalysis known in modern literature" (Green 1988, 1), it is striking that the Freudian interpretation of Hugh Person's "erotic dream" in *Transparent Things* should be impossible to contradict. The scenario that his Freudian psychiatrist finds to be "much too direct" unfolds as follows:

> [H]e was offered a sleeping beauty on a great platter garnished with flowers, and a choice of tools on a cushion. These differed in length and breadth, and their number and assortment varied from dream to dream. They lay in a row, neatly aligned: a yard-long one of vulcanized rubber with a violet head, then a thick short burnished bar, then again a thinnish skewerlike affair, with rings of raw meat and translucent lard alternating, and so on – these are random samples. There was not much sense in selecting one rather than another – the coral or the bronze or the terrible rubber – since whatever he took changed in size, and could not be properly fitted to his own anatomical system, breaking off at the burning point or snapping in two between the legs or bones of the more or less disarticulated lady. He desired to stress the following point with the fullest, fiercest, anti-Freudian force. Those oneiric torments had nothing to do, either directly or in a "symbolic" sense, with anything he had experienced in conscious life. (Nabokov 2011: 4, 57)

Person's "anti-Freudianness" is helpless against his dream's catalogue of malfunctioning phallic objects, whose individual oddity belies an essential continuity. Even the "sleeping beauty" for whom he attempts to equip himself for functional sex is the image of an unarousable member, linear and drooping. The roundabout formulation: "He desired to stress the following point with the fullest, fiercest, anti-Freudian force" inserts a gap between his desire and its performance, as if his very anti-Freudianness were a form of impotence. There is a sense in which his own language knowingly acts against him.

In suggesting that Nabokov sides with Person's Freudian psychiatrist in this passage, I am not proposing that he approves of Freud or Freudianism. Jeremy Berman's trawl through Nabokov's writing in *The Talking Cure: Literary Representations of Psychoanalysis* shows the novelist to have been consistent in his scorn for Freudian "quackery" since he published his first parody of psychoanalytic dogma in 1931, in which he gleefully explains (and invents) the "Tantalus complex", "the penal servitude complex" and "the happy marriage complex" (Berman 1885, 316). Nabokov was proud of having been among the first Europeans to see through Freud. On the other hand, the argument of this essay is that when Nabokov moved from France to America in 1940, he encountered a version of psychoanalysis that seemed vaguely palatable. From Freud's own perspective in 1909, the seemingly unquestioning enthusiasm of Americans for psychoanalysis pointed to "the absence of any deep-rooted scientific tradition" in the the nation's academic culture (Kaye 1995, 122), but this absence of foundation and the lack of attentiveness to precedent that it suggests may also be viewed in positive terms, as a freedom for invention. In *The Freudian Ethic*, the Stanford sociologist Richard LaPierre traces a tendency towards "metapsychological speculation" in America in the 1950s (LaPierre 1959, vii) – a mode of enquiry that compares to Freud's in *The Future of an Illusion* (1927) in its license for conjecture about subjects whose specific nature is unknown (e.g. Freud introduces his analysis of the so-called "illusions" on which society is based with the disclaimer that "any such venture is invalidated from the outset" by its lack of information (Freud 2008, 1), but which also departs from Freud's example in its disregard for scientific criteria of probability. The function of the prefix "meta-" in LaPierre's "metapsychology" is to propel "psychology" away from its basis in fact, turning it into philosophy or pseudopsychology. Nabokov's closest American friend in the 1940s and 1950s, Edmund Wilson, was a prime instance of a " metapsychologist", For Stanley Edgar Hyman in *The Armed Vision*, the main problem with Wilson's work was precisely his tendency to apply hotchpotches of Freudian theory to literary texts "on no more solid basis than… eclecticism" (Hyman 1952, 45). However, read from a more forgiving angle, Wilson echoes the Nabokov of *Transparent Things* in his use of psychoanalysis as a platform for fancy.

Nabokov was ill-disposed to humour Hyman, whose sloppiness in characterising his father as a "tsarist liberal" seems almost to have led to a brawl between them in 1948 (Boyd 1991, 146). Yet Wilson's penchant for what Hyman calls "superficial" psychologising must have been apparent to him as he worked his way through his friend's work (Hyman 1952, 45). The triple-decker diagnosis of Paul Valéry as "introverted, narcissistic and manic depressive" in *Axel's Castle* (Wilson 2004, 74), the conception of Dickens's Scrooge as "the victim of a manic-depressive cycle' in "The Two Scrooges" (Hyman 1952, 26), and the assessment of Ben Jonson's "sadism" in *The Triple Thinkers* (Wilson 1963, 219), were sure to have engaged Nabokov's attention, both because he was inclined to be meticulous in finding fault with Wilson (it was part

of their dynamic) and because Wilson tended to be his first port of call when he was in the mood to mock psychoanalytic silliness. He could rely on Wilson to remember the context of "the solemn Freudian contention that children like playing ball because balls remind boys of their mothers' breasts and girls of their fathers' balls" (Nabokov & Wilson 1970, 26), or when reading Freud's *Letters to Willhelm Fliess*, he could rely on Wilson to summon to mind the moment when the "Viennese Sage mentions a young patient who masturbated in the w.c. of an Interlaken hotel in a special contracted position to be able to glimpse (now comes the Viennese Sage's curative explanation) the Jungfrau" (Nabokov & Wilson 1970, 300). However, far from being turned off by Wilson's "metapsychological speculation" in his critical work, Nabokov found himself able to enthuse over his friend's most conspicuously psychological readings. The essay on Hemingway in *The Wound and the Bow* seemed exceptionally "excellent" to him (Nabokov & Wilson 1970, 188), although Wilson's project in this piece is to trace an "undruggable" anixety into the "membrane" of Hemingway's prose style (Wilson 1980, 229). Anxiety was a major focus of psychoanalytic concern in America at mid-century, when the American-based Auden wrote *The Age of Anxiety*. It was because of what Louis Menand calls the "discourse of anxiety" that the American pharmaceutical industry was launched in the 1950s to treat the multitudes of the anxious (Menand 2012, 201). Humbert Humbert may be said to invoke this popular preoccupation in *Lolita* in arming himself with sedatives against Lolita's pluck. For Americans in the 1940s and 1950s, the consciousness of anxiety as a phenomenon was a stimulus to as well as a product of metapsychology. And yet, Nabokov was happy to indulge Wilson's contribution to this form of Freudianism.

The only issue that Nabokov had with Wilson's psychologising in *To the Finland Station* seems to be its slight earnestness – a quality that sat uneasily with what Nabokov would later call his "pseudo-scholarship" (Myers 1994, 393). The context in which Nabokov prompts his friend to remember Freud's comment on "balls" is a response to Wilson's reading of Hegel's "triad" – a theory of the interdependence of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis – as a re-imagining of the "male sexual organs" (Wilson 2004, 188). Instead of taking issue with the attribution of a penis fixation to Hegel, Nabokov pirhouettes off into whimsicality with the suggestion that the "triad" is not a "triangle" at all, and that Hegel's concept is more likely to suggest the magnetism of "balls". He writes:

> you are quite wrong about Hegel's triad being based upon the triangle (with a phallic implication which reminds me of a solemn Freudian contention that children like playing ball because balls remind boys of their mothers' breasts and girls of their fathers' balls.) The triad (for what it is worth) is really the idea of a circle; to give a rough example: you come back (synthesis) to your starting point (thesis) after visiting the antipodes (antithesis) with the accumulated impressions

> of the globe enlarging your initial conception of your home town. (Nabokov & Wilson 1970, 32)

The argument here is deliberately coy of committing itself to a view, as if its object were to shake Wilson out of his scholarly "solemn[ity]". It begins with the nonsensical claim that the triad is not a triangle, moves on to ironise Freud's "contention" that balls symbolise breasts or testacles, and finally either flattens this irony or redirects it towards its own discourse with the hypothesis that Hegel's triad "really" suggests the circumnavigationof a "globe" (or ball), the mental image of which "enlarg[es]" (or swells) as it is associated with one's "home town" – the site of one's "original conception". Nabokov carries Wilson's metapsychology to a new level in the act of accusing him of taking metapsychology too seriously.

Potentially, to present oneself as a metapsychologist is to secure a license for whimsicality. LaPierre refers in *The Freudian Ethic* to "the devious thought ways of metapsychological speculation" (LaPierre 1959, vii), as if deviousness were to be expected in metapsychology. But another way of approaching the necessary precariousness of psychological analyses that lacks evidential support is as a sign of creativity. Depending on the earnestness of the writer, a specimen of metapsychology may either be read as bad science or ingenious fiction. When Nabokov published his account of the life of a world-famous psychologist in 1969 in *Ada or Ardor*, he surely intended to remind his readers of another world-famous psychologist whose bogusness seemed to have been clinched by the posthumous appearance in 1967 of *Woodrow Wilson: A Psychological Study* – of which Nabokov wrote in a letter to the editor of *Encounter* that "[it] must be the last rusty nail in the Viennese quack's coffin" (Berman 1985, 213). However, the fundamental difference between Freud and Van is that Freud purported to be writing in his capacity as a scientist, while Van's science is a species of fiction. In the passage below, from an account of Ada and Van's memory of a picnic, Van's authority as a psychologist is reinforced at the same moment that it is undermined on a logical basis:

> For the big picnic on Ada's twelfth birthday and Ida's forty-second *jour de fête*, the child was permitted to wear her lolita (thus dubbed after the little Andalusian gipsy of that name in Osberg's novel and pronounced, incidentally, with a Spanish "t", not a thick English one), a rather long, but hairy and ample, black skirt, with red poppies or peonies, "deficient in botanical reality", as she grandly expressed it, not yet knowing that reality and natural science are synonymous in terms of this, and only this, dream. (Nor did you wise Van. Her note). (Nabokov 2000: 1, 64-65)

Van's criticism of Ada's query with the stipulation that "reality and natural science are synonymous in terms of this, and only this, dream" is at once partially deflated by Ada's "Nor did you wise Van", and vindicated by it: the argument seems to stand that

"this dream" is unique in its botanical realism. And yet, the knowledge Van requires of *all dreams* in order to identify "only this, dream" as a departure from the norm is impossible even in retrospect. That Van might have a particular insight into the anomalousness of Ada's dreams is undercut by the fact that the poppy and/or peony images may not belong to Ada's memory at all but to the "dream" recreated as a pattern on her "lolita" – *if* this garment does belong to her. The invocation of Lolita, combined with Osberg's "little Andalusian gypsy", within whom a ghost of Carmen also lurks, risks dragging the skirt off into the memory system of the earlier novel. At the same time, the hairiness, amplitude, and blackness of the "lolita" makes its floral illustration incongruous, while the spectacle of red flowers straining through a mesh of hair inevitably suggests genitalia. Van's analysis is thus both overambitious and too tame. Yet he retains his credibility.

Wilson wrote of *Ada* in 1973: "I could not get through it… This is a brilliance which aims to dazzle but cannot be anything but dull" (Wilson 1973, 237). There is a shallowness to *Ada*'s preoccupation with the idea of itself as a performance, to which Van's self-consciously playful metapsychology may be understood to contribute. However, from another perspective, the deflective quality of *Ada*'s "brilliance" may be read as part of its refusal to pry, which manifests itself most obviously through the continual, oblique allusion to biographical information that is inaccessible to the reader. Aqua Kaluga is "afflicted with her *usual* [my italics] vernal migraine" (Nabokov 2000: 1, 10), or Walter Demon Veen has "tea at his *favorite* [my italics] hotel" (Nabokov 2000: 1, 17), or Ada asks Van suddenly about one of their formative frolics: "Remember?" and he replies: "Yes, of course, I remember: you kissed me here, on the inside –" (Nabokov 2000: 1, 77-78). *Ada* is full of interiors that we can only vicariously imagine, and in this respect it reinforces the centrality of questions of privacy to Nabokov's late novels. Sebastian Knight in *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* is too mysterious to be at risk of being known intimately by anyone. Yet by the time Nabokov wrote *Lolita* in the mid-1950s, the endeavour to know another person had become criminal. Humbert's account of his raided writing desk as a "raped little table with [an] open drawer" is the only unambivalently negative representation of physical assault in the novel about paedophilia (Nabokov 2000: 2, 96). In *Pnin*, Nabokov's protagonist frames "psychiatry" as a kind of theft in asking: "Why not leave their private sorrows to people? Is sorrow not, one asks, the only thing in the world people really possess?" (Nabokov 2000: 3, 41).

In *Pale Fire*, Nabokov uses the tension between this Pninian idealisation of privacy and the "psychiatric" impulse to intrude as the basis of the relationship between the poet John Shade and his posthumous editor Charles Kinbote. Kinbote's interpretation of one of Shade's couplets as a reference to Disa, for whom the King of Zembla's "dream-love […] exceeded in emotional tone, in spiritual passion and depth, anything he had experienced in his surface existence" (Nabokov 2011: 2, 167), is rendered

absurd by the meagreness of his proof – Shade writes of a Spring visit to Nice with his wife:

> A host narrator took us through the fog
> Of a March night, where headlights from afar
> Approached and grew like a dilating star,
> To the green, indigo and tawny sea
> Which we had visited in thirty-three.
> (Nabokov 2011: 2, 41)

Kinbote informs us that "thirty-three" was the year of Disa's eighth birthday and goes on to read the couplet to which the date belongs as an allusion to the resemblance between Disa and Mrs Shade, although the scene is drenched in fog, and although Shade's formulation of his meaning foregrounds the text in its capacity as material construct – *as against* a medium of self-expression. The figure of "thirty-three" simultaneously recalls a sea visit undertaken in 1933 and the sea visit of line 433 of the poem, so that '33 neatly emerges as a site of déjà vu. Shade's emphasis on the surface of his poem not only disables Kinbote's specific readings but disturbs the logic and justification of his interest in the "underside" of the poet's meaning (Nabokov 2011: 2, 167). If, as Pnin argues, "private sorrows" are "the only thing in the world people really possess", the subject of the novel is the poet's posthumous insistence that he continues to own himself.

Nabokov's last four novels, *Ada*, *Transparent Things*, *Look at the Harlequins!*, and *The Original of Laura*, may be read (in part) as critiques of the Freudian practice of attempting to unearth secrets. *Ada* is made up of conspicuously incomplete fragments of information, *Transparent Things* defines the activity of reading the past into the present as a form of blindness to the present – Nabokov writes, with a play on the temporal sense of "tense": "[W]hoever wishes to remain in the now, with the now, on the now, should please not break its tension film" (Nabokov 2011: 1, 2); *Look at the Harlequins!* afflicts Vadim Vladimovich N. with the inability to turn back, either literally or in his memory; and *The Original of Laura* dismisses "Dr Freud's' analysis of children's dreams as the work of a 'madman'" (Nabokov 2009, 91). However, Nabokov remains active as a metapsychologist in these novels, and justifies his continued investment in this bastard form of psychology by defining his analytic riffs precisely as an eschewel of the profundities of the psyche. Nabokovian metapsychology is an embrace of the surface. Accordingly, the phrase "probably pathological" in the passage below, from *Ada*, is not designed to expose the workings of a particular mind but to generate a set of improbable, amusing hermeneutic possibilities:

> [Van] was out [...] *na progulke* (promenading) in the gloomy firwood with Aksakov, his tutor, and Bagrov's grandson, a neighbor's boy, whom he teased and

> pinched and made horrible fun of, a nice quiet little fellow who quietly massacred moles and anything else with fur on, probably pathological. (Nabokov 2000: 1, 125)

The grammatical extraneousness of "probably pathological" gives it a scattershot capacity to refer to anything in the sentence that seems medically odd: whether Bagrov's grandson's habit of killing furry animals, or the habit of acquiring fur, or Van's aggression, which may be directed at the mole killer because his fetishisation of "anything with… fur on" inverts Van's own predilection for prepubscent girls – Bagrov's grandson is a pervert by Van's standards. That any of these phenomena might be "pathological" deprives the term of scientific value, but without denting its believability in the context. The phrase suggests a misleadingly vague style of annotation rather than quackery. Not only does the attribution of pathology maintain its hold on our credibility, then, it is also justified on an ethical basis by its open-endedness: its imprecision functions like discretion.

Where in *Ada*, Van's metapsychological conjectures are reliable in spite of their irrationality, in *Transparent Things*, the Freudian explanation of Person's dream about impotent tools is self-evident, as is the subtext of the analogy Nabokov draws between Person's "innocent curiosity" in entering a new era of his emotional life – marked by the prospect of sex with the air hostess, Armande – and that of "a child playing with wriggly refractions in brook water, [or] an African nun in an arctic convent touching with delight the fragile clock of her first dandelion" (Nabokov 2011: 1, 98). That these images are intended to suggest masturbation is confirmed by the original association of the word "wriggling" with snakes, and by the archaic use of the word "clock" to mean "bell", which by 1961 had started to imply "bell end". The sound of "cock" conspires with "bell" to transform the dandelion into genitalia. Moreover, one might argue on the basis of these examples that the psychological reasoning in *Transparent Things* lacks the hypothetical quality that makes metapsychology non-intrusive. Person's sexual temperament is exposed to a degree that recalls Humbert's confessional openness in *Lolita*. On the other hand, just as Humbert is protected against psychoanalytic intruders by the novel's mockery of Freud and booby traps against simplistic analyses, Person is impossible to see through or into in a meaningful way because his entire substance is a surface. His "transparency" is not a window into anything beyond itself; it is a way of remaining opaque, if opacity is understood as the inability to reveal depth. In the sense that his privacy is impossible to encroach upon because it does not exist, Person is not a person.

The ironic impersonality of Person paves the way for the redirection of metapsychology away from the analysis of human subjects and towards language in *Look at the Harlequins!*, where Vadim's useless consultation with a pair of psychoanalysts called Mr and Mrs Junker – who fail to enjoy his joking comparison of their establishment to a paedophilic brothel – is counterposed to the productive train of thought set in motion by the analysis of their "analy[sis] of each other", "every Sunday,

in a secluded, though consequently rather dirty, corner of the beach [...]" (Nabokov 2011: 3, 22). To read the etymological implications of "unloose, release, or dissolve" into "analysis", and so to interpret this beach encounter as sexual, is to explain – albeit whimsically – the novel's preoccupation with miscellaneous sand. The Junkers' energetic holiday may be held responsible for the "*n* like a grain in a cavity" that disrupts Mr Molnar the dentist's dental name (Nabokov 2011: 3, 22), the sudden contact between Vadim's "knee" and "blessed sand" when he almost drowns (Nabokov 2011: 3, 48), the "few grains of wet gravel" that adhere to Iris's "rose-brown ankles" (Nabokov 2011: 3, 50), the reduction of Vadim's first novel to "a pinch of colored dust in my mind" (Nabokov 2011: 3, 72), and the transmutation of his sentences into a "handful of grain" as he reads them aloud (Nabokov 2011: 3, 102). Moreover, part of the point of this trail of references is to turn analysis in on itself. The analysis of analysis leads to an involuted sequence rather than an exploratory exercise; and this might be understood as another kind of Nabokovian sabotage of Freudian method. But if this is the case, in the process of undermining psychoanalysis, Nabokov also reinvents it as an engine for linguistic play, which is the book's main occupation. The polarity between a form of psychology that sets out to intrude and one that limits itself to speculation is perhaps most vividly snapshotted in *Laura*, where Nabokov writes of Flora:

> Only some very expensive, super-Oriental doctor with long gentle fingers could have analyzed her nightly dreams of erotic torture in so called "labs", major and minor laboratories with red curtains. (Nabokov 2009, 57)

The hypothetical doctor who "analyze[s]" Flora is rendered repulsive both by his explicit interest in her sexual fantasies and by his implicit fascination with her labia, while the analysis that reveals the pun in "labs" and the vulval flesh in "red curtains" playfully unveils his crime. Play has an ethical as well as an imaginative purpose. Moreover, there is a claustrophobic over-intimacy to the representation of solitary bodies here and throughout Nabokov's last novel from which such metapsychological punning offers relief.

In working their way through Nabokov's *Letters to Véra*, readers with no prior knowledge of the author's aversion to Freud will be surprised to find after the apparently positive comment in a letter of June 5th 1926: "Mlle Ioffe – pleasant name – is giving a talk about Freud – pleasant topic" (Nabokov 2014, 58), the annotation: "VN would become famous for his dislike of Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) and baiting of Freudians" (Nabokov 2014, 566). The ability to notice irony in Nabokov's comment depends on a willingness not only to read it against the grain but to do so in the absence of any local cue for suspicion. If the Russian physicist Abram Ioffe had established his reputation for socialist extremism by this point our task would be easier. As it stands, the specific meaning of the utterance is ground out by the majority view of the discourse of Nabokov's oeuvre to which it belongs. Moreover, in reading Nabokov's "

dislike of Sigmund Freud … and baiting of Freudians' into all the psychological aspects of his corpus, we both, in principle, subordinate our understanding of particular moments in his writing to an overview of them – an approach he would have hated – and run the risk of failing to spot the mellower shades in his attitude towards psychoanalysis. These mellower shades are the locus of his metapsychology – a kind of psychology lite that succeeds in dissociating itself from Freud's ambition to see all the way from "the details of neurosis to the conditioning of consciousness" (Freud 1954, 129). Metapsychology offered Nabokov a mode of psychoanalytic thinking that accommodated his flights of fancy, and may have seemed to him to cure the larger discourse to which it belonged of the arrogance he diagnosed as its disease.

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ANDREA CAROSSO

NABOKOV'S COLD WAR NOVELS AND THE CONTAINMENT OF AMERICAN SEXUALITY

The memory of pre-revolutionary Russia, the Russian intellectual diaspora in Europe between the wars, America as a newly-found Arcadia, butterfly hunting, an obsessive debunking of psychoanalysis: these are some among the well-known preoccupations in Nabokov's American writings, produced mostly in the 1950s and 1960s, a period in which these concerns appeared distinctly removed from those of the American collective psyche, catalyzed as it was on the one hand with the cult of domesticity and consumption, and on the other by pervasive fears of nuclear annihilation and the ever escalating thrust of containment politics.

Despite Nabokov's occasional professions of ideological alignment with America's Cold War politics, his American writings have appeared to many to deliberately elude any reference to the political and social context in which they were produced. "I am an American writer [...] America is the only country where I feel mentally and emotionally at home", wrote Nabokov is *Strong Opinions*, where he also claimed to "feel a suffusion of warm, lighthearted pride when I show my green USA passport at European frontiers" (Nabokov 1973, 26; 131). And yet, in his literature, the aesthete always appeared to supplant concerns with the temporality of his art.

In this paper I look at Nabokov's most widely debated Cold War novels, *Lolita* and *Pale Fire*, seeking out textual clues to that rich and complex period in American culture. I will try to trace the way in which – despite Nabokov's apparent dismissal of its evidence – his outsider's immigrant voice intersects certain crucial nodes of American culture in that period, and especially the way in which sexuality, a highly-charged domain in the early Cold War years, operates in the American novels as Nabokov's distinct marker of his commitment to the politics of the Cold War.

Vladimir Nabokov's American novels – i.e. the novels he wrote during his residence in the U.S., and which include *Bend Sinister* (1947), *Lolita* (1955), *Pnin* (1957), and

Pale Fire (1962)[1] – all belong to what cultural historians have defined the "Long 1950s", an almost mythical period of American prosperity, coinciding with the economic boom of the post-World War II era and characterized – among other things – by a decisive expansion of a middle class, an emphasis on family and domestic values, obsessive fears of Communism at home and abroad, and growing U.S. influence in the world within the context of third-world de-colonization and pervasive anxieties of nuclear doom (Carosso 2012, 16-19). Interpretations of Nabokov's *oeuvre* have tended to elude the American topicality of his plots, contexts and characters, while rather focusing on issues such as language, word-play, irony, identity, emigration, or on the supposed pervasive concerns for a transcendent, or "otherworldly", realm (Alexandrov 1991). And yet, upon its long-awaited U.S. release in 1958, *Lolita* was met by generalized prurience as well as widespread chastisement for its explicit treatment of deviant sexuality, but also for its disdainful accounts of American life, especially consumer culture and the drudgery of suburbia – a response that Nabokov himself addressed in his postscript to the novel.

Scholarship over the last decades has attempted to focus more closely on the historical relationship between Nabokov's themes and their American context. Andrea Pitzer's controversial new biography, *The Secret History of Vladimir Nabokov* (2013), revolves around the assumption that, far from engaging art for art's sake, Nabokov's *oeuvre* detailed "the horrors of his era" (Pitzer 2013, 4) or, as a reviewer well put it, pondered "the oddness of the relationship [that his] writings create between the fictive and the historical" (Ford 2013). Along with Pitzer, scholars such as Brand, Castronovo, Haegert, and Sweeney – just to name a few – have recently steered Nabokov studies towards the American context of Nabokov's novels (the road trips, American commercial culture, immigration), an aspect of his work that Nabokov once infamously defined "topical trash" (Nabokov 1958, 313). The question I would like to address is whether America is in some way addressed in Nabokov's novels of the 1950s and 1960s beyond its mere function of context and social commentary, posing the question of whether Cold War America was crucial in shaping those novels. It is my contention that sexuality, its social and political function in Cold War America, and its potential in that context to subvert the body politic, lie at the core of these works, whose political implications remain untapped if we merely submit to Nabokov's own interpretive prescriptions, i.e. his notorious cant for sending critics to bark up the wrong tree (see Rampton 2008).

In a controversial inquiry into Nabokov's fictional as well as personal sexual attitudes, Eric Naiman has argued that in Nabokov's novels the figure of the "pervert" functions not so much as a literal signifier, but rather as an allegory of the author's – and ideal reader's – basic hermeneutic stance, i.e. the idea that the text must be "twisted" in

[1] *Pale Fire* was actually completed in Montreux, Switzerland.

order to get to its essence. Lewdness, in other words, according to Naiman, is both a metaphor of Nabokov's textual strategies – which always displace language into the abyss of meaning – as well a central force of desire that constantly governs interpretations of the text. Although I subscribe to Naiman's overall argument, I would also like to suggest that perversion in Nabokov's novels does not only function as a trope of reading, but rather as a timely, historically-conscious response to some of the central preoccupations in American society at the time when these books were written and published. Of Nabokov's five English-language novels, at least four emphasize sexual subversion, i.e. the emergence of a discourse lying outside norms and conventions of the era. *Lolita* is a tale of paedophilia; homosexuality plays a key role in both *Bend Sinister* and *Pale Fire*. And *Ada*, Nabokov's last novel, is a story of incest.

Scholars have pointed out that, in the Long 1950s, masculinity and femininity were rigidly contained within very specific and narrow gender roles, and sexuality was predicated upon the "assumed moral purity of womanhood", i.e. a series of social expectations that Betty Friedan famously defined, in her 1962 best seller, the "feminine mystique". While conjuring up images of small screen TVs in wooden cabinets, of Ozzie and Harriet, and comfy suburban homes, the 1950s reflected for many Americans a post-war pattern of newfound prosperity in which Dad went off to work every day, while Mom stayed home, kept house, and devoted herself full-time to maternal duties (Melody-Peterson 1999, 115). A best seller of the decade, Dr. Benjamin Spock's *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* (published in 1946, it underwent 144 printings and sold 16 million copies over 20 years) encouraged women to "focus on motherhood", perceived as an antidote to the larger sexual and economic freedom women had experienced in wartime, when many had worked and earned real money for the first time, replacing the men who had gone off to war. According to Dr. Spock's orthodoxy, post-war education was to centre on following rules and controlling emotions – sexual drives most of all, which his book, as Melody and Peterson have pointed out in their study of American sexuality, "simply ignored" (Melody-Peterson 1999, 117).

In a decade when popular literature mostly shied away from frank discussion of sexual matters, one of the most widely sold books was *A Marriage Manual: A Practical Guidebook to Sex and Marriage* by Hannah and Abraham Stone, a Baedeker to prevailing attitudes to sexuality during the decade. First published in 1935 but completely revised in its 1952 edition, *A Marriage Manual* discussed sexuality as strictly functional to procreation and rigorously bound to marriage. Female sexuality in particular was viewed as divorced from orgasm, since a woman's sexual impulse, the Stones observed, "may normally remain dormant for a long period" (Melody-Peterson 1999, 124).

A slightly less restrictive view of sexuality was held by another popular family planning manual of the Long 1950s, Eustace Chesser's *Love Without Fear: How to*

Achieve Sex Happiness in Marriage. Originally published in Britain in 1940 (and acquitted of obscenity charges in 1942), the book appeared in the U.S. in 1947, selling three-quarter million copies in its first hardcover edition. The paperback edition did even better. Although allowing for the view that pre-marital sex might in fact be beneficial to produce what it called a "mature marriage", Chesser was aligned with the Stones in his suspicion towards feminine sexuality. He in particular chastised sexual promiscuity for women, which it defined "wholly opposed to woman's true feminine nature" (Melody-Peterson 1999, 124). Chesser seemed to worry that, if unleashed under the wrong circumstances outside marriage, female sexuality might be difficult to control – and hence he stressed, like the Stones, the need for its decisive containment within the boundary of marriage and family.

During the Long 1950s, adultery was illegal in most U.S. states and specifically targeted by the Hollywood Production Code (also known as the Hays Code), which limited Hollywood's rendition of marital life to the ideal based on the traditional Christian view of marriage, rooted in the idea that "the family that prays together stays together". The Code explicitly stipulated that adultery, while sometimes necessary plot material, "must not be explicitly treated, or justified, or presented attractively" (Pennington 2007, 153). The Hays Code also banned any positive treatment of homosexuality, in line with U.S. law and social attitude at the time: prior to 1962 sodomy was a felony in every state, and gays were socially stigmatized as sick individuals, both medically and mentally (Eaklor 2008, 77-103).

Nevertheless, sexual behavior in America did not seem to mirror its representations in the mainstream cultural outlets. A banner ad appearing in metropolitan areas around the country in the 1950s warned that "1.5 million Americans have syphilis or gonorrhea and don't know it", serving as explicit evidence that sexual promiscuity was becoming a problem in society (Vickers 2008, 45-46). Two books published at the turn of the 1950s provided further proof. Alfred Kinsey's *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948) and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1953), better known as the Kinsey Reports, made headlines as they disputed some of the widely-held tenets of American sexuality in the Long 1950s. Kinsey's work presented evidence of attitudes to sexuality in the country that disrupted the Cold War consensus. In particular, it contested notions that women generally were not sexual, and presented evidence that sexuality as practiced in the U.S. was largely an affair that exceeded the sacred boundaries of marriage.

Even more controversially, Kinsey tackled head-on the master taboos of Cold War sexual culture: adolescent and pre-adolescent sexuality, as well as homosexuality. Based on interviews with educators, parents as well as convicted child molesters, Kinsey provided detailed evidence of hundreds of cases of sexual abuse of children by adults (Vickers 2008, 46). In other words, Kinsey exposed an America swarming with subversion to the most widely held tenets of sexual propriety. Cold War orthodoxy

exploited Kinsey's findings as evidence of an attack on America's founding moral and political values (Melody-Paterson 1999, 122).

Although there is no evidence that Nabokov ever met Kinsey, nor that he actually read either of the Reports, scholars have pointed out how *Lolita* makes a number of tongue-in-cheek references to Kinsey and to the larger array of sexual orthodoxy that his Reports debunked. In the novel's Foreword, for example, John Ray, Jr., PhD, remarks that Humbert is one of "at least 12% of American adult males [who] enjoy yearly, in one way or another, the special experience 'H.H'. describes with such despair" (5). Later on in the novel, Humbert cites sexology statistics on "the median age of pubescence for girls" (43), makes reference to "writers on the sex interests of children" (43), and pleads to the "frigid gentlewomen of the jury" (132). These tongue-in-cheek remarks, as Appel has pointed out, "poke fun at the work of Alfred Kinsey" (Appel 1970, 324). In fact, they do more than that: they establish a connecting line between Kinsey, Nabokov and a whole area of early Cold War culture which also includes J.D. Salinger, the Beats, Grace Metalious's middle-brow classic *Peyton Place* (1956) and Nicholas Ray's cult movie *Rebel Without a Cause* (1956) – each in its own way interested in debunking the myths of the Cold War consensus and exploring sexual subversion.

Youth, and adolescence in particular, appeared in American culture as a problematic seat of that subversion in the Long 1950s. Interest in adolescence intensified during this decade, when teenagers emerged for the first time as a prominent sociological category, endowed with specific social roles, as well as specific rights, mostly derived from their newly-acquired power in influencing consumer choices during the post-World War II economic boom. Leerom Medovoi has shown how this new social formation emerged in a cultural space that was distinct from the narrowly-defined social and sexual roles of the pre-war era. American teenagers during the early Cold War years became subversives – or "rebels" – i.e. defined themselves through behaviors not aligned within norms of social containment of the era. The rise of rock 'n' roll (and of Elvis in particular), James Dean's rebellion "without a cause" as the synthesis of the wider social problem known as "juvenile delinquency", as well as the "bad girls" and "tomboys" depicted in popular movies and novels of the period, are all discussed by Medovoi as evidences of a decade in which Cold War confrontation propelled American society to accept, even encourage, teenage rebellion as a marker of its inherent democratic advantage (Medovoi 2005, 167-214).

The deviant girl phenomenon is particularly relevant here. In the second part of *Lolita*, Humbert is described as systematically re-arranging the bed sheets in the various motel rooms in order to conceal any signs of his illegitimate (in fact, criminal) behavior with a minor, "in such a way as to suggest the abandoned nest of a restless father and his tomboy daughter, instead of an ex-convict's saturnalia with a couple of fat ole whores" (138). If "Lolita the tomboy" is to be read, in Humbert's self-delusive construction, as the ideal cover-up for his perversion, *Lolita* in fact matches more closely the other

model of psychopolitically independent femininity of the 1950s, the "bad girl", whose sexuality is enacted outside the rigid moral boundaries of the era, yet whose freewheeling eroticism opens her to exploitation and predation by immoral men (Medovoi 2005, 270). Humbert and Quilty stand as ultimate proof that Lolita's carefree sexuality, removed from the constraints of the Cold War consensus ("She saw the stark [sexual] act merely as part of a youngster's furtive world, unknown to adults. What adults did for the purposes of procreation was no business of hers", 133), will make her the victim of sexual exploitation. Lolita the "bad girl" closely resembles other prototypes of juvenile delinquency in 1950s culture, from Silver in Mamie Van Doren's *Girls Town* (1959) to Sarah Jane in Douglas Sirk's seminal film *Imitation of Life* (1959), where sexual rebelliousness appears "initially as a source of strength", soon reverting to an awareness that when girls play the sex card they leave themselves exposed to rape and sexual exploitation (Medovoi 2005, 270). If "it was [Lolita] who seduced me" (132), as Humbert staunchly proclaims to the jurors, it is Lolita who ultimately succumbs to her male predators.

It is within this larger cultural framework that Nabokov's American novels require further attention. *Lolita,* for one, seems to rise out of Nabokov's interest/obsession for subversive sexuality in Cold War America. Lionel Trilling argued that in writing the novel Nabokov explicitly sought to shock his readers and managed to do so by breaking "one of our unquestioned and unquestionable sexual prohibitions": the taboo of "the sexual inviolability of girls of a certain age", compounded with "what amounts to [impious] incest" (Trilling 1958, 92). Oddly enough, however, Nabokov refused any notion that Lolita was in any way a lewd or immoral book. In his famous postscript to the novel, "On a book entitled *Lolita*", he went to great lengths in directing the hermeneutics of the book to specific sexually-neutral images in a novel which, he argued, offered "special delectation". Famously, Nabokov claimed in the postscript that *Lolita*'s true theme was its author's "private tragedy" of having had to abandon his "natural idiom" – the Russian language – "for a second-rate brand of English" (Nabokov 1958, 316-17).

Readers who rushed to buy the novel after it was finally published in the U.S. in 1958, amid fears of an obscenity trial which never materialized, saw it otherwise. *Lolita*'s extraordinary success, and Nabokov's resulting wealth, came in the wake of the scandal the book had unleashed following its first publication in France in 1955, a scandal well encapsulated in the public quarrel between Graham Greene, one of the book's early admirers, and the chief editor of the British newspaper *Sunday Express*, who pronounced *Lolita* "the filthiest book I have ever read" (see Vickers 2008, 49). The problem with emphasizing moral perversion in *Lolita* was that, if read from this perspective, the novel, which explicitly engaged pedophilia, "deviant" sexuality, prostitution, and sexual promiscuity, ran a collision course against the orthodoxy of the Long 1950s which located sexuality safely within the bond of marriage (May 1988, 114-

32). As Fredrick Whiting has well pointed out, critical reactions to the novel's publication in the U.S. (including Trilling's) aimed at neutralizing the sexually subversive plot, by emphasizing a formalist reading (i.e. in line with Nabokov's explication of the book as his "love affair with the English language"), in order to defuse the novel's symptomatic subversion of the logic of the Cold War consensus (see Whiting 1998). *Lolita*'s scandal, as well as its appeal, lay precisely in the fact that the novel opened a space for a representation of sexual subversion which denied the integrity of the American home as nation on which the Cold War consensus was postulated.

The paratext of John Ray's fictional introduction, ironically inscribing the narrative within the framework of pseudo-clinical confession, allowed *Lolita* to tread the delicate space between the Cold War consensus and censorship, a space which proved crucial to the book's success. Ray denounces *Lolita* as a tale of "horrible", "abject", ultimately "abnormal" sexual behavior (Nabokov 1958, 5) – yet he does so within the logic of psychiatry and psychoanalysis whose authority the novel constantly seeks to undermine. And Humbert's fate, condemned not as a pedophile, but as a murderer, underlines the novel's ever present critique of the Cold War consensus: Humbert is jailed not for rape – his unspeakable crime becoming public only upon the publication of *Lolita*, and hence after his death – but for the murder of Claire Quilty, his rival in perversion. And in noting that, if he were his own jury, he would dismiss his murder charge and sentence himself to 30 years for rape, Humbert acknowledges that the problem with Cold War America lies in its incapability to healthily address discourses of sexuality.

Like *Lolita*, Nabokov's other novels of the Long 1950s rely on sexual subversion to organize their main narrative tropes. After a brief release in his next novel, *Pnin* (although a few of Nabokov's very imaginative scholars have managed to argue to the contrary, see Naiman 2002, 89-117), Nabokov's most hermetic and sophisticated novel, *Pale Fire*, published in 1962, returns to the theme of subversive sexuality at the time of the Cold War. Although *Pale Fire* has long been read as an "old-world aesthete's novel of wordplay and allusion", recent scholarship has converged on the notion that the very wordplay has allowed Nabokov "to engage cultural narratives that prescribed the limits of mid-century reality" (Belletto 2012, 62). If the Kinsey Report chose not to take sides as to the morality of homosexuals and presented its findings from interviews with over seventeen thousand subjects in an apparently neutral, fact-based manner, the public polemic on the perceived "heinous abnormality" of homosexuality raged during the Cold War years. While heterosexual love was subsumed, but rarely displayed, under that decade's cult of marriage and family (D'Emilio and Freedman 2010, 280), homosexuality held an even more complicated status, as it came to be construed as the form of sexual rebellion that most directly infringed on matters of domestic security. Unlike heterosexual love, which was never the topic of public conversation,

homosexuality turned out to be the perfect site to turn private stigma into a matter of national concern. In his *From Perverts to Fab Five* (2009), Rodger Streitmatter has studied the treatment of gays and lesbians in the U.S. after World War II, and has shown that the media in America were instrumental in bringing homosexuality under public scrutiny beginning in 1950, as Senator Joseph McCarthy's crusade against communist spies at home intersected a homophobia campaign aimed at alleged Communist sympathizers working for the State Department. Dubbed as the "Perverts on the Potomac" campaign, it helped demonize homosexuals not only as sexual deviants, but also a threat to the integrity of the nation. Homosexuals were described as emotionally unstable, immoral, and hence "very susceptible to Communism" (Streitmatter 2009, 8-11) – and therefore targeted, alongside with Communists, in the same category of national threats against which McCarthyism waged its infamous campaign.

In this context, Nabokov's *Pale Fire* becomes of even greater interest. In essence a story of misreading, in which Charles Kinbote – a homosexual college professor at a campus quite resembling Cornell (where Nabokov taught for most of the 1950s) – gets hold of an unpublished manuscript by the poet John Shade and sets out to write a long commentary of it, *Pale Fire* is construed to elude its own constraints. A text which ostensibly appears to addresses its fictional author's marriage, his suicide daughter and his own mortality, Shade's poem is transformed by Kinbote's delusional commentary into the tale of the deposed King Charles II of Zembla, an imaginary king from an imaginary land in the remote European North that the king was forced to flee following a Bolshevik-style revolution. King Charles – who, according to Kinbote's own fantasy, is no less than Kinbote himself – has found shelter in the U.S Northeast in order to evade Jacob Gradus, a Communist-like "extremist" assassin who is hunting him across the globe and tracks him down at the end of the commentary, fires at him but misses his target, while mortally wounding Shade.

Recent criticism of *Pale Fire* – in particular Steven Belletto's *No Accident, Comrade* (2007) and Andrea Pitzer's *The Secret History of Vladimir Nabokov* (2013) – has argued, with ample references to news sources from the late 1950s and early 1960s, that *Pale Fire* is actually a sly commentary on the Cold War, and that its events and characters are rooted in Cold War-era news reports. Pitzer has noted that early reviews of *Pale Fire* had already made the connection between Kinbote's homeland of Zembla and the real-life Arctic Islands of Nova Zembla which, at the time *Pale Fire* was being written, had been chosen by Khrushchev as testing sites for thermonuclear bombs. Pitzer makes the argument that Nabokov

> during his daily reading of the New York Herald Tribune in Switzerland [...] would have seen more than a dozen front-page stories mentioning Nova Zembla. Nova

> Zembla appeared on maps in newspapers around the globe, with fall-out patterns noted. (Pitzer 2013, 78)

The figure of King Charles, the exiled homosexual, is therefore embedded in a tale explicitly evoking a Cold War scenario.

Within this perspective, it can be argued that *Pale Fire* presents a discussion on the intersection of Cold War fear of Communism and homophobia, in a way that parallels the McCarthy crusade of the early 1950s. According to Belletto, *Pale Fire* is the one Nabokov novel that addresses the writer's obsession with homosexuality, deriving from his unresolved relationship with his younger brother Sergej, whose "odd behavior" (as Nabokov termed it *Strong Opinions*) led him to an early death in a Nazi concentration camp. As Pitzer has noted, "[t]his lost, forgotten, and sometimes secret history suggests that behind the arts-for-art's-sake facade that Nabokov both cultivated and rejected, he was busy detailing the horrors of his era [...] in one way or another across four decades of his career" (Pitzer 2013, 6).

Belletto has contended that the tale of mythical Zembla, to which Kinbote gives over hundreds of pages of his commentary, "functions, in part, to manage the open secret of Kinbote's own homosexuality". (Belletto, 2007, 61). Whereas Zembla was, before the Extremists' coup, a land where sexuality could be practiced in all forms and King Charles himself was openly homosexual, he finds himself compelled to disguise his political as well as sexual identities after the coup. According to Belletto, this secret makes him the object of persecution by a Cold War community "that displaces a patriotism based on anti-Communism with a patriotism based on something equally destructive – homophobia" (Belletto 2012, 61), in much the same way in which at the height of McCarthyism anti-Communism and homophobia operated as parallel strategies of political control and repression. In a way directly associated with the politics of McCarthy's witch-hunts, *Pale Fire* emphasizes the American Cold War practice of eliding differences among the perceived enemies of democratic freedom in such a way that homosexuals came to be treated as political threats on a par with Communists (Belletto 2012, 62).

If *Pale Fire* can be read as a distinct engagement with leading Cold War concerns of anti-Communist paranoia and homophobia, it remains to be seen where exactly Nabokov positioned himself on the issue. In *Bend Sinister*, the novel Nabokov was working on when he learned of Sergey's death in 1945, the hero – like Sergey – pays with his life for speaking out against a brutal and repressive regime. Nabokov's conflicting feelings towards his brother veer *Bend Sinister* towards a skewed rendition: it is not the hero who is gay, but rather the tyrant who orders his death. In this regard, *Bend Sinister* is textbook Cold War material. In *Pale Fire*, however, this paradigm is upended. Having established Kinbote/King Charles as a homosexual from the book's very foreword (beginning with Kinbote's repulsion towards a "pulpous pony-tailed [waitress]" working in the college faculty lounge, *Pale Fire*, p. 449), the commentary

goes on to integrate homosexuality and Cold-War politics in a non-normative way. The "lithe youths diving into the swimming pool" that King Charles observes from afar while in captivity after being dethroned by the revolution (*Pale Fire*, p. 521) create one of several moments in the novel where the sexually "deviant" individual is cast as the victim, not the agent, of a totalitarian regime. The same dynamics applies in America, where King Charles/Kinbote finds himself compelled to keep a lower profile – not only sexually but also politically. He is clearly not a Communist, but his somewhat effeminate posturing, unknown identity (making him a potential spy within the Cold War paranoia about possible infiltration) and illicit behaviour (Kinbote steals Shade's manuscript which he then publishes with his own commentary) all come together to make him the object of persecution by a Cold War community whose sinister conflation of sexual and political subversion Nabokov now appears finally ready to confront.

In *Containment Culture*, a seminal study of the pervasiveness of Cold War rhetoric in cultural narratives of the American 1950s, Alan Nadel has argued that those narratives "made personal behavior as part of a global strategy at the same time as they personalized the international struggle with Communism". By constantly reminding Americans that "the Soviet Union was a Godless place [...] while in America 'the family that prays together stays together' (although mom and daddy do so in separate beds)", Nadel has pointed out, American narratives of the Cold War contributed to frame culture within a space that was at all times relevant to that era's political agenda. In the readings I have suggested in this paper, Nabokov's American novels are no exception to the Cold War landscape they inhabit. They diverge from normative narratives of the Cold War, as I have attempted to show, in the fact that rather than highlighting what Nadel has described as "a normality in all things that I absolutely believed existed, although I could find no observable examples in my home or anyplace else" (Nadel 1995, viii), Nabokov's Cold War novels appear precisely to challenge such call to "normality". By establishing sexual subversion as a central narrative trope, Nabokov's American novels at the same time reflect and resist the Cold War consensus in which they are inscribed: they submit to it by raising the specter of Communism as the least desirable of Cold War outcomes; yet at the same time they resist that rhetoric by denying the very social foundation of Cold War America: the nuclear, heterosexual family that prays and stays together.

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ALEXANDER ETKIND

LEFT SIDE OF THE MOON

Nabokov's Personal Terminology of Homosexuality[1]

Lunar metaphors are as old as literature itself and even older.[2] In literature, their meanings may radically differ. In Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*, the moon is associated to stupidity. In *Timon of Athens*, Shakespeare maintains that the moon steals her energy from the Sun. In *Diary of a Madman,* Gogol says that men's noses are all on the Moon, the Earth will squash them and the Moon ought to be saved: the Moon is connected to Gogol's idea that noses can exist separately from their owners, in other words, to fear/desire of castration. In Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*, the moonlight is tied to suffering and guilt. In Boris Pilnyak's "The Tale of the Unextinguished Moon", it is a symbol for terror. In *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* by James Joyce, the narrative connects the young protagonist to the moon, alluding to Aegyptian Toth, the god of the moon, literature and death.

In 1911 the Russian philosopher and journalist, Vasily Rozanov, wrote about the "people of the moonlight". Thus he spoke of those for whom no universally accepted word had yet been found; later on they would be called homosexuals. According to Rozanov, attraction for the love of people of the same sex hides behind may events, facts, and phenomena such as artistic creativity, religious asceticism and revolutionary exploits. It is "the people of the moonlight" who engage in such activities, because they are not up to attending to family life, to which the majority of straight men and women devote their energies. In antiquity such people, according to Rozanov, committed self-castration in the name of the moon-goddess Astarte; in the Middle Ages, they became monks. By sharpening differences, he had resort to any device he could think of:

[1] Translated from the Russian by Giuliana Ferreccio and Massimo Maurizio. All translations from Nabokov and Russian authors are ours, except for Nabokov's or other authors' texts originally in English. The original version of this article appears in A.Etkind. *Sodom i Psikheia. Ocherki intellektualnoi istorii Serebrianogo veka*. Moscow: Arsis 2015.

[2] In pagan religions, the feminine principle and death are usual meanings for the moon; see Eliade 1999, 54-183.

To a sodomite he is someone different
His handshake is different
His smile is entirely different! (Rozanov 1911, 98)

These ideas had nothing in common with science, no matter what one means by science. Still, such an analysis of homosexual love must be seen as a raw, groundbreaking experience in the Russian context. Rozanov was by no means a liberal, and the way he dealt with sodomites was obviously full of fear, even hatred. At his time homophobia was well-rooted even among specialists. At the beginning of the 1920s, European psychoanalytic societies refused to have homosexuals as their members because they held them as incurable neurotics. In a crooked way, however, Rozanov's homophobia was targeted at a Victorian sexual repression. Rozanov blamed "the people of the moonlight" not because they might be specifically depraved, on the contrary, because they were stifling their sexual identity. With a special eagerness he described not sexual depravities in the wake of Krafft-Ebing or Havelock Ellis, but the opposite cases, like ascetic lives or unconsumed marriages. All this he attributed to a "spiritual sodomy", more or less matching a form of latent homosexuality. Practicing Sodom's sin was to Rozanov a rare and repulsive matter, but in lives and texts he perceived an endless, frequent "spiritual sodomy". Sodomites bring forth the idea that coitus be a sin, they spread around the world a guilt-feeling for their own desires and repulsion for their own body; they influence culture, because they do not use up their energy in sex. Rozanov's sodomites are not gay, they forbid themselves to be such.

As a consequence, the people of the moonlight are afraid of fulfilling their depraved essence and for this reason they channel their energies into culture, permeating it with their values. Thus Rozanov's notion of Sodom radically differs from Freudian libido (Sinyavsky 1982, 33 and Etkind 1993, ch. 2). They both recognise a lineage between sexual attraction and cultural creation, but Freud gave no decisive meaning to the object of attraction, whereas Rozanov did. Freudian sublimation lies in deflecting libido from the field of immediate satisfaction – whether it be a homo- or heterosexual act, to cultural activity. Rozanov shared Freud's intuition, i.e., the less one exhausts himself in sex, the more strength is left to create culture. In Rozanov's view, however, a fundamental asymmetry separates "normal" and homosexual love: normal people live without feeling ashamed, the sodomites fear their own unnatural attraction, therefore they live like ascetics.

Rozanov was by no means a solitary Russian inventor. He valued Weininger and relied on pre-Freudian psychiatrists. The lunar and solar metaphors he took from Johann Bachofen, who defined matriarchy (which he discovered, or rather, invented) as humanity's lunar phase and the ensuing patriarchy as the solar phase. Bachofen, however, did not mention homosexual love. Rozanov's great interest in homoeroticism is his own invention, as well as the revival of a classical trope.

Rozanov's metaphorical device, which he presented from the start as a positive trait, could be employed in a number of cases reaching far beyond the original sexual belonging. In Rozanov's view, contemporary culture, including orthodox religion, would lead to revolution. The accusation of "sodomy" he addressed to a whole bunch of cultural representatives, led him to use an aggressive and cutting idiom, a sort of intellectual caricature; for this reason, he was forgiven his clear touches of blasphemy and his many excesses. Sergei Bulgakov, a future priest, in his letter to Rozanov, defined "the people of the moonlight" as "a key opening to a horrid lot of things, and one is steadily and increasingly forced to reckon with it".[3]

Rozanov's metaphors are still relevant to Russian language today. Igor Kon has titled his own book on homosexual love *Lunnyi svet na zare* (Kon 1998) using Rozanov's old idea. Besides, Kon has assumed that the new Russian metaphor, *Golubye* (light-blue and "fairy") is genetically tied to the idea of moonlight, itself partly light-blue. Referring back to Rozanov, Kon assumes that his moon light is well-known and clear to the reader. I will now try to show how in his attempt to find suitable means to give shape to homosexual experience, Nabokov consistently used Rozanov's very device without pointing to its source, probably thinking that his reader would anyway ignore that source.

The Proud Selenographer

Only once, during his lectures, Nabokov spoke about Rozanov calling him an outstanding writer who merges talent with moments of astounding naiveté.[4] So enthusiastic a portrait, one of the rare occurrences when Nabokov praised a writer belonging to the Silver Age (the age of Russian modernism), is enhanced by a personal memory. "I knew Rozanov" the professor reported to his Cornell students, without resorting to details.[5] In his youth, when Nabokov may have known Rozanov, he confronted the problem of homosexual love for the first time: his younger brother was a homosexual.[6] They both went to school. Vladimir found Sergey's diary, and, after

[3] For S.N. Bulgakov's unpublished letters to V.V. Rozanov, see Kolerov 1992, 153-154.

[4] Nabokov 1981, 87. This trait has given way to old clichés; Alexander Benois assessed Rozanov in a similar way: a mixture of "extremely keen observation coupled with an almost childish naiveté" (Benois 1990 vol. 2, 249).

[5] In *Sebastian Knight* we understand that some Rozanovs knew the narrator's family before the revolution. In Nabokov's best biography (Boyd 1990) and in the best collected essays on him (Alexandrov 1995), Rozanov is not even cited in the index. The first groundbreaking research on Rozanov's influence on Nabokov is due to Olga Skonechnaia (1996, 33-52).

[6] Nabokov's childless uncle, V.I. Rukavishnikov, from whom Vladimir Nabokov inherited his estate, was also homosexual. Andrew Field (1976, 38-39) stressed the similarities between Kinbote and Rukavishnikov.

learning of is brother's unusual feelings, he showed it to their governess, who in turn reported to their father. Although Vladimir Dimitrievich Nabokov regarded this problem with his usual liberal frame of mind (he had authored a bill which was intended to lighten homosexuals' lot), Nabokov's brother had to listen to a far from easy speech (Nabokov 1996, 560). Astonishment and guilt feelings surrounded Nabokov's dealings with his brother. Sergey Nabokov was a victim of the Nazi campaign against homosexuals and in 1945 he died in a camp (Karlinsky 1980, 157).[7] Relations between brothers became more relaxed while Nabokov was busy writing *The Gift*, where the homosexual role is entrusted to tender and unhappy Yasha Chernyshevsky: only then could Nabokov at last dine with his brother and his companion (Boyd 1990, 106; 396). Critics have already pointed out that understanding Nikolay Chernyshevsky in *The Gift* depends on the way one sees him in *The People of the Moonlight*, where one reads: "Chernyshevsky's relevance to our culture was, of course, huge. He was ½ urning, ¼ urning, 1/10 urning" (Rozanov 1911, 156).[8] As he sketches out his protagonist Godunov-Cerdyncev, Rozanov reports:

> Again N.G. Chernyshevsky's countenance flashed to his mind, about him he only knew that he was "a syringe with sulphurous acid", as Rozanov somewhere says. (Rozanov 1911, 195)

In Nabokov's works we find homosexuals, unhappy, highly enigmatic people who are close to the protagonist. In *Glory* Nabokov depicted a homosexual professor of Russian literature and gave him the lunar name of Archibald Moon (in the English authorised translation, to dispel any doubt, also Moon). With his knowledge of Russia, Moon "astonished and enchanted" young Martyn, but their relationship grew troublesome when Moon started showing an excessive fondness for the young man. If homosexual Moon with his name alludes to the moon, homosexual Yasha Chernyshevsky in *The Gift* alludes to the moon by his own metaphor for love. Yasha is in love with Rudolf and writes about him so:

> I am fiercely in love with his soul – and this is just as fruitless as falling in love with the moon. (Nabokov 2001, 41)

In *The Gift*, the editorial secretary of the emigration "Newspaper" is described as follows: "a moon-like, phlegmatic person, ageless and virtually sexless" (Nabokov 2001, 59).

[7] Simon Karlinsky mentions this in his comment to *The Nabokov-Wilson Letters* (Nabokov 1980, 157).
[8] The similarity between the portrait of Chernyshevsky in *Lyudi lunnogo sveta* and in *The Gift* has been noticed by Olga Skonechnaya (1996, 41).

In *Pale Fire* there are two protagonists, the heterosexual Shade and the homosexual Kinbote. They are as different as the sun and the moon. Shade is a happy monogamous man, who has spent his life with his wife; Kinbote is a lonesome homosexual who is constantly in search for a partner. Shade lives up to old age in his father's house; Kinbote is an expatriate without a home. Shade does not eat vegetables, Kinbote is a vegetarian. Shade writes verse, Kinbote writes comments. Shade is famous, Kinbote is unknown. Shade often speaks about the sun and almost never about the moon. His best time of the day is morning, his favourite time of the year is full summer. Shade's repeated crises are connected to the aster of day-light, when he sees the sun appearing in his head. Unlike Shade, Kinbote does not see the sun, or struggles against it. While Kinbote follows the hard prescriptions needed to combat sun rays, endangering the furniture, Shade makes fun of him. Kinbote lives at night, even his memories of his homeland, Zembla, are enriched under the grey light of the riverside rainy roofs. His solitary nights are permeated by the horror of memories having the same colour:

> I would lie awake and breathless – as if only now living consciously through those perilous nights in my country, where at any moment a company of jittery revolutionists might enter and hustle me off to a *moonlit wall*. (Nabokov 1989b, 96, my italics)

Unlike Kuzmin and Rozanov, Nabokov lived a historical moment when homosexuality was becoming a fully accepted literary theme (Sedgwick, 1990),[9] but defining a terminology still required a long time and Nabokov was interested in this process, choosing several options, among which some of his own devising. In relation to Moon, for instance, he employs the term "uranism", in *The Eye* the meaningful notion of "sexual left-handed person" is used to the purpose,[10] in "Spring in Fialta" bisexuality is defined by the artistic formula "eclectic in carnal life" and in a further case "pederast" comes to help. Professional interest in this terminology lasted all his life long and his early family impressions doubtlessly lurked behind it. In his memoirs Nabokov reported that his father, V.D. Nabokov, gave his contribution to this field by "coining a convenient Russian word for 'homosexual': rill'nopolly [equal-gendered]" (Nabokov 1996, 492).

Most often Nabokov resorted to the metaphor of the moonlight. There are reasons for this preference. If pseudo-scientific terms like "urning" refer to psychiatry and, one way or another, keep carrying along negative connotations, Rozanov's motif is convenient because it is undefined, and apparently commonplace. The reader takes this formula as a romantic cliché, whereas it is a diagnostic tool. The reader's attention skips

[9] On the acceptance of homosexuality in Victorian England, see Sedgwick 1985 and Sedgwick 1990.
[10] Nabokov's homosexual brother Sergey was left-handed (Nabokov 1996, 560).

over it, thus perfectly responding to the author's intentions. Nabokov uses this device in a systematic and persuasive way: in spite of its being a hackneyed romantic cliché, the moon is hardly ever mentioned without recalling this specific meaning. In Nabokov's texts, the counter-evidences, showing the moon outside a homosexual context, are very rare; they concern, specifically speaking, parallels between the moonlight and the whiteness of the film-screen or Humbert's distinctive trait of being a sleep-walker (*Lunatik*). Nabokov's systematically using one single motif to decode difficult situations parallels the formal definition of leitmotif in prose narration:

> We mean the principle by which a motif, once arisen, is repeated later on many times [...] The only thing that defines a motif is its being fit to be reproduced in the text [...] The author intentionally [...] starts the "engine" of associations which begins working, giving rise to links [...] which the author may not have thought of. [...] this construction principle is, on a prominent level, the distinctive trait of poetry. (Gasparov 1993, 30)

Having derived the moon metaphor from Rozanov, Nabokov updates its meaning. Having borrowed this motif implies pointing to its source and renewing the general understanding of the problem his precursor had earlier worked out. Citing the light of the moon not only alludes to homosexual love but also recalls Rozanov's connecting it to intellectual art-works.

Luzhin is an exceptionally gifted chess-player, a fit idiom for an autonomous cultural creation. His artistic biography starts with a chess game he plays with a flirtatious aunt[11] and ends with his suicidal flight from his wife. Luzhin's sexuality and his talent are communicating vessels, his energy is channelled into chess-playing while in his relationship with his loving wife, he is impotent. Luzhin's life is made up of unfulfilled relationships with his coach and tutor Valentinov. This character was a connoisseur of the Orient (his name may refer to the famous II century Valentine, the founder of

[11] The aunt toyed with small Luzhin, taught him to play chess and had an affair with his father. May Nabokov have portrayed this figure in dear, quaint aunt Maud ("I was brought up by dear bizarre aunt Maud" – Nabokov 1989b, 36)? It is highly probable that this aunt, the first muse and enchantress, may have suggested the particular metaphors with which Shade describes his own first moments of inspiration: "One day, when I'd just turned eleven [...] there was a sudden sunburst in my head [...] Like some little lad forced by a wench / With his pure tongue her abject thirst to quench, I was corrupted, terrified, allured" (Nabokov 1989b, 38). See Luzhin's feelings when he discovers his father with his aunt: "he was very surprised and somehow ashamed" (Nabokov 1990b, 74). Such interpretation of dear aunt Maud's educational practice brings Shade close to Luzhin and Lolita: child seduction has a happy ending. Brandon S. Centerwall (1990, 469-84) tried to prove, on biographical evidence, that young Nabokov was seduced by his uncle (I am grateful to Erik Naiman who pointed out this contribution). In my view, this hypothesis is not proved and is useless: the Nabokovian motif of child seduction (in key texts always heterosexual) renders a childhood fantasy and not a real event.

Gnosticism; on his index finger Valentinov carries "a ring with Adam's head"); Luzhin felt an "unhappy love" for him and when Valentinov abandoned him, he gave Luzhin money, "as one gives a lover one has grown bored with". Valentinov had "a peculiar theory that the development of Luzhin's gift for chess was connected with the development of the sexual urge", and a less peculiar practice: "fearing lest Luzhin should squander his precious power [...] he kept him at a distance from women" (Nabokov 1990b, 94). The whole story is a clear illustration of Rozanov's ideas on the relation between art and sexuality, trusting after all its validity. Sublimation does not occur under one's father's or society's influence, but thanks to a homosexual attraction. At the story's climax, we are given a clue to its source: "the heavy, oppressive moon" lightens up a love scene, during which Luzhin and his future wife get convinced of his impotence:

> She had again sat on his lap [...] But the moon emerged from behind the angular black twigs, a round, full-bodied moon – a vivid confirmation of victory – and when finally Luzhin left the balcony and stepped back into his room, there on the floor lay an enormous square of moonlight, and in that light – his own shadow. (Nabokov 1990b, 116-17)

In *Mary* (*Mashenka*) Ganin loves the girl he loved in his youth and, dreaming of meeting her again, he rejects the women who pursue him. One day he meets Mashenka in the stillness of the park, but no attraction arises and Ganin disappears "cycling in the moonlight haze homeward" (Nabokov 1989a, 73). Many years go by and he again awaits Mashenka, spends the night before their encounter getting drunk in a group of homosexual dancers' room. "The room was lit by a somewhat pale, unearthly light, because the ingenious dancers had shrouded the lamp in a scrap of mauve silk" (Nabokov 1989a, 96). Ganin keeps repeating the verses of the poet who is dying in the room: "The full moon shines over forest and stream. Look at the ripples, how richly they gleam" (Nabokov 1989a, 92).[12] The following morning he refuses to meet Mashenka and, playing around with his own muscles, he stays alone. His life is full of adventures, but his relationship with the old poet appears to have been his deepest attachment.

In "Spring in Fialta", Ferdinand, a bisexual, sucks "a long stick of moonstone candy, that specialty of Fialta's". The narrator, fully in love with his wife, feels, on the contrary, a solar sensation that exceeds Shade's similar ecstasies.[13] In *Sebastian Knight* the

[12] Podtiagin repeats the clichés of the Russian ballade; see Kapnist: "Uzhe so t'moju nochi / Prosterlas' tishina, / Vychodit iz'za roshchi / Pechal'naya luna".

[13] "Suddenly I understood something I had been seeing without understanding [...] the white sky above Fialta had got saturated with sunshine, and now it was sun-pervaded throughout, and this

narrator starts feeling his fondness for Sebastian in a particularly sharp way, when he reads his novel, *The Other Side of the Moon*. In "Istreblenie tiranov" ("Tyrants Destroyed"), the narrator makes up the murder of the dictator he is in love with and stops making a difference between himself and the former. Trying to disentangle himself from this complex of homoeroticism and narcissism, the narrator thinks back on the Moon:

> A horrible feeling seized me, that was remarkably relevant for the dream, and woke me up immediately, in my dismal little room, with a dismal moon shining through my curtainless window. (Nabokov 1956, 181)

"I am listless and fat like Shakespeare's Hamlet", the protagonist tells us; and this self-description turns into a well-known, though unexpected metaphor: "Ah, Hamlet, thou lunar fool" (Nabokov 1956, 184; 192). The moon again goes along with Hamlet in *Bend Sinister*, where the scholarly work "The Real Plot of Hamlet" and the American project of "a film out of Hamlet" are discussed: "We'd begin […] with [...] the mobled moon"; "the moon making fish-scales" on the roof of Elsinore; "The moonlight following on tiptoe the Ghost in complete steel" (Nabokov 1990a, 111-12). This idea, so evidently relying on psychoanalysis, portrays Hamlet's possession both as a homoerotic attraction for his father and a paranoid mechanism. Hence "Tyrants Destroyed" brings forth a paradoxical view of political terrorism as attraction toward the victim-tyrant; hence *Bend Sinister* infers an analytical trait of tyranny. The protagonist's first encounter with dictatorship, which is full of homosexual sadism,[14] takes place by the light of a remarkably meaningful moon:

> The left part of the moon was so strongly shaded as to be almost invisible in the pool of clear but dark ether across which it seemed to be swiftly floating, an illusion due to the moonward movement of some small chinchilla clouds; its right part, however, a somewhat porous but thoroughly talc-powdered edge or cheek, was vividly illumined by the artificial-looking blaze of an invisible sun. The whole effect was remarkable. (Nabokov 1990a, 9)

The picture matches the definition: *Bend Sinister* may mean "Left detour", "Left Turn" and maybe also "Round movement leftward". The whole novel is a political allegory and the scene with the made-up left side of the moon offers a summarized

brimming white radiance grew broader and broader, all dissolved in it, all vanished" (Nabokov 1958, 28).

[14] On entering dictator Krug's study, a room is shown in which a eunuch keeps watch on "a score of brown-skinned Armenian and Sicilian lads" waiting for their hour of death; Krug's son dies after having been raped by those boys (Nabokov 1990a, 141).

portrait, an allegory of allegory. The protagonist who tries to understand the enigma of the new regime feels like a "proud selenographer". But intellect is powerless, there is nothing to be understood and the great philosopher loses his contest against the inept tyrant. In the novel are three female characters who serve the regime, entice Adam Krug and kill his son. These Bachofen sisters exert a full female power over Krug, but they are themselves subject to the homosexual dictator, whom the moonlight illuminates. In this case too, Nabokov ironically follows Rozanov's clues: the sisters are scornfully named after Johann Bachofen, who invented the theory of matriarchy. Generally speaking, *Bend Sinister* makes the reader feel that Nabokov's interest goes to the history of ideas, quite regardless of what it purportedly means to prove.

Nabokov's thought about the Average Man was similar to Hannah Arendt's on the "banality of evil"; furthermore, both Paduk's regime, as portrayed in the novel, and Arendt's "totalitarianism" show the common denominator tying Nabokov's regime to the Nazis, the common basis of historically similar situations. At the end of the novel the author comes to his hero's aid and he too sees his role under the moonlight: we see "the shredded ray of a streetlamp", along which the so-called authorial will alights on his protagonist. In a later afterword going back to this topic, we have: "In a sudden moonburst of madness, Krug understands he is in good hands".[15]

SM and 69

In the marvellous poem "To Prince S.M. Kachurin" (1947) the same cluster of ideas merges into the nostalgic dream of return. The rhymed narration unfolds as a letter to America, written on the third day after returning to the USSR. The narrator, a Russian émigré and American spy, is disguised as a priest. He travels with a false passport, in which not everything is quite right and carries along a novel by Sirin. This makes him "transparent", which sounds as a self-quotation from *Invitation to a Beheading*. He is in Russia and he is scared.

He would have wished to go back to America, which was by now dearer to him than Russia. But his return depends on a certain Kachurin: the narrator has reached the USSR following his instructions, and now writes him a letter and dreams of meeting him again in America. All this happens while he lives with his own translator, in a Leningrad hotel "with a view on the Neva".

He is a "broad-shouldered provincial slave": he is also a translator who never leaves his dictionary. This useless but stalwart companion controls the narrator; without "convincing" him he cannot even move a step. The narrator feels "the languor of youth" and contrives a way to convince his translator to drive out of town to the "red stable" among the birches (it is the "red stable in the middle of a white field" from "Spring in

[15] See Nabokov's Introduction to the novel (Nabokov 1990a, xviii).

Fialta", the place of the child's memories and a further citation from Sirin). In that moment the protagonist of these thoughts, the translator, "drowsing, made a noise with his lips, reached out toward the dictionary"[16] a funny gesture the narrator gives a remarkable relevance to, "here is the explanation of the whole life". The narrator's fear is not chased away even by the moon, which here too has homoerotic connotations. The Neva landscape is lit by the moonlight and embellished by phallic or even orgasmic hues, so untypical to it.

This poetic vision is intentionally controlled in every detail. The author is the best interpreter of his own text, it is he who combines the delicate inspirations with the expert's interpretations. He controls the whole gamut of possible interpretations, is ready to favour one and set off the others. He knows the master-key by which a gloomy and humourless reader will approach his text, and lies traps on his way. To a kindlier, merry reader he will lovingly suggest more compelling reading paths. The author's aim is, after all, to share his own real or invented, experience. The process of interpretation enters the whole of this experience, which the author shares, like all the rest, with his reader.

In the second stanza of the poetic letter to S.M. Kachurin, the author sends a "jealous greeting" to a citation from Lermontov, to "all the plains of Daghestan". Lermontov's poem "The Dream" shows a murdered warrior, who dreams his last dream, in which his beloved appears. This woman sees her dream in her own dream, in which she perceives the Daghestan plain and the dead narrator. In this context the "jealous greeting" means not only that the Leningrad hotel is as dangerous as the Daghestan plain. This intertextual reference leads one convincingly to a second reading spotlighting the letters to Kachurin as a love story.

In the background of the landscape with the Neva – the moon, the steps, the street lamp, and the wave, the narrator sees the body of the sleeping translator. After observing him, he returns to his letter: "Among other things, when we will meet I will tell you everything". The promise is addressed to Kachurin: the narrator means to tell his old American friend about his new Russian friend. Becoming almost like a slave, the author of the letter now asks his far-away addressee for permission: "Kachurin, may I come back home?" The narrative spy-story structure is based on a threefold level of submission: on the one hand, the narrator yields to Kachurin, who sent him on his mission, on the other, the narrator gives in to his translator who controls him, being himself a slave. In the text one feels a strange pleasure concerning the Neva and the broad-shouldered provincial. The author's irony reads these feelings by a double decoding: a reverse nostalgia for America is hidden within the spy-story plot which

[16] The dictionary was probably Russian-English and the translator was so incompetent as to be unable to part with it; but his move is in keeping with the meaning found in V. Dahl's dictionary the whole poem long.

opens up as erotic fantasy. The narrator is disguised as an "American priest", but he is neither American nor priest. The addressee is called Kachurin: one just has to "stretch out one's hand toward the dictionary" to understand the erotic aura of such a last name.[17]

Now we are ready to read again Prince Kachurin's initials,[18] but also to understand that they point out the sense of distance of the "sixty-nine [...] *verste*" separating the protagonist from the red stable: S.M. and 69.

The charm deriving from these comfortable interlinguistic symbols plays a foremost role in many of Nabokov's works, but not in his biography. It is an important difference for further key motifs in Nabokov's work. For instance, he constantly writes about his return to Russia, but never actually returned there. The closest analogy to this situation I can think of is in Svetlana Boym's work on the motifs of suicide in the poetry of Mallarmé, Mayakovsky and Cvetaeva. The philologically inclined scholar highlights the therapeutic meaning of their art. They were writing *not* to act and did *not* act, for as long as they wrote. Up to a point, the writing process has saved them from desire, carrying out the same function the psychologist ascribes to free associations (Boym 1991).

Among the "Viennese delegation of psychoanalysts", whom Nabokov made fun of, such interrelation was called projection. The psychoanalytic view of projection implies that an unacceptable desire may not consciously be accepted but unconsciously embedded into the text: by relying on his knowledge, the psychologist spotlights in the text what the author himself did not know about his own text. In Nabokov, however, we notice that the author plays a controlled, subtly deliberate and intentional game with the reader's desires, ideas and forms, although many moves in the game remain hidden. We are dealing with a more complex, active power-process than the psychological notion of projection yields. The author has written what he meant to write and he invites us to read that only.

Like the Freudian dream, the text fulfils the desires that do not come about in reality. Thus Martyn in *Glory* freed his own author from the harmful desire to return to Russia, thus Gumbert or Kinbote would free him from other unattainable longings. Texts help authors not to fulfil some desires; maybe they also help their readers.

[17] According to Dahl, *kachura* is "beanpole, a very tall person" and *kachurit'*, "twist,warp, crumple"; *kachur'*-"swing".

[18] It is amusing to note that in Nabokov's self-comment he attached to these poems, these initials were deciphered in various ways: in one case Kachurin is called Stefan Mstislavovich, in another Sergei Michajlovich. See M.E. Malikova's footnotes to Nabokov 2002, 572-573.

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ANNALISA VOLPONE

"NOT TEXT, BUT TEXTURE"

Nabokov and the Joycean Momentum

What have you learned from Joyce?
Nothing.
(Vladimir Nabokov, *Strong Opinions*)

James Joyce and Vladimir Nabokov met a few times while Joyce was living in Paris in the late thirties. He was fascinated by Joyce's sagaciousness and strong personality. On his part, the Irish writer empathized with this young Russian artist to the point of helping him in a difficult moment of his career.[1] Nabokov's admiration for *Ulysses* is widely documented as well as his rejection of most of the rest of the Joycean production. For instance he defines *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* "a feeble and garrulous book" (Nabokov 1990, 71), and while he never commented on *Dubliners*[2] he left his most caustic remark to Joyce's last novel *Finnegans Wake*. He declared to detest the *Wake* as he considered it "one of the greatest failures in literature" (Nabokov 1980, 342), in which "a cancerous growth of fancy word-tissue hardly redeems the dreadful joviality of the folklore and the easy, too easy, allegory" (Nabokov 1990, 102). Yet, despite his dismissive and boastful comments on the author of *Ulysses* – "James Joyce has not influenced me in any manner whatsoever" (Nabokov 1990, 102) – to Nabokov Joyce remains an inescapable reference point both in terms of style and narrative devices.

[1] In this regard, Richard Ellmann notes that "on hearing that Vladimir Nabokov was to lecture on Pushkin, and would probably confront an empty hall, Joyce made a point of attending so as to save his young friend from undue embarrassment." (Ellmann 1982, 699) Nabokov recalls the same episode observing that "A source of unforgettable consolation was the sight of Joyce sitting, arms folded and glasses glinting, in the midst of the Hungarian football team" (Nabokov 1990, 86).

[2] In honour of the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of Vladimir Nabokov, PEN American Center, The New Yorker, Vintage Books and Manhattan's Town Hall brought together a group of authors on 15 April 1999 to read from and reflect on Nabokov's work. In his speech Martin Amis's observed that although Nabokov never commented on *Dubliners* "he did mark up a short story in the anthology he was sent, often giving zed or z-minuses to writers with hemispherical reputations like Lawrence, and he did give Joyce an A+ for "The Dead."

In this essay I consider the kind of influence Joyce exerted on Nabokov with particular reference to his major works *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*. The first part provides some examples of the impact of *Ulysses* on Nabokov's novel *The Eye* (*Soglyadatai*, 1930) – which was published when he was in Europe[3], while the second part focuses on the possible analogies between *Finnegans Wake* and *Pale Fire* (1962), and in particular on the way both Nabokov and Joyce create for their characters a specific idiolect and linguistic universe of its own.

As a result such a comparison discloses a series of interconnections that go well beyond the mere concept of influence. In other words, although it may be true that when Nabokov begins to study Joyce systematically he is "definitely formed and immune to any literary influence" (Nabokov 1990, 71), it is quite apparent that Joyce's "noble originality and unique lucidity of thought and style" (Nabokov 1990, 71) cannot be so easily dismissed. Indeed Joyce surfaces in Nabokov's narratives as a sort of textual reverberation from a sophisticated interplay of literary as well as cultural references.

The way Nabokov concocts and organizes his textual material has been often considered as "postmodern".[4] For instance the self-reflexive treatment of the author-reader relation, the use of an unreliable narrator, the textual fragmentation, and the recourse to different planes of reality, which are typical of postmodern narratives, might be associated to Nabokov's style. By contrast, I argue, that his response to Joyce's peculiar style can be investigated and interpreted within a modernist context, whereby modernism, or better in this particular case Joyce's modernism, becomes a turning point for his own writing. As John Burt Forster Jr. has observed

> when Nabokov self-consciously assembles a context for his writing, modernist culture itself enters his works as something that he directly emulates, amplifies or attacks. (Forster 1993, xii)

It is precisely in such self-conscious emulation, amplification and attacks towards Joyce's own modernist style that the Nabokov-Joyce controversial relation articulates itself.

Joycean Echoes in *The Eye*

The Eye marks a crucial passage in Nabokov's style. This "little novel", as he defines it in the "Foreward" to the English edition (1965), translated by his son Dmitri and supervised by himself, presents a crucial technical achievement: it inaugurates

[3] This is true if we do not consider the unfinished *Solus Rex*. Notably Nabokov's first American novel *Bend Sinister* incorporates *Solus Rex*.

[4] See for instance Kondoyanidi 1999, Green 2008, Danglli 2010 and Abbasi 2013.

Nabokov's employment of the first person narrator. Obviously such a stylistic choice has important repercussions on the story itself. For example it dramatically complicates the narrator's point of view: the plot is in fact based on the possibility that the narrational "I", who guides the reader through the story, and the ineffable Smurov are the same person. Hence, on the one hand, the story is presented from a claustrophobic and inescapable point of view – the "I"'s – and on the other, this "I" appears utterly unreliable, which leads the reader to believe that the voice belongs to a probably delusional, if not completely mad, character. Moreover this "I", as the unique narrative voice, comes from a disembodied consciousness: it is in fact the result of a residual psychic energy (Barton Johnson 1995, 131), as a consequence of the protagonist's supposed suicide.

The emphasis on the character's conscience, the uncensored penetration of his/her most intimate thoughts – which is a hallmark of modernism – here becomes the very substance of the story. Even the title suggests a similar interpretation. In fact, in the English edition of the novel Nabokov chose to translate the Russian title *Soglyadatai*, which literally means "the spy" or "the reconnoiterer", with *The Eye*, playing with the homophony between the pronoun "I" and the substantive *eye*. Such a connection between the two lays particular emphasis on the story's point of view. The *eye* in fact symbolically represents a passageway into the dimension of consciousness. When the *eye* conflates into the "I" the story becomes an infinite *myse en abyme* of the subject (as the speaking voice) and of his multiple refractions. It is precisely through this *eye*/"I", through this particular point of view, that the reader enters the character's consciousness. However such overlapping, rather than clarifying the nature of the events narrated and their plausibility, complicates things even further. Indeed, despite Nabokov's declaration in the "Foreward" that "the author disclaims all intentions to trick, puzzle, fool, or otherwise deceive the reader", it becomes immediately clear that *The Eye* resists interpretation. Even if the reader, as expected by the author, easily detects the relationship between the narrational "I" and Smurov, the story maintains its intricacies, because "the stress is not on the mystery but on the pattern": for theirs is not a one-to-one connection but a one-to-many. Notably at the very end of the novel the reader comes to know that:

> I [the narrational "I"] do not exist: there exist but the thousands of mirrors that reflect me. With every acquaintance I make, the population of phantoms resembling me increases. Somewhere they multiply, I alone do not exist. Smurov, however, will live on for a long time. (Nabokov 1965, 103)

Paradoxically the narrational "I" can exist only through its own multiplications, through the infinite series of disembodied images that it perceives both as "a projection of" and "other from" itself. Although not perfectly superimposable, these phantoms "resemble" each other just enough as to make the reader question Smurov's "real"

identity. In this regard the etymology of "resemble" can be helpful. Resemble comes from the middle English *resemblen,* "to appear", which derives from the Latin *simulare*, "to imitate" (Online Etymology Dictionary). The kind of relationship between the narrational "I" and Smurov is indeed based on imitation and simulation. The narrational "I" is never completely superimposable to a particular reflection, rather it needs a virtually infinite number of reflections to continue to exist. Therefore Smurov must remain ineffable and undefined, because he subsumes in himself all of these existential possibilities: unlike the "I" he "will live on for a long time" (Nabokov 1965, 103).

In the polyphonic interplay of the multiple narrative voices of *Pale Fire* one can find a similar provocative closure, when at the very end of the novel Kinbote, reflecting on Gradus' untraceability declares:

> But whatever happens, whatever the scene is laid, somebody, somewhere, will quietly set out – somebody has already set out, somebody still rather faraway is buying a ticket, is boarding a bus, a ship, a plane has landed, is walking towards a million of photographers, and presently he will ring at my door – a bigger, more respectable, more competent Gradus. (301)

Likewise the closing paragraph of *Pale Fire* presents a vertiginous multiplication of narrative subjects, of Gradus-like identities, all ready to accomplish their murderous intent. In Kinbote's ravenous and paranoid presumptions, Gradus is not even identifiable with a single individual; on the contrary he randomly proliferates in different places at different times. Adding another meaning to his very name, in such a continual regeneration – which like in *The Eye* "increases the population of phantoms" resembling himself – he *gradually* becomes more and more "respectable" and "competent" for his task.

From a stylistic perspective, Nabokov effaces the presence of the narrative voice – and consequently of the traditional well-defined point of view – in favour of a multiplicity of refracted and fragmentary voices. Therefore he dramatically complicates the role and function of the narrator, whose (individual) voice turns into a polyphony of silent voices within a network of stories to be told and re-told, disrupting the world that has been depicted, and making it multilevel.

Certainly the textual aspects I have focused on can only in part convey the impact of *The Eye* on Nabokov's future works. Nonetheless I consider them instrumental in discussing the kind of influence Joyce has exerted on Nabokov's style in such a crucial moment of his production. Hence the choice of identifying the narrator with a disembodied consciousness that "pulsate[s] and create[s] images", (Nabokov 1965, 21), as well as the shift from a singular to a multiple point of view, and finally the peculiar author-reader relationship, which such narrative devices imply, are all elements that can be traced back to *Ulysses*. Despite Nabokov's peremptory declarations about

the non influence of Joyce's writing on his own style, the kind of technical achievements presented in *The Eye* is reminiscent of the pioneering experimentations of *Ulysses*. Even the pun in the title is somehow anticipated in Joyce's text, when in the "Ithaca" chapter, to the question "What did the first drawer unlocked contain?" the impersonal narrator answers:

> an infantile epistle, dated, small em monday, reading: capital pee Papli comma capital aitch How are you note of interrogation *capital eye* I am very well full stop new paragraph signature with flourishes capital em Milly no stop. (Joyce 1993, 17.1791-94, my italics)

Milly's infantile epistle to her father, written as if it were a dictation exercise, contains a series of words, whose first letters are transcribed as following a teacher's suggestion to spell them correctly. Hence Milly writes "em" for Monday, "pee" for Papli, and, remarkably, "capital *eye*" for the pronoun I, reproducing the same pun of Nabokov's title, with practically the same ontological implications. In both cases, this particular pun invites a reflection between the objective and subjective point of view. As for Joyce, the "I"/*eye* in the letter[5] subsumes the interplay between a completely objective narration – represented by the scientific gaze (*eye*) through which each object, piece of furniture and event is duly catalogued and recounted[6] – and the characters' subjectivity that ineluctably surfaces in the text, undermining the certainty of a "neutral" narration. Because in Milly's letter punctuation is translated into words, it contributes to the semantics of the text, revealing once again the artificiality of writing as well as its deceptive nature. Whatever the point of view, Joyce's text denies the reader any form of totalizing hermeneutics. Accordingly, Milly's letter articulates itself between the conclusive "I am very well full stop" and the inconclusive "new paragraph signature with flourishes capital em Milly no stop". Hence the letter remains suspended between a "full stop" and a "no stop", between meaning and its deferral. One is reminded of Jacques Derrida's last statement in his well-known essay "Signature Event Context":

> as a disseminating operation separated from presence (of Being) according to all its modifications, writing, if there is any, perhaps communicates, but does not exist, surely. Or barely, hereby, in the form of the most improbable signature. (Derrida 1982, 329)

[5] Letters in Joyce have often a metonymical function, as if they were a reproduction of the text in a smaller scale. See for instance letter/mamafesta in *Finnegans Wake*.

[6] Notably Joyce declared that he wrote "Ithaca" in the "form of mathematical cathechism" (Ellmann 1982, 501).

Provocatively Derrida closes his essay with his own signature followed by a full stop. By contrast, Joyce leaves the letter incomplete because there can be no reconciliation between the I/*eye*, between the outer gaze and the subjective perspective of reality. The "I" loses himself/herself in the *eye*, the points of view clash. At the same time the reader is invited to enter and escape narration, to see the events from the inside, from the character's mind, and to abandon them, in favour of a more detached point of view. The private writing between a daughter and her father is presented as a specimen of a writing exercise. Her emotions are objectified and translated into barely meaningful alphabetical signs described by the narrator's inquisitive gaze. The reader is on the threshold between the "I" and the *eye*, forced to unravel an impossible double bind, which does not admit any solutions. The more the reader tries to overcome the gap between the "I" and the *eye* the more the text loses its coherence and sense.

Likewise, in Nabokov's novel the reader is first led to follow the "I", to enter his mind and see everything from his own point of view. Then, the "I" turns into the *eye*, a disembodied gaze deprived of any identifiable subjectivity, which through a series of textual mirrors, reflects reality in what apparently seems an objective way. As the story goes on, the fracture between the "I"/*eye* becomes deeper and deeper because, in a sort of meiotic recombination, the "I"/Smurov divides and replicates himself into an infinite number of other subjectivities ready to take his place. Once again the reader is invited to unravel this double bind, to reconcile the "I" with the *eye*, and once again such an unravelling proves to be impossible. Nabokov's story inscribes itself precisely in the fissure produced by the semantic slip between the "I"/eye, stemming and growing from it. Analogously to Milly's letter, *The Eye* presents no closure and the reader is left with Smurov's address to some "cruel, smug people…", who doubt about his final epiphany:

> the only happiness in this world is to observe, to spy, to watch, to scrutinize oneself and others, to be nothing but a big, slightly vitreous, somewhat bloodshot, unblinking eye. (103)

It is not difficult to recognize in those "suspicious people" the reader(s), who is/are invited to share in the voyeuristic pleasure of the gaze all its possible articulations.[7] The gaze here functions as a subtle scrutiny of the events from a distance. After all, according to Nabokov, the reader's task is first and foremost to disclose and admire the wonder of the author's creation. Both Joyce and Nabokov deny the reader a reassuring "full stop", ironically longed for by Derrida, and leave their novels in tension, as if they were a textual machine ready to generate new stories. Here the ellipsis at the "end" of

[7] "Observe", "spy", "watch" and "scrutinize" are only an example of the conspicuous use of verbs related to sight in the novel.

The Eye and the "no stop" at the end of Milly's letter aim to produce a continual textual parthenogenesis, which is crucial to both Joyce's and Nabokov's writing.

Incoherent Transactions: *Finnigan's Wake*[8]

Nabokov refers to *Finnegans Wake* as "a formless and dull mass of phony folklore, a cold pudding of a book, a persistent snore in the next room, most aggravating to the insomniac I am" (Nabokov 1990, 71). Hence, it will not come as a surprise that in response to Alfred Appel's question about a textual convergence between *Finnegans Wake* and *Pale Fire*,[9] he answered quite peremptorily that Joyce's last novel "has no inner connection with *Pale Fire*" (Nabokov 1990, 74).

Such a firm judgment might discourage one from speculating about a dialogic tension between *Finnegans Wake* and *Pale Fire*. Yet, I do not think that this issue can be so easily dismissed. After all, Nabokov truly believed Joyce to be a genius:[10] for him the Irish writer's works were a challenge as well as a significant source of inspiration. In *Pale Fire*, for instance, this is particularly apparent in Nabokov's treatment of Kinbote's commentary, which from both a narrative and a linguistic point of view can be associated to the beguiling narratives of the *Wake*.

Indeed, rather than being a formal critical apparatus,[11] as one would expect it to be, Kinbote's commentary is a formidable work of imagination which parasitically draws life from the dissected main text, whose broken sentences and words are recycled for a different narrative. Even the title is reversed and anatomized in Kinbote's coercive appropriation of "Pale Fire", reappearing above the textual surface as "wavelets of fire" and "pale and phosphorescent hints" (297). Thus, Kinbote's contribution turns into a whirlpool of "contrapuntal" translations of images and echoes, partly belonging to his own existential experience and partly to Shade's.

It is remarkable that, precisely during this activity of sorting out the threads of his rhizomatic web of (non)sense, Kinbote should recall to his mind Joyce's last novel:

> Of course it would be unseemingly for a monarch to appear in the robes of learning at a university lectern and present to rosy youths Finnigan's Wake [sic] as a monstrous extension of Angus MacDiarmid's "incoherent transactions" and of Southey's LingoGrande ("Dear Stumparumper", etc). (Nabokov 1962, 76)

[8] A more extensive version of this section has already been published in Volpone 2009.

[9] Appel questioned the analogies between the *Wake*'s fifth chapter, devoted to Anna Livia's mamafesta, and *Pale Fire*, since for Appel, that particular chapter of the *Wake* is very close in spirit to Nabokov's novel (Appel 1967, 137).

[10] This is what he declared in an interview with James Mossman at the BBC (4 October, 1969).

[11] Kinbote dismisses these kinds of studies by defining them as "nonsense" or as something "aside from the veritable clarion of internal evidence" and the like.

The passage refers to King Charles' passion for literature. Disguised in his physical appearance and under false identity (according to Kinbote, it would be inconvenient for a King to work at a university), he becomes an esteemed professor who lectures on *Finnegans Wake*.[12] Here, Joyce's novel is related to Angus MacDiarmid, a champion of Scottish folklore and culture, author of *A Description of the Beauties of Edinample and Lochearnhead* (1815) written in a somewhat broken and clumsy English, and to the romantic poet Robert Southey, in this case mentioned more for his love of riddles, puns and nursery rhymes than for his poems. Unequivocally, Nabokov aims to emphasize the extreme linguistic experimentation and parody offered by these authors. In a single annotation, he conflates Joyce, MacDiarmid and Southey as the ultimate paradigm of linguistic nonsense and distortion.

As for Angus MacDiarmid, Nabokov seems to refer to the Scottish antiquary and journalist Robert Scott Fittis who, in *Sports and Pastimes of Scotland Historically Illustrated*, describes him as follows:

> He appears to have acquired just sufficient knowledge of the English language to enable him to use an English dictionary, from the study of which his untutored mind formed an extraordinary style of composition. The Description was reprinted at Aberfeldy in 1841, and again in 1876, and is altogether unique as the production of an untaught Highlander striving to express his thoughts in literary English. A copy of the first edition apparently fell into the hands of Robert Southey, who quoted and laughed over one of its queer phrases "men of incoherent transactions". (47)

As a humorous and witty intellectual, Robert Southey was amused by MacDiarmid's "queer language" which evoked his word-games and jokes. In particular, Kinbote's allusion to the "Lingo Grande" refers to a sort of linguistic game played between Robert and his sister-in-law, Sarah Fricker, the wife of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Sarah had invented a language, "Lingo Grande", as her family called it, which she spoke with her friends and children. According to Molly Lefebure, "the fullest surviving account which we have of this language occurs in a letter from Southey to [his friend] Grosvenor

[12] In the current Vintage International Edition of the book, *Finnegans Wake* is spelled "Finnigan's Wake." Other editions of the novel carry the same misspelling, while in the Penguin Classics (and in more recent American editions) the novel's title is correctly spelled. Ironically, such a mistake has been inherited by the translations of *Pale Fire* as well. In particular, Richard Zahnhausen has noticed that in the "Afterward" to the German translation, Andrew Field has ascribed the misprint to Kinbote, as another proof of his mediocre literary culture. The question has been discussed in the on-line Nabokov forum, where some of the most prominent scholars have reached the conclusion that most likely it is a misprint; yet this explanation has not convinced the Nabokovian community and the debate is still on-going.

Bedford dated 14 September 1821" (Lefebure 1985, 82). The letter begins with "Dear Stumparumper", which is how Mrs. Coleridge addressed Bedford in her language.

Moreover, from 1814, Southey "began working on a book which he at first was tentatively calling 'Dr Dove' and ultimately was to publish as *The Doctor*, a tome of seven volumes, comprising collections of mottoes, anecdotes, fairy tales, nursery tales, social history, gossip, folklore and ballads, punning and play with words, attempts at serious etymology and essays on every subject under the sun" (Lefebure 1985, 80). Southey's work can be inscribed onto the literary tradition (inaugurated by Lawrence Sterne[13] and later developed by Lewis Carroll) devoted to systematically undermining narration in its deepest structure and seriously putting into question the effectiveness of linguistic communication.

In other words, Nabokov associates *Finnegans Wake* with two main literary traditions: "nonsense" and "regional literature". In this regard, both MacDiarmid's and Southey's stylistic devices might be considered to be excellent precursors of those employed by Joyce in the novel. Hence, it will not come as a surprise that Kinbote describes the *Wake* as a "monstrous extension" of MacDiarmid's and Southey's works. Nabokov is mocking what he believed was the total nonsense of Joyce's language as well as the audacity of his style in *Finnegans Wake*. As for MacDiarmid, in his genuine ignorance of the English language, he rendered his thoughts in an approximate prose form, including semantic slips, misquotations and decontextualized translations from Scottish. Such a peculiar use of language can be compared with Joyce's provocative attempts to show the unpredictable mechanisms of linguistic communication. Analogously, Southey's intentional deconstruction of language and grandiose project of *The Doctor* seem to anticipate the *Wake*. In his intention of producing an omni-comprehensive text that ranges from serious to humorous and encompasses all literary genres, Southey is creating a precedent for Joyce's novel. However, whereas the romantic poet needs six volumes to accomplish his project, Joyce encapsulates the wor(l)d in 628 pages.

Priscilla Meyer considers the reference to MacDiarmid a parody of the Scottish poet, James MacPherson. MacDiarmid was trying to establish a cultural and national tradition for Scotland just as Macpherson, in his eighteenth century forgery, was trying to affirm a specific literary and epic inheritance through the mysterious discovery of the ancient bard, Ossian.

Here Nabokov's description of the *Wake* as "a dull mass of phony folklore" or as "regional literature full of quaint old-timers and imitated pronunciation" (Nabokov 1990, 71) might be useful. Similarly to MacPherson, Joyce is (re)creating a national epic, intentionally forging a tradition that does not exist. From this perspective, the

[13] Southey considered himself the rightful heir of Lawrence Sterne, indeed he turned the tale *The Doctor* into a book with "much of Tristram Shandy about it." See Lefebure 1985.

Wake becomes for Kinbote the highest example of literary deceit, a model reference to make Zembla more tangible. Indeed, to turn his imaginary land into a real place, Kinbote needs to endow it with a national history, a culture and, of course, a language. Consequently, the very essence of his library is its Zemblan translations of the major achievements of western culture, *Finnegans Wake* included.

It is as if the books in the library were a draft copy of the original, a plagiarized and manipulated collection of the ideas that have contributed to the advancement of human knowledge. In this infinite catalogue, the *Wake*, with its overt plagiaristic nature, embodies the ultimate parody of this calculated forgery. The annotations and comments of Prof. Jones to the Tiberiast Duplex as a comic counterpart of *The Book of Kells* (from which the letter-mamafesta seems to derive), are a further extension of MacPherson's cooked up annotations to Ossian's Son of Fingal, echoed by Joyce in the very title of his novel.

Finally, the context in which Kinbote mentions *Finnegans Wake* deserves some attention. He lingers on a digression in the note to "crystal land" in line 12. In his reading, this expression might be an allusion to his "beloved Zembla". His painful exiled condition often leads him to misinterpret Shade's words as encrypted signs of his country. Thus, he argues that in the passage he is commenting on, the main subjects are exile and nostalgia. Recalling Joyce in this context is more than appropriate. Like Kinbote and, of course, Nabokov, he chose to leave his motherland and never return. Despite this drastic decision, we know that Joyce wrote only about Ireland and Dublin. As a matter of fact, Kinbote's pathological contextomy[14] and distorted interpretation turn Zembla into the center of Shade's poetical discourse.[15]

One cannot help but compare King Charles/Kinbote's lectures with Nabokov's. During his stay in America, Nabokov taught at Stanford University, Wellesley College, Harvard and Cornell. Posthumously his lecture notes on European and Russian literature were published under the titles *Lectures on Literature* (1980) and *Lectures on Russian Literature* (1981). In his famous course on the Masterpieces of European Fiction (Literature 311-12 delivered in 1954 at Cornell University), a prominent place was given to *Ulysses*, which Nabokov considered one of the greatest achievements of the twentieth century. It is quite ironic that Nabokov's fictional counterpart, King Charles/Kinbote, does not teach *Ulysses* but, rather, *Finnegans Wake*, as if the latter were more appropriate to a professor, who manifests signs of mental disorder.

Undoubtedly, the compelling linguistic experimentations of HCE's Wakease prefigure both Kinbote's dense Zemblan "heteroglossia and multi-languagedness" (Bakhtin 1981, 274) with its polysemic blending of Russian, English and other

[14] This expression refers to the practice of quoting out of context, whereby the meaning of a passage, removed from its original context, can be easily distorted and misinterpreted. See McGlone 2005.

[15] There are a number of episodes in the novel in which Kinbote argues that his Zembla is the subject-matter of the poem.

languages; as well as Hazel's peculiar use of "mirror words" or "twisted words" – as Shade would have it. For instance, in his comment to line 109 of "Pale Fire", Kinbote states that Shade's word "iridule" means "an iridiscent cloudlet, Zemblan muderperlwelk". Kinbote's Zemblan analogue is a compound word in which there are allusions to English, Russian and German (just to mention the most apparent languages). Indeed, "muderperlwelk" echoes the English expression, "mother of pearl welk" ("welk" being a particular kind of mollusk or shell), the Russian "perlmutr", and the German "perlmutter". Moreover, "welk" in German brings to mind both "welken", which means "withered" and "wolke", which means "cloud". Each of these references contributes both to the articulation of meaning and to the emergence of a *différance* between Shade's line and Kinbote's Zemblan version. The effect of the endless deferral of meaning, in the passage from one language to another, is even more dramatically intensified by Kinbote's attitude towards Shade's text. Like a virus, he creeps into the cracks of translation and the clefts of language to deconstruct Shade's poetic *imaginaire* and substitutes it with his own. The result is the kind of undecidable tension and infinite play of allusions that characterize the language of *Finnegans Wake*.

The analysis of the compound word "muttheringpot" (20.7) can serve both as an example of such a practice and as a meta-reflection on the use of languages in the *Wake*. Joyce employs this expression in the context devoted to cooking and communication. In this case, the very act of speaking/writing is analogous to the preparation of a dish. "Mutther" refers to German "Mutter", which means both "type mould" and "mother". It is women, and in particular mothers, who are traditionally associated with food and cooking, as it is to a feminine sphere that the notion of "native language" is metonymically referred in the expressions, "mother language" or "mother tongue". Furthermore, "muttheringpot" echoes the English "melting pot", "muttering" and "murmuring" as if communication were a long, continuous indistinct sound of blending languages, like the bubbling of a pot on the stove, a hidden message which becomes meaningful only if properly "cooked". It is a perspective that polyglot Nabokov seems to put into practice quite literally.

As for Hazel's private idiolect, again *Finnegans Wake* is a point of reference. Wordplays like "top" for "pot" or "redips" for "spider" could be easily added to the Wakean linguistic repertoire. Certainly Joyce's novel presents an abundant use of mirror words and metathesis. The acronyms used by the author to refer to his characters, ALP (Anna Livia Plurabelle) and HCE (Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker), are often written in reverse.[16] For example the first three letters of the term "echoland" (13.5) correspond to the initials HCE in reverse order, thus, "echo-land" can be also read as "HCE's land", i.e. Ireland. Sometimes Joyce uses palindromes (which are a particular kind of mirror words) as in the following question: "And shall not Babel be

[16] For the use of acronyms in *Finnegans Wake* see McHugh 1976.

with Lebab?" (258.11-12). Indeed not only is "Lebab" the reverse of "Babel" but it is also "a palindrome incorporating the Hebrew word for 'heart' (lebhabh), as well as a derivative of the Irish word leabhar, meaning 'book'" (Armand 2001). It follows that for Joyce, mirror words represent a formidable instrument for increasing the novel's semantic density. In Nabokov, they are a repetition on a smaller scale of the novel's main pattern which consists of an infinite play of reflections, reverse images and (a)symmetrical juxtapositions. After all, "Pale Fire" opens with the image of "a waxwing slain/by the false azure in the windowpane" (33).

To conclude, in such a complex hypersemiotic reference system, meaning is turned into the most visible effect of an "ongoing dynamism". Through the evocativeness of certain semantic nodes, as in the case of the passages on which I have just commented, in both novels the reader is brought to develop his own reference pattern according to his knowledge, competence and experience.

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MADDALENA GRATTAROLA

NABOKOV'S LITERARY LEGACY

Bridging Russian and American Postmodernism

> I often think that it is necessary to come up with a typographic symbol denoting a smile – some flourish or leaning closing bracket, which I could use to accompany my answers to your questions.
>
> Vladimir Nabokov

This paper aims to highlight the importance of V. Nabokov's oeuvre in shaping some aspects of selected Russian and American postmodern novels. Given the complex stratification of different narrative layers that characterises his prose, the extreme attention to details, the constant presence of doubles, linguistic puns and a general playful attitude toward the text, it is quite clear why Nabokov has been recently seen as a precursor and pioneer of the postmodern genre. Besides highlighting the postmodern elements in his works, and following the leitmotiv that secretly connects the characters within all his novels, we shall take a step further and extend this intangible but quite strong connection to the novels of two postmodern authors – Pelevin's *The Sacred Book of the Werewolf* (Священная Книга Оборотня, 2004) and Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966). As we shall see, not only these two authors welcome in their novels characters space-travelling directly from Nabokov's world, but they even insert them in a new context, surrounded by postmodern elements which redefine their role as some sort of metafictional *émigré*.

Before proceeding, it is important to understand and briefly state the definition and borders of the postmodern novel. According to Currie, a postmodern novel "takes the issue of the relationship of fiction and reality as a central concern" and "constructs fictional worlds only to expose them as artificial constructions" (Currie 2011, 2). Postmodern novels often favor illusion-breaking devices, especially those which emphasize the presence of the author within the text, and particularly when this presence has the specific role of declaring the fictionality of the fiction. These novels are metafictions: fiction about fiction, or fictions which incorporate "critical and theoretical reflection into their fictional worlds" (Currie 2011, 2). Postmodern novels are above all intertextual novels: they cite, allude to, refer to and borrow from other texts, from other

representations and from other jargons, both real and fictional. The acts of recycling and reshaping, repeating and rewriting are typical of the postmodern novels which are also characterized by an inner intermediality: not only they borrow from different texts, but also from different media, inserting – for example – a TV script within the main plot. Last but not least, postmodern novels represent "a contemporary state of global culture, dominated by new technologies". They reflect aspects of globalization, represent worlds of simulation, and "of personal and collective archiving that belong to the contemporary phase of capitalism" (Currie 2011, 2). Moreover, they reflect a world in which simulations are inseparable form the things they copy and they represent "above all, issues of identity and cultural difference seen against a backdrop of global, cultural standardization". At the level of form, being immersed in the global village and globalized here and now of an eternal present, postmodern novels show "the loss of linearity in temporal experience, or the tendency to experience, in technologically assisted ways, the present as a future representation or recollection" (Currie 2011, 3).

As Hassan states in *The Postmodern Turn* (1987), modernism and postmodernism are not separated by "an Iron Curtain or Chinese Wall; for history is a palimpsest, and culture is permeable to time past, time present, and time future" (Hassan 1987, 88). It is highly difficult (and utterly arbitrary) to claim an inaugural date for the beginning of postmodernism, as for any other literary movement, thus, once we have created and defined in our mind a model of postmodernism, it is inevitable to frequently discover "antecedents of postmodernism" (Hassan 1987, 88) by rereading authors so far considered as belonging to a previous period, such as Kafka, Beckett, Borges and Nabokov.

But more specifically, let's now focus on the Russian response to this type of novel by addressing the first and most important question related to this subject: is there a "Russian postmodernism"?

Mikhail Epstein (in *Russian Postmodernism*, 1999) follows Baudrillard's notion of hyperreality and when approaching the concept of Russian postmodernism he proposes to:

> treat those laws of twentieth-century cultural development as shared by the West and Russia, in spite of the fact that Russia was isolated from the West and in fact set itself in vigorous opposition to it during this period. Indeed Russia's own "revolutionariness" is part of the global revolutionary paradigm of the twentieth century. (Epstein 1999, 3)

Thus, he explores the complex relationship of Modernism and Postmodernism as the two complementary aspects of one cultural paradigm. This paradigm may be designated by the notion of "hyper": Epstein plays with the prefix "hyper" taking its meaning directly from the original Greek etymology where it stands for "above, too much, in an excessive way".

In Epstein's opinion, therefore, a key factor in Russian postmodernism is the tendency to exaggerate, to represent reality through the lens of excess, to embrace a new form of addiction to redundancy: the concept of the "hyper" is, in Epstein's vision, a natural response of a new movement compared to the previous one. The temporal lag with which postmodernism manifests itself in Russia is mainly a result of the 'unnaturalness' of the Russian case: "as a result of decades of censorship and other forms of repression, Russian postmodernism presents a concentrated, intellectualized, and accelerated form of the phenomenon" (Epstein 1999, vii). Russian postmodernism, to a certain extent, may be seen as a piece of amber, where everything that happened in the twenty years of delay (compared to the rise of postmodernism in the U.S.A) is still perfectly understandable by looking at the first literary products of this new genre. Whether we decide to call it postmodernism, new sincerity, or hypermodernism, it seems quite clear from Epstein's words that this cultural movement has indeed deeply affected all Russian cultural subsets.

Lipovetsky (in *Russian Postmodernist Fiction*, 1999) states that Russian postmodernism came into being as "the simultaneous expression of two contradictory tendencies". While there was a certain inclination for a return to modernism and to the aesthetic model of the classics, at the same time it was also clear that decades of totalitarian aesthetics were impossible to ignore, and therefore that the return to the "restored" modernism was just incompatible with Russia's recent past. In Lipovetsky's view, the postmodernist potential of Russian modernism can be demonstrated by the evolution of Vladimir Nabokov, who witnessed the atmosphere of the Silver Age during his youth, and then, as an émigré in the twenties and thirties, was actively involved in the creation of two modernist (and at the same time metafictional) novels, such as *The Gift* (1970) and *Invitation to a Beheading* (1935), which are quite emblematic within his oeuvre. It was only a few decades later, after he moved to America, that Nabokov published, in 1995, *Lolita* which is currently considered to be a classic of the American postmodernist canon.

World War II showed, as Couturier argues, "not only the fragility of the old values and of the real, but also constituted a universal liturgy of the ultimate real, death" (Couturier 1993, 257). It is therefore in this historical event that we shall find the border dividing the modernist and postmodernist realms in Nabokov's oeuvre. His approach to postmodern aesthetics is based on the fundamental acknowledgement of his understanding of the "unreality of the real", and this leads Couturier to argue that *Bend Sinister* and *Invitation to a Beheading* represent "the militant stage of the late-modernism" or of the "pre-post-modernism" and to consider *Lolita*, *Pale Fire*, and *Ada, or Ardor* to be "archetypical postmodernist novels" (Couturier 1993, 258).

The "unreality of reality" is, as Lipovetsky states: "a fundamental part of Nabokov's metafiction in his Russian, thoroughly modernist period" because the author's playful attitude toward the text is expressed both "by constantly exposing the author's role in the constriction of the work" and "by drawing the reader into the creative game,

constantly undermining what little sense of reality and mimesis the novel has" (Lipovetsky 1999, 9).

Being able to observe Nabokov's entire oeuvre from a certain distance and perspective, it seems important to highlight to what extent the author has pushed the limits of the world he has created. Not only has he managed to bend the rules of narrative, but he has created an entire cosmos in which his characters still exist and coexist in perfect balance even after his death: for example, in *The Gift* there are elements and characters that may be also found in *Speak, Memory* (1951), which has a similar structure and line of events as *Pnin* (1957), whose protagonist is last depicted while driving his pale blue car, just to appear again in *Pale Fire* (1962) and *Lolita* (1955); *Lolita* partially includes elements of *The Enchanter* (1939) and both are partially included in *Look at the Harlequins!* (1974) and so on, in an endless game of cross-contamination. Thanks to his legacy, Nabokov's characters are still able to metafictionally travel across space and time, and materialize in yet another book, another story, another role, another "unreal reality".

Victor Pelevin seems to be continuing this game in his novel *The Sacred Book of the Werewolf* where the protagonist A Hu-Li is a revised – supernatural – version of Lolita: she is the main character and unreliable narrator of the novel, a shape-shifting nymphet, a red-haired Asian girl who is 2000 years old but looks 14:

> I could be anything from fourteen to seventeen years old – closer to fourteen. My physical appearance arouses feelings in people, especially men, that are boring to describe, and there's no need – nowadays everybody read Lolita, even the Lolitas. Those feelings are what provide my living. (Pelevin 2008, 5)

Her name sounds like a Russian obscenity, "[s]omething like living in America and being called Whatze Phuck" (Pelevin 2008, 7), but it actually means "the fox named 'A'" in Chinese; when asked about her name, she explains:

> Why am I called 'A'? [...] He said it was the very shortest sound that a man could make when the muscles of his throat ceased to obey him. And it is true that some of the people over whom I cast my web of hallucination have just enough time to make a sound something like a muffled "A-a.." (Pelevin 2008, 7)

The book opens with a fictitious "Commentary by Experts" that strongly resembles the ones that open both *Pale Fire* and *Lolita*. Moreover, the first lines that the reader finds at the beginning of the book are an epigraph from *Lolita*:

> Who is your hero, Dolores Haze,
> Still one of those blue-caped starmen?
> Humbert Humbert

But Pelevin goes further on, by giving to A Hu-Li the pseudonym "Adele" which becomes shortly after "Ada": an explicit tribute to the Russian word for hell "ad", and obviously to Nabokov's novel *Ada, or Ardor: A Family Chronicle* (1969). Because A Hu-Li (which may be read with the same pace as "Lo-Lee-Ta") is 2000 years old, she has witnessed episodes of Nabokov's life, and gives proof of this by explaining the origin of some verses from Nabokov's "Paris Poem" (1943) which she feels particularly fitting for her existence as a shape-shifting fox:

> Life is irreversible –
> It will be staged in a new theatre,
> In a different way, with different actors.
> But the ultimate happiness
> Is to fold its magic carpet
> And make the ornament of the present
> Match the pattern of the past
> (Pelevin 2004, 49)

In fact, she explains:

> Vladimir Vladimirovich wrote that about us foxes. That's exactly what we do, constantly folding the carpet [...] And by the way, that carpet from "Paris Poem" was later inherited by Humbert Humbert: "Where are you riding, Dolores Haze? What make is the magic carpet?" I know what make it is. It was woven in Paris on a summer day sometimes around 1938, under gigantic white clouds frozen in the azure heavens, and it traveled to America in a roll [...] it took all the abomination of the second World War, all the monstrosity of the choices that it dictated, for the carpet to be hung up in Humbert's reception room. (Pelevin 2008, 49-50)

The carpet mentioned by A Hu-Li comes directly from Nabokov's "Paris Poem", then it travels safely to *Lolita* and it finally makes its last (official) appearance in *Speak Memory*, gaining more and more threads and patterns each time Nabokov decides to unfold it in his novels:

> I confess I do not believe in time. I like to fold my magic carpet, after use, in such a way as to superimpose one part of the pattern upon another. Let visitors trip. And the highest enjoyment of timelessness – in a landscape selected at random – is when I stand among rare butterflies and their food plants. (Nabokov 2000, 109)

Thanks to A Hu-Li we can now pretend to know "what make" Nabokov's magic carpet is, and what historical events it has absorbed in the space-time travel it has

accomplished from a poem written in 1943 to Pelevin's book: it has unfolded once more, and Lolita's pattern is now superimposed upon A Hu-Li, the transfer is complete.

The word that Pelevin chooses for the Russian version of *The Sacred Book of the Werewolf* to describe the type of creature that A Hu-Li represents, is "оборотень" which means shape-shifter, or, literally, someone who turns into something he/she was before (usually sorcerers turning themselves into animal, in Russian Folklore): it seems quite indicative that, instead of "vervolk" which he used for his earlier tale "A Werewolf Problem in Central Russia", Pelevin decides to choose this particular word. "Oboroten'" can also metaphorically indicate a person whose real nature is hidden. A Hu-Li is indeed a shape-shifting revised version of Lolita, or, if we are to follow Nabokov's instructions about folding the magic carpet after use "in such a way as to superimpose one part of the pattern upon another" (Nabokov 2000, 109), we may see her as a "repatterned" version of Lolita, this becomes quite clear as she declares:

> I took Lolita's story very personally and very seriously. For me Dolores Haze was a symbol of the soul, eternally young and pure, and Humbert Humbert was the metaphorical chairman of this world's board of directors. Apart from that, in the line of verse describing Lolita's age ("Age: five thousand three hundred days") it was enough to replace the word "days" with "years" and it would more or less fit me. (Pelevin 2008, 51)

The threads added by Pelevin to the magic carpet are also dedicated to Nabokov himself, and his particular way of depicting the characters of his novels by lending them memories of his own past, but always keeping (and loudly declaring) a voluntarily unbridgeable distance between his own (real) life and the life he creates for them. A Hu-Li comments as follows:

> I feel insulted when someone confuses Nabokov with his characters. Or calls him the godfather of American paedophilia. That's such a profoundly mistaken view of the writer. Remember this – Nabokov isn't speaking for himself when he describes the forbidden charms of a nymphet at such length. [...] A writer's true heart speaks out very furtively. (Pelevin 2008, 50-51)

In this case Pelevin seems to be echoing the words that Nabokov used in a BBC interview, in 1962: "I'm very careful to keep my characters beyond the limits of my own identity. Only the background of the novel can be said to contain some bibliographical touches". (Nabokov 1990, 13-14). When, during the same interview, the interviewer asks him about the "almost extravagant concern" shown in his novels "with masks and disguises" as if "you were trying to hide yourself behind something, as if you'd lost yourself", Nabokov replies:

> Oh, no. I think I'm always there; there's no difficulty about that. Of course there is a certain type of critic who when reviewing a work of fiction keeps dotting all the i's with the author's head. Recently one anonymous clown, writing on *Pale Fire* in a New York book review, mistook all the declarations of my invented commentator in the book for my own. It is also true that some of my more responsible characters are given some of my own ideas. (Nabokov 1990, 18)

It seems that among his "more responsible characters" we may indeed find not just those Nabokov himself created in is oeuvre, but a joyful crowd of postmodern readaptations ready to be sent to play a role both in Russian and American contemporary literatures.

On the American side of the postmodern genre, Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966) shows signs of Nabokov's influence less explicitly (besides a direct reference to Humbert Humbert, as we shall see) than those in Pelevin's novel, but with effects on his narration that are nonetheless quite evident and relevant. The over-detailed reality described by Pynchon and his tendency to play with puns, acronyms and the characters' names are all elements considered as crucial in Nabokov's style.

In this novel, there is at least one explicit mention to *Lolita*, in chapter six, when Serge, the counter-tenor of the band "The Paranoids" who has lost his girlfriend to an older (middle-aged) lawyer, sings a song, which conveys his suffering and declares his intention to start dating younger girls, i.e. nymphets:

> Serge's Song
>
> What chance has a lonely surfer boy
> For the love of a surfer chick,
> Whit all these Humbert Humbert cats
> Coming on so big and sick?
> For me, my baby was a woman,
> For him she's just another nymphet;
> Why did they run around, why did she put me down,
> And get me so upset?
> Well, as long as she's gone away-yay,
> I've had to find somebody new,
> And the older generation
> Has taught me what to do –
> I had a date last night with an eight-year-old,
> And she's a swinger just like me,
> So you can find us any night up on the football field,
> In back of P.S. 33 (oh, yeah)
> And it's as groovy as it can be.
> (Pynchon 1996, 101)

As soon as we enter the world created by Pynchon we are immediately surrounded by voices coming from different media: television, radio, letters, magazines and plays. The protagonist of the novel, Oedipa, a quite Nabokovian name indeed, is completely immersed in this kind of reality, and she deals with the effects of the exposure to the information overload she is experiencing. We first meet Oedipa in her living room, "stared at by the greenish dead eye of a TV tube" (Pynchon 1996, 9), so that since the very beginning it is quite clear that, despite the fact that the television's eye is dead, this medium is nonetheless considered as an agent, staring at a passive object, the protagonist. The entire novel is narrated through Oedipa's eyes starting from the point in which she receives a letter from a law firm telling her that Pierce Inverarity, her former lover and a California real estate mogul, has died after naming her the executor of his estate. This is the MacGuffin of *The Crying of Lot 49*. From this point on, Oedipa's entire life will be devoted to the quest of gathering information regarding Inverarity's vast real estate holdings and in order to do so she will drive restlessly from one point to another of Pynchon's version of the U.S.A. This ride resembles in a certain way Humbert Humbert's own infernal road trip, or, if we unfold the magic carpet once more, one of Nabokov and Vera's summer trips, when Vera indulged Nabokov, by accompanying him hunting butterflies: while Oedipa looks for information, Humbert Humbert looks for an impossible elopement and Nabokov for rare butterflies, because, as he writes, "[t]he highest enjoyment of timelessness – in a landscape selected at random – is when I stand among rare butterflies and their food plants. This is ecstasy, and behind the ecstasy is something else, which is hard to explain. It is like a momentary vacuum into which rushes all that I love" (Nabokov 2000, 110).

It is in this precise timelessness that Oedipa, paradoxically enough for a world so full of media, will find it quite hard to understand how to process the information she obtains. She opens a Pandora's box, but finds herself unable to extract a logic or a meaning from the load of information she is dealing with: "[t]hese follow-ups were no more disquieting than other revelations which now seemed to come crowding in exponentially, as if the more she collected the more would come to her" (Pynchon 1996, 81). The more she struggles in order to find meanings and patterns, the more the surrounding world teems with new information. The novel itself mirrors Oedipa's state of mind, offering the reader a labyrinth of riddles, puns and apparently reliable hints for the solving of the mystery, something that Nabokovian readers are quite used to. The reader, in the end, is in Oedipa's exact situation, unable to decide if the clues provided by the unreliable narrator in the novel are true or misleading information. Reached the end of the story, Oedipa has the feeling that the urge to "see" beyond the mere signifier of each word inevitably creates a feeling of expectations in the reader, pushing him/her through an escalation of paranoia, a theme often present in postmodern literature, and a very familiar one for Nabokov's readers, as we can see in *Look at the Harlequins!* In this

novel, the protagonist slowly but inexorably starts doubting his own existence, and suspects to be the copy of a more famous writer:

> I now confess that I was bothered [...] by a dream feeling that my life was the non-identical twin, a parody, an inferior variant of another man's life, somewhere on this or another earth. A demon, I felt, was forcing me to impersonate that other man, that other writer who was and would always be incomparably greater, healthier, and crueler than your obedient servant. (Nabokov 1990a, 89)

While Nabokov's character experiences paranoia and identity loss by over-interpreting (or simply understanding) the misleading (or accurate) signs that the author scatters throughout the novel, it seems clear that Oedipa is experiencing the failure of the communication system. Whether to believe in Tristero or not is precisely what Oedipa has to decide when she tries to unravel the mystery: "[e]ither Tristero did exist, in it's own right, or it was being presumed, perhaps fantasied by Oedipa, so hung up on and interpenetrated with the dead man's estate" (Pynchon 1996, 75). But if we turn back and now focus on how it all started, we will only find Pierce's letter, full of meaning or totally useless. In this case letters, which should really be the clearest and most direct form of communication, are depicted as meaningless, invalidated by errata, omissions and inconsistencies. The W.A.S.T.E. (an acronym similar to L.A.T.H. in *Look at the Harlquins!*) delivery system, for example, requires each of its members to send a letter once a week even if there is no real need to communicate with the others. Her entire quest may in the end be based on nothing and the mystery may hold no mystery at all. The real question for Oedipa will be, in the end, the one related to her own identity: she will find herself metaphorically trapped in a tapestry and will have to gain and demonstrate her own independence, like the protagonist in *Look at the Harlequins!:* "Should I ignore the coincidence and its implications? Should I, on the contrary, repattern my entire life?" (Nabokov 1990a, 97). Like the reader, Oedipa feels completely disoriented, lost and alone in a world that keeps on shifting and oscillating: Tristero or Trystero, San Narciso, San Francisco or Saint Narcissus, Oedipa or, as her husband pronounces it, "Edna Mosh". Oedipa has to solve a far more complex riddle: finding out whether she lost her sanity and is now decoding a message that doesn't exist or if the message has been encoded with a distortion (encrypted) on purpose.

We have now folded and unfolded Nabokov's magic carpet yet again, to superimpose pattern after pattern in our road trip through space and time, across borders and novels, different languages and cultures. We have followed its path from a poem to Humbert Humbert, *Speak, Memory*, A Hu-Li, and A Hu-Li's revised version of the same carpet; we have now finally placed it in Oedipa's world as well, hidden between a cheap song and the mystery of W.A.S.T.E delivery system. Nabokov, we may say, is still here, and he is still creating new worlds, secret paths and riddles for his readers, thanks to the explicit tribute paid by Pynchon (a former pupil of his) and

Pelevin (considered nowadays as "the Nabokov of the cyber-age"). Nabokov's unique style, impossible to label, has allowed us to unveil where the "new Nabokov" lies and how he may indeed be seen as a literary Charon, who ferries the characters' souls across space (Russian and American) and time (modern and postmodern) and still lives within these novels, suspended in his adored "timelessness", "a momentary vacuum into which rushes all that I love. [...] A thrill of gratitude [...] to the contrapuntal genius of human fate or to tender ghosts humouring a lucky mortal" (Nabokov 1990, 110).

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MICHELE RUSSO

"HYPOTRANSLATING" AND "HYPERTRANSLATING" THEORIES

in Nabokov's *Anja v strane chudes* (1923) and *Eugene Onegin* (1975)*

Over the last decades, scholars have offered manifold interpretations of Nabokov's translations, especially regarding *Anya v strane chudes* (i.e. the translation of Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, 1865), and *Eugene Onegin* (i.e. the translation of Pushkin's *Evgenij Onegin*, 1799-1837). Wilson, for instance, in the 70s, criticized Nabokov's *Eugene Onegin*, labelling it as pedantic and obsolete. Eskin, later in the 90s, analysed the same work from a semantic perspective and Bethea focused on the issue of bilingualism by comparing Nabokov and Brodsky; Rosengrant examined Nabokov's different theories of translation enunciated in the foreword to *Eugene Onegin*. More recently, Fet has analysed the cultural and semantic differences between the English and the Russian versions of Carroll's work, and Vid, starting from the target audience's perspective, has offered an interesting and complex analysis of the different characteristics of the domesticated and foreignized translations in, respectively, *Anya v strane chudes* and *Eugene Onegin*, (see Wilson 1972, 209-37; Rosengrant 1994, 13-32; Bethea 1995, 157-84; Eskin 1997, 1-32; Vid 2008, no pagination; Fet 2009, 47-55). In the light of these hermeneutic routes, the purpose of this paper is to develop such concepts as the "domesticating" process of cultural transposition and the "foreignizing" process of literal translation, by adopting Newmark's theories of communicative and semantic translation. The analysis will go beyond the borders of domesticated and foreignized translations; it will contextualize Newmark's concepts within the coordinates of a wider "frame" representing the different degrees of the (de)familiarizing process towards the target audience. Such a "frame" ranges from the target audience-oriented approach to translation to a more complex one, which is more distant from the reader's perspective. The former reads like a "smooth" and simple style, in that it tends to "hypotranslate", to carry out a cultural translation and to maintain a certain conceptual correspondence

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between the source text and the target text. The latter is represented by a "rough" style, which "hypertranslates" and requires from the target reader an in-depth knowledge of the cultural setting of the source text.

The issues of the use of language and bilingualism are central in Nabokov's poetics and are strictly connected with his education. The vicissitudes that compelled the Nabokovs to live as emigrants, gave Nabokov a particular sensitivity to the problems of language and translation. Unlike other bilingual writers, who used a second language to abandon their mother tongue, like Joseph Conrad, Nabokov never relinquished his interest in translations from Russian into English and vice versa. During his long exile in Western Europe, he never stopped reading and studying works in English, thus "forging" his future as an American writer. Despite the criticism of some among the Russian emigrées, such as Georgij Adamovich and Mikhail Osorgin, who accused him of having lost his Slavic roots, Nabokov's tendency to reveal himself through the "deforming mirrors" of the Russian language, even in his American works, testifies to his deep bond with the Russian substrate (see Adamovich 1975, 219-31).

Nabokov elaborates his conception of translation as an adaptation of a text into a different culture in his first translations of tales and works by English and American writers. His translation of *Alice in Wonderland* constitutes one of the first experiments, in which Nabokov applies his theory of translation as a process of cultural transposition: he "slavicizes" Carroll's fantasy world and adapts the names, the characters and the story for the Russian readers. As Steiner observes, "[Nabokov's] Russian version of *Alice in Wonderland* […] has long been recognized as one of the keys to the whole Nabokov oeuvre" (Steiner 1970, 122). Although Carroll's work is apparently simple, as a story written for a target audience of children, many critics, such as Demurova, point out the complexity of the text, so that "the early translators of Carroll had to introduce the Russian reader to a most unusual book in which verbal and logical nonsense, all sorts of puns and parodies, played an important role" (Demurova 2003, 184). Nabokov had to use a "functional" translation of *Alice in Wonderland*, considering the audience it was addressed to and, as a consequence, designed it as an aid to scholarship. Hence, the necessity to adopt a communicative translation as well as hypotranslating devices. According to Newmark, "a communicative translation is likely to be smoother, simpler, clearer, more direct, more conventional, conforming to a particular register of language, tending to undertranslate, i.e. to use more generic, hold-all terms in difficult passages", whereas "a semantic translation tends to be more complex, more awkward, more detailed, more concentrated, and pursues the thought processes rather than the intention of the transmitter. It tends to overtranslate, to be more specific than the original, to include more meanings in its search for one nuance of meaning" (Newmark 1981, 39). Nabokov's approach to the translation of Carroll's text had to follow the principles of the Soviet school, that asked for communicating "the distinctive character of one people to another, to convey mutual understanding across the barriers not just of language but also of cultural-historical experience" (Leighton

1991, 83). In the wake of such an interpretation, translation is a matter of culture whose task is to render and represent the cultural elements of the source language as best as possible. Carroll's text contains various elements, as well as parodies of pedagogic poems and rhymes, typical of Victorian times, that clearly ridicule the institutions and the models of the world of children.

Nabokov's first aim is to solve the problem of reproducing the humorous background of Alice's story, coping with passages, texts and hypotexts unknown to the readers of the target language. He, therefore, paves the way for cultural translatability, namely the cultural translation of the elements and the units of the source text, by adopting a target text-oriented approach. Such an attitude to translation, however, does not deteriorate his style for the sake of the readers' taste. On translating the text, Nabokov does not mean to modify or distort the original text to conform to the aesthetic tastes of the Russian readers. As to the main errors made in translation, in fact, he states that "the [...] worst degree of turpitude is reached when a masterpiece is planished and patted in such a shape, vilely beautified in such a fashion as to conform to the notions and prejudices of a given public" (Nabokov 1941, 160). By considering the formalist concept of "polisystem", as the "entire network of correlated systems – literary and extraliterary – within society", Nabokov confirms the necessity to have an in-depth knowledge of the cultural and linguistic systems of the two languages he is working with (Gentzler 1993, 114). The first example of Nabokov's practical and not artificial approach to the translation of Carroll's work lies in the translation of the title itself. It introduces the Russian readers into Carroll's macrotext, since it uses cultural units that are familiar to the Russian context. In spite of Newmark's thesis of the untranslatability of proper names, according to which "names of single persons or objects are 'outside' languages, belong, if at all, to the encyclopedia not the dictionary, have [...] no meaning or connotations, are, therefore, both untranslatable and not to be translated", the name of the protagonist, Alice, becomes Anya, instead of being transliterated into the foreign form "Alisa" (Newmark 1981, 70). Nabokov introduces his Russian readers into the macrotext of *Alice in Wonderland* by means of the title, and does not leave the name of the protagonist untranslated, as it usually happens. The name Anya fits the Russian context and decreases the sense of foreignness conveyed by the name "Alisa".

Having solved the problem of the approach to translation, Nabokov's choices as he translates are remarkable when he renders the "frames" of the story, that is to say the units of words that are combined with longer sentences: he gives them ambiguous and polysemantic overtones. Such frames include puns, allusions, proverbs and idioms. In the ninth chapter of *Alice in Wonderland*, for example, in which Mock Turtle boasts his education in front of Alice and lists the subjects he has studied, Carroll makes use of a pun, "Reeling and Writhing", a paronym of "Reading and Writing" (Carroll 2002, 103). The allusion to reading and writing becomes explicit if the reader considers the whole narrative context. The pun is typical of the source language and its translation into the Russian version requires a lexical substitution conveying its alliterative effect. Nabokov

chooses the verbs "chesat i pitat" (namely "scraping" and "feeding"), acronyms of "chitat i pisat" ("reading" and "writing"); he employs a hypotranslating nuance, in that the phonic architecture of the text is made smoother and more direct, even by using verbs of different semantic denotations (Nabokov 1976, 85).[1] The pun is rendered by means of homophonic lexical elements in both texts, that are chosen more for stylistic than for semantic reasons. The process of cultural translation in *Anya v strane chudes* also stands out in the transposition of historical names and allusions, which abound in Carroll's work. In the second chapter, for instance, Alice is surprised of being ignored by the Mouse, and says " 'Perhaps it doesn't understand English. [...] I daresay it's a French mouse, come over with William the Conqueror'. (For, with all her knowledge of history, Alice had no very clear notion how long ago anything had happened)" (Carroll 2002, 34). On translating these sentences, Nabokov preserves the Mouse's French identity: "Veroyatno, eto frantsuzskaya mysh, ostavshayasya pri otstuplenii Napoleona" (Nabokov 1976, 18), namely "It is probably a French mouse that has remained after Napoleon's withdrawal". As a result, Nabokov's compromise of preserving the French Mouse's identity in the Russian text is balanced by his choice of turning William the Conqueror into Napoleon. The translator associates the Mouse with two different French invasions and changes the historical setting of the target text: he "transposes" it into the Russian context, by alluding to Napoleon's withdrawal from Russia.

Nabokov's translation choices in *Anya v strane chudes* seem to take advantage of what Molnar names "noetic licence", with some slight changes, as this theory refers to so-called "self-translators". According to Molnar, writers who translate their own works use the advantage of their authorial position to manipulate the process of self-translation, thus concealing from the readers the literary devices and tools which make a translation sound suitable for the target context (see Molnar 1995, 333). Nabokov seems to adopt a similar approach, as if he were the author of *Alice in Wonderland*; he even assumes the perspective of a self-translator. He appropriates Carroll's text and shapes it by following certain criteria of "cross pollination". Nabokov transplants elements of the source text into the cultural context of the land of the Romanovs. As Steiner claims, in so doing the translator invades a text, takes its content away with him and literally "imports" it into the "ground" of the target text (see Steiner 2004, 356). The translator reproduces, therefore, the same phonic effects of the source language from a Russian perspective and he often changes, at the same time, the lexical framework, without altering the original spirit. He adopts a delicate approach in the transition to the Slavic world and makes remarkable changes which do not violate the rules set by Carroll. In light of this, Nabokov preserves the extravagant setting of the source text before the Russian readers, by adopting a special "camouflaging" technique, also when rendering idioms and place names. The words and phrases that he uses in his

[1] All the subsequent references will be to this edition and page numeration will be given in the text.

translation are often heterogeneous, but they fit the cultural background of the target text and, under a diverse "lexical appearance", they disclose the nature of the original one. Some of the characters in *Alice in Wonderland* are emblematic of certain English idioms, such as the "Cheshire-Cat", which is the source of the idiom "to grin like a Cheshire cat", namely to smile broadly. Carroll provides a particular representation of this character:

> The only two creatures in the kitchen, that did *not* sneeze, were the cook, and a large cat which was lying on the hearth and grinning from ear to ear.
> "Please would you tell me", said Alice [...] "why your cat grins like that?"
> "It's a Cheshire-Cat", said the Duchess, "and that's why. Pig!" [...]
> "I didn't know that Cheshire-Cats always grinned; in fact, I didn't know that cats *could* grin".
> "They all can", said the Duchess; and most of 'em do".
> (Carroll 2002, 72)

The Russian expression that Nabokov coins to translate the English idiom is named after a Russian feast, the "maslenitsa", that is the so-called "Mardi Gras". The name of the Russian feast is used by Nabokov to translate the English idiom into Russian, "Maslyanichnyj kot" (Nabokov 1976, 51), the "carnival cat". The semantic effect of "to grin like a Cheshire cat" is conveyed by means of the Russian saying "Ne vsegda kotu maslenitsa" (Nabokov 1976, 52), which is, in turn, connected with "Ne vse kotu maslenitsa", "every day is not a feast". In Carroll's text the Duchess says to Alice that all Cheshire cats can grin. Nabokov writes in his translation that "Ne vsegda kotu maslenitsa. [...] Moemu zhe-kotu – vsegda. Vot on i ukhmylyaetsya" (Nabokov 1976, 52), that is "It is not always a feast for cats, but it is always for mine. There he is, grinning".

Nabokov proves to be more concerned with sounds and words than with their referential meaning in his translation of Carroll's parody of Ann and Jane Taylor's poem "The Star". Such a parody emphasizes the monotony and the tediousness of the text, whose repetitions facilitate children's memorization: "*Twinkle, twinkle, little bat! / How I wonder what you're at! [...] / "Up above the world you fly / Like a tea-tray in the sky. / Twinkle, twinkle -"* (Carroll 2002, 82-83). Nabokov clearly focuses on both cultural and phonic transposition, since he does not only replace Ann and Jane Taylor's text with a parody of a Russian folkloristic work, but also preserves the rhymed structure of the poem in the target language. He makes some changes in the Russian song, usually sung during Mardi Gras, by eliminating its original allusions to alcohol, not pertinent in a text addressed to children. The tedious function of the repetition "Twinkle, twinkle" is replaced by the anaphoric alternation "Ryzhik, ryzhik, gde ty byl?" (Nabokov 1976, 62). The text is then translated as follows: "Na polyanke dozhdik pil? [...] Vypil kaplyu, vypil dve, / Stalo syro v golove" (Nabokov 1976, 62-63), that is "Delicious lactarius,

delicious lactarius, where have you been? / Did you drink any drizzle in the clearing? / Did you drink a raindrop, two raindrops, / Did your head become damp". Unlike the source text, in which the Dormouse repeats in its sleep "*Twinkle, twinkle, twinkle, twinkle*" (Carroll 2002, 83), in the target text it says: "*syro, syro, syro, syro*" (Nabokov 1976, 63), namely "moist". The allusion to drunkness is quite direct. Nabokov's translation, once more, proves to be stylistically and phonically original, since, although changing the semantic value of Carroll's words, it reproduces the alliterations and the two rhymed couplets: byl / pyl and dve / golove (Nabokov 1976, 62-63). Moreover, the Dormouse is translated as Sonya, deriving from the Russian "son", namely "sleep". Such a lexical choice underlines the link with the English "dorm", and confirms once again the accuracy with which Nabokov translates proper names. The author of *Anya v strane chudes* does not use circumlocutions. He "undertranslates" and employs precise and direct words, without embellishing the text with artificial devices. To quote Grayson, Nabokov, "in his translation of the alliteration and onomatopoeia, [...] will often modify and change his meaning in order to give an equivalent auditive effect" (Grayson 1977, 176). The semantic substitutions in *Anja v strane chudes* are "shifts". They are required "by the different structures of the source and target languages", and make semantic changes in the target text possible, as they are not important elements of the plot (Weissbrod 1996, 221). They generate a "creative transposition into a different system of signs", and convey the message of the source text (Venuti 2000, 69).

In opposition to the theories of translation that Nabokov applies to *Anya v strane chudes*, the translation of *Evgenij Onegin* is structured according to the rules of literal translation. As Steiner confirms, Nabokov did not regard literal translations of lines as a deception (see Steiner 2004, 293). In the foreword to the book, Nabokov actually claims that literal translation is "true translation", in that, as a translation intended for educated people, it renders the contextual meaning of the source text, by using the associative and syntactical means of the target text (see Nabokov 1990, viii). As Baer writes, "Nabokov's concept of literal translation was one that developed during the years he spent on his English translation of Pushkin's *Evgenij Onegin*, which, like his translations of Lermontov's *Geroi nashego vremeni* and *Slovo o polku Igoreve*, were intended primarily or at least initially for American students of Russian literature" (Baer 2011, 179). Nabokov intends Pushkin's work for readers who have a fair knowledge of Russian, to facilitate their comprehension of the original text. Nabokov does not change the structure of the stanzas. He retains the fourteen lines and follows the order of the words; he "sacrifices" the rhymes and the phonic effects and applies, as a consequence, the principles of literal equivalence. To quote Wilson, the target text is written in a "bald and awkward language which has nothing in common with Pushkin's or with the usual writing of Nabokov" (Wilson 1972, 210). On reading the lines of stanza eighteen in the fourth chapter, the reader may soon perceive a sense of awkwardness: "You will agree, my reader / That very nicely acted / Our pal toward sad Tanya" (Nabokov 1990, 183). The translation of the lines reflects the syntagmatic structure of the source text, since

the order of the words is retained: "Vy soglasites, moj chitatel, / Chto ochen milo postupil / S pechalnoj Tanej nash priyatel / [...]" (Pushkin 2000, 222).[2] Nabokov justifies his translation as a need to "rearrange the order of words to achieve some semblance of English construction and retain some vestige of Russian rhythm [...]" (Nabokov 1990, viii). Nabokov employs this approach to the translation of Pushkin's work, in order to convey a sense of "otherness"; he uses expressions and phrases which an English reader may not be familiar with. Something similar happens in the following lines:

> Buyanov, my mettlesome cousin,
> Has to our hero led
> Tatiana with Olga; deft
> Onegin with Olga has gone
> (Nabokov 1990, 223)

The lines would sound quite unnatural to an English reader because, as Wilson observes, "[t]he natural English here would be *and* not *with* [...] I suppose that we have here the same idiom, which Nabokov has translated literally" (Wilson 1972, 212). Actually, in Pushkin's work one reads "Tatyanu s Olgoyu" (Pushkin 2000, 292). The use of the Russian preposition "s" ("with") serves the purpose to create a rhyme with the following line, "Onegin s Olgoyu poshël" (Pushkin 2000, 292), and it is used likewise in the English text. Such a foreignized style, which uses an irregular syntactic structure in English, allows Nabokov to convey a sense of linguistic estrangement in the target reader's perspective. As a matter of fact, Pushkin's work may sometimes sound foreign even to a Russian reader, owing to the presence of numerous intertextual references. Nabokov's *Eugene Onegin* seems to represent a "counter-translation", that is to say an*other* space of translation that acts as an equivalent place and offers an alternative and uncommon reality. Nabokov's translation "deviates" from certain syntactic norms of the language, to serve the logic of literal translation, and stands for a deforming mirror whose function is to invite the reader to overtranslate and to understand Nabokov's source text-oriented translation.

Nabokov is literal while translating some stanzas with references to foreign writers or expressions.[3] Although adopting a literal translation, he pays attention, at the same time, to the phonic effects of the work. In stanza number eight, first chapter, which

[2] All the subsequent references will be to this edition and page numeration will be given in the text.

[3] Such stanzas reveal the cultural influence of other European countries on Russian society, as well as Pushkin's knowledge of Italian works, such as Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*. Although some critics think that Pushkin did not fully appreciate Tasso's works, there is evidence that the former knew such poets as Ariosto, Homer and Virgil. In addition, he loved Italy, the country of freedom and culture (see Pushkin 2000, 534).

contains references to English culture, Nabokov uses the alliteration of the velar consonant "c", in order to convey Onegin's coldness and immobility. The latter are underscored by the anagram of Byron's *Childe Harold*, containing the adjective "cold": "the Russian 'khondria' / took hold of him [...]. To shoot himself, thank God, / he did not care to try, / but toward life became quite cold. / Like Childe Harold " (Nabokov 1990, 112). The original text reads as follows: "*russkaya khandra* / Im ovladela [...]; / On zastrelitsya, slava bogu, / poprobovat ne zakhotel; / No k zhizni vovse okhladel. / Kak *Child-Harol"* (Pushkin 2000, 108). The English translation proves to be faithful to the original, since the velar sound is repeated both in the source and in the target text. Likewise, Nabokov preserves the fricative sounds in the second stanza of the first chapter: "Thus a young scapegrace thought, / with posters flying in the dust, / by the most lofty will of Zeus / the heir of all his relatives" (Nabokov 1990, 96), namely: "Tak dumal molodoj povesa, / Letya v pyli na pochtovykh, / Vsevyshnej voleyu Zevesa / Naslednik vsekh svoikh rodnykh" (Pushkin 2000, 76). Although the fricative sound "Thus", "Thought", "with", "dust", "Zeus", and "relatives" is rendered by means of different lexical elements, such as "povesa", "Vsevyshnej", "Zevesa", "Naslednik", "vsekh" and "svoikh", the translator makes the rhythm of the lines smoother and frantic, in order to introduce the subject to the reader at once. On the one hand, Nabokov, as a literal translator, works in a "no man's land" from both a psychological and a linguistic point of view, as he carries out a *mot à mot* translation (see Steiner 2004, 376; Wilson 1972, 209-37). On the other hand, he gives his translation a didactic architecture and, owing to its literalism, makes it a useful guide for learners of Russian. Once again, Nabokov proves that literal translation, unlike lexical and paraphrastic translation, "has the best chance [...] the only chance [...] of carrying over full literary meaning from one language to another" (Rosengrant 1994, 17).

Nabokov employs a literal approach even when he translates stanzas containing allusions to facts and events of Russian culture, since they are not transposed, like in *Anya v strane chudes*, into the target reader's cultural setting. Pushkin is self-referential and hints at autobiographical facts in the above-quoted second stanza of the first chapter. The lines "Friends of Lyudmila and Ruslan" (Nabokov 1990, 96) and "But harmful is the North to me" (Nabokov 1990, 96) are addressed to Russian readers, because they hint at Pushkin's work *Ruslan i Lyudmila* (1817-20) and at his exile in the North, respectively. In this context, the audience is supposed to know Pushkin's biographical elements, to confirm once again the high level of learning which is required of the reader. Nabokov retains the cultural references of the source text and renders the exact meaning of every single word. He sacrifices the formal and stylistic effects and uses a source text-oriented approach. Such an approach is supported, for the target reader's sake, by a rich corpus of notes, which are not only appended to the translation *Eugene Onegin*, but actually make up a much bulkier second volume of the translation, aimed at explaining and clarifying the numerous references to the cultural setting of the source text. This vast paratextual apparatus facilitates the translator's task

in his choice to use a semantic translation; it even "re-writes" some parts of the book and makes its numerous allusions to other literatures and historical events explicit, with the frequent quotation of passages and lines by different European writers and philosophers. The second volume represents the commentary to *Eugene Onegin* and is divided into two parts. The first part is composed of 547 pages and the second one is composed of 384 pages; this confirms the remarkable function of the notes within the structure of the book to help the target reader grasp every single line of the work (see Nabokov 1990, 3-547; 3-384). The substitution of the "cultural" units with elements of the English world would compromise the specificity of the cultural-historical coordinates of the source text. Nabokov's translation does not distort the close relationship that Pushkin establishes with the reader, as well as the referential function which is revealed in the time-space relationship. Nabokov thus preserves the cultural identity of *Evgenij Onegin* without changing the relation between text and context. As a consequence, Pushkin's translation, unlike *Anya v strane chudes*, raises a sense of foreignness in the supposed English reader and, at the same time, emphasizes the hypertranslative overtone of the text. The supposed educated English reader, in fact, is invited to read the text over and to comprehend and reconstruct the Russian historical background, thus metaphorically overtranslating the cultural references in the target text. The relation between translation and intertextuality becomes natural, and it is strictly connected with the translator's knowledge of the two linguistic and cultural systems he deals with. Nabokov is aware of the fact that the language-culture equation is very complex, and that it is necessary to adopt different translating approaches to make a translation "work" in a different cultural context.

Onegin shares with Childe Harold his misanthropy and hypochondria and is, therefore, inspired by other texts and then recomposed by Pushkin, who turns out to be the "child" of a universal culture. Nabokov recognizes the numerous historical and literal allusions to foreign cultures in his translation of *Evgenij Onegin* and, by means of his literality, conveys the universal meanings of Pushkin's work. As he writes in one of his letters to Wilson in 1957, "I have been studying the question of Pushkin's knowledge of foreign languages for about ten years now and really you should not send me to *Rukoyu Pushkina*" (Karlinsky 2001, 350). By "rukoyu" he may mean his hand ("ruka" in Russian), and so he seems to state his full knowledge of the Russian poet, by asking Wilson not to take him "by his hand" in the complex analysis of Pushkin. Nabokov does not need a further guide when he studies Pushkin. His translation can be read with the help of its source text and its notes, without necessarily using a dictionary, and proves to be a sub-cultural system which lies, in turn, within the largest cultural system of the target language. It addresses the Russian language learners, who intend to have a thorough knowledge of the language itself. As Boyd writes, "[l]oyal to the irreducible particulars of Pushkin's genius, to Pushkin's natural, effortless individuality, Nabokov also inevitably demonstrates his own innate singularity, so much of which lies in his more conscious, more thoroughgoing, more dogmatic, pursuit of the particular"

(Boyd 1991, 355). Nabokov's route from hypotranslation to hypertranslation within the "frame" of the (de)familiarizing process towards the target readers allows him to carry out his linguistic experiments and to find his own identity. He can cross the narrative and hybrid "spaces" of different literal and cultural traditions, "much like Ada's Antiterra", in Fet's words (Fet 2009, 55). Such a transition from an opposite strategy of translation into another one does not lead to the incoordination of the source texts though, and it represents a process of cultural and linguistic enrichment. Nabokov carries out his task, but avoids any entropic effects on the original texts; he "balances" the features of the source texts with the exigencies of the target readers and adopts different approaches according to the different cultural settings.

The effects of entropy on translation, as well as the physical concepts of the death and the destruction of the universe, have been discussed by Steiner himself, who traces their origins back to Clausius in 1865 (see Steiner 2004, 196). On transposing the cultural setting in *Anja v strane chudes* and using a target reader-oriented approach, Nabokov may risk to generate an entropic phenomenon, with the consequent annihilation of the structure of the source text. Translation is an act of "linguistic and cultural manipulation", and its processes of application may vary according to the aims of the translator. However, Nabokov's translations respond to two different needs, in so far as they are addressed to two different categories of readers. When Nabokov translates the linguistic and cultural world of Carroll's book, he uses a domesticated style which does not compromise the original structure of the text; it simply "forges" some expressions to maintain their phonic effects. He adopts an adequate style, which meets the target reader's expectations and exigencies, and, at the same time, keeps the rhythm and the puns of the source text. Although Nabokov transposes *Alice in Wonderland* into a different context, his choices to translate and render certain phonic effects, as well as cultural and historical references, are coherent with the essence and the structure of the source text. He averts the entropic process that a free translation could generate. Moreover, his foreignizing touch in *Eugene Onegin* turns out to be effective, in order to preserve a style for literate people. Despite its apparent phonic and stylistic imperfections, the work preserves the purpose of the source text, since it keeps the numerous hypotextual references and information implicit. Nabokov is faithful to the encyclopedic configuration of *Evgenij Onegin*, and manages to convey its quintessential structure, by relying on the paratextual "scaffolding" of his translation and his readers' erudition. Some lines in *Eugene Onegin* could sound unnatural to an English ear, but Nabokov avoids the entropic effects of the potential destruction of both the source and the target texts, thanks to his lexical and phonic sensibility, which is supported by the ample apparatus of notes to the text and its commentary.

Nabokov develops many elements that still lie in a potential state in the original work. His translations express his "trans-nationality", i.e. his route from Europe (Anya v strane chudes) to America (*Eugene Onegin*), and mark the passage from the European

"innocence" and "smoothness" of his narrative and translation techniques to the "rough experience" of the American phase.

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FOCUS • 2

UNBURIED MEMORY

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INTRODUCTION

This second Focus section of *CoSMo* collects essays that have been commissioned in an attempt to address the question of cultural memory in many ways, according to different disciplines, and points of view. Following a conference organised in May 2015 at the University of Torino, where several of the papers appearing here were presented at various stages of early research, the editors are attempting to generate debate on the status and direction of recent developments in dealing with the topics of reworking historical memory.

In his article, Alexander Etkind focuses on the concept of "mimetic mourning" as a recurrent response to the loss of relatives, that entails a symbolic re-enactment of that loss. A typical example can be found in the Victims' Balls, organised by relatives of aristocrats who had been guillotined during the French Revolution. Starting from the assumption that expressions of cultural memory and cultural mourning change from generation to generation, depending on how far removed they are from the catastrophic event, Etkind points out that if survivors and the first generation of their descendants come together physically in a ritual of collective mourning, in later generations the victims' mimetic performances migrate to the increasingly virtual spaces of theatre, art, literature, film and social media.

Etkind further addresses the question of mourning in contemporary post-Soviet Russia where Russian authors complain about their country's "historical amnesia". As opposed to Nazi terror that established a clear boundary between the victims as "Other" and the perpetrators, Soviet terror was suicidal: the perpetrators of one wave of terror more often than not became victims of the next. Unlike their peers in the colonial domains of the socialist empire such as the Ukraine or the Baltic states, who felt oppressed by a foreign power, or the peasants in Russian villages who perceived collectivization as the imposition of an urban and therefore foreign order, the victims among the Russian intelligentsia and party members perceived this terror as senseless precisely because it was self-inflicted.

Where victims remain "unburied", the dialectics of repetition and remembering studied by Freud produces a kind of warped imagery, which combines the analytic, self-

conscious exploration of the past with its reverberations and transfigurations, as Gerhard Friedrich shows in his article "Between Psychiatry and Popular Fantasy: Trauma, Ghosts and Revenants in the 'New German Domestic Novel'". Contemporary German authors attempt to re-engage emotionally, within the private sphere, with the German past through the memory of – real or fictitious – relatives who became victims of the Second World War in various ways, and thus, at least 'partially reconciled' with this past, so as to be able to shape the present and future of united Germany. However, it appears that the attempt has left them with the conundrum of the magician's apprentice: they cannot rid themselves of the 'ghosts' that they, literally, called up.

Following up Etkind's contention that "the desire to know" lies at the heart of mourning "in order to share its burden, to express it in clear words or images", in his essay "My unburied Father", Carol Sauerland narrates the events that dramatically marked his father's life. Kurt Sauerland was a well-known intellectual and member of the German Communist party who was arrested in Moscow in 1937 and soon executed in the (in)famous Lubyanka prison, a victim of Stalin's purges. Kurt Sauerland had fled Nazi Germany in 1933 first to Paris then to Moscow where he was invited to take up a post in the Communist International. Only in 1963 his wife, herself a member of the Communist party, was informed of her husband's death. In Kurt Saueland's case, the conclusion to be drawn is that "he is not only waiting for rehabilitation, but resurrection – resurrection in the sense of the course of his life being presented as it really was".

Echoing Etkind's performative view of both individual and collective memory, Jens Brockmeier's article demonstrates that the autobiographical process is not a teleologically directed process towards the discovery of a historical past, but rather a continuous stream of discursive interactions and interpretations. Individual memory is inextricably interwoven with collective cultural memory opening up an endless and beginningless symbolic space made up of life narratives, actions, language, artifacts, circulating in a culture. However, there are sudden fractures in which the unaware becomes aware. This article offers two models for reading those fractures: revelation and simultaneity. Out of sudden revelations - in which the cultural unconscious comes into view - the work of autobiography may begin, as shown in Karol Sauerland's contribution to this collection. Conversely, in the model of simultaneity there may be painful contradictions between layers, but one may flow unconsciously among different, but simultaneously present realities, when one acknowledges that a life is intermingled with narrative, and that one's autobiographical consciousness is grounded in various possible lives. Possible lives are part of our identity projects. In various situations more than one identity project is performed, showing no clear-cut borderlines separating fact and fiction.

As first discussant, Karol Sauerland agreed with Etkind's argument that emphasised the keen difference separating the Russian and the Nazi victims' discourses. If we disregard the Hitler assassination attempt in 1944, only once perpetrators became victims in the Nazi regime, when Röhm and his followers were unexpectedly

prosecuted for homosexuality. On the other hand, in the Soviet system it was not uncommon for victims to become offenders: in their belief in Communism as a new social order, the victims themselves saw it as no surprise that so many mistakes were made, in order to fight against the imperialist fascist world. Although the Victims' Balls may yield some optimistic view, this seems hardly possible in post-Soviet Russia, where pride and humility overlap as a consequence of the system's inability to work through the "unburied memory" of past horrors, producing instead, a ball of the perpetrators.

Alexander Etkind's and Karol Sauerland's presentations are at the core of the next three discussants' comments. Declaring that Etkind's and Sauerland's papers would require a wider discussion, Guido Franzinetti, as historian of East-European Countries, restricts himself to a few remarks. In "Remembering Communism" he welds the topics of Communism and remembrance, by focusing on three points: first, echoing Brockmeier's paper, Franzinetti maintains that all memory, even the most traumatic, reflects first of all one's subjectivity, and that the present explains the past, and not vice-versa. Second, referring to Etkind's view that "Making sense of the memory of the [Communist] past does not require sharing its weird presumptions" he adds that experience [like memory] cannot be inherited. Third, he suggests that Sauerland's attempt to present his father's life during Communism "as it really was", should be used as a starting point to discuss, and remember, Communism as it really was, pointing out that the opposite of remembering is not forgetting but the "incoherence" that defeats rational ways of understanding the past. In the case of Russian Communism, as Etkind maintains, only other forms of culture, such as literature, music, film can present post-Soviet warped mourning, or the melancholic dialectic of re-enactment and defamiliarization.

Diana Osti connects Etkind's theory of "warped mourning" to Adorno's cultural criticism as formulated in his "negative dialectic", referring to Adorno's convicton that "unspeakable" memories may run the risk of being aestheticized, once critical discourse brings traumatic experiences back to rational expression. By applying trauma theories to postcolonial literature, Osti points out how the "unspeakable" surfaces in the latter's use of language.

By relying on the notions of hyper-mediated memory and post-memory, Alice Balestrino applies Etkind's theory to the way in which the 9/11 Memorial Monument in New York narrates the historical experience of that trauma through contemporary media, enhancing sentimental, as opposed to cognitive, involvement and emphasising the active role the visitor is called to play in the construction of the narrative event. However, while Etkind's reading of cultural memory covers a three-faceted transgenerational response based on loss, trauma, and warped mourning, these "three energies structuring post-catastrophic world" seem to simultaneously interact in 9/11's warped memorialization, recalling Brockmeier's definition of cultural memory as intertext.

We would like to thank all contributors for their generous work. A special word of thanks goes to Anna Chiarloni and Adam Lausch-Holubowizc for taking part in the discussion with stimulating and thought- provoking remarks.

Giuliana Ferreccio and Daniela Nelva

ALEXANDER ETKIND

VICTIM BALLS IN POST-STALIN RUSSIA: DISTANCE, GENERATIONS, MOURNING

After the French Revolution, relatives of the guillotined victims used to gather regularly for Bals des victimes, or Victims' Balls. These legendary balls provide a prototypical case of what I call mimetic mourning — a recurrent response to loss that entails a symbolic re-enactment of that loss. Referring to Russian cultural developments from Khrushchev's Thaw to Putin's revivalism, I will situate the fundamental concepts of cultural memory, such as loss, trauma, and mourning, in the context of changing generations. Structured by generations (which are memory concepts themselves), temporal distance from the social catastrophe changes the substance and forms of cultural mourning. The historical processes of catastrophic scale traumatize the first generation of descendants, while their daughters and sons – the grandchildren of the victims, perpetrators and onlookers – produce the work of mourning for their grandparents: mass graves for the generation of terror, trauma for the first post-catastrophic generation, and mourning for the second. I will also compare the post-catastrophic memories of mass violence with the postcolonial memories of oppression and emancipation. In some cases, these two experiences overlap, which is a particular challenge to the theoretical framework.

For many years, Nadezhda Mandelstam had a painful, persistent nightmare: she is standing in line to buy food and her husband, Osip, is standing behind her; but when she looks back, he is not there. Not recognizing her or not willing to talk to her, he walks away. She runs after him to ask, "What are 'they' doing to you?" (Mandelstam 1999, 433). But he never responds. Importantly, Mandelstam put the word "they" in quotation marks, as if she saw these quotation marks in her dream; though she had no way of conceptualizing "those" who had taken away her husband, she needed a grammatical fiction or place-holder, which remained unspecified but which, with an element of self-irony, she put into quotation marks.

It is not the pain of knowing, but rather the desire to know – "What are 'they' doing to you?" — that lies at the heart of mourning. This desire to know the unbearable is also a desire to share its burden, to express it in clear words or images, to tell the story – what "they" have done to him – to the close community of equals, and then to others as

well. At this stage, Victims' Balls become textual; in other words, communicative memory about the terrible past flows into cultural memory, where it stays indefinitely.[1] With a somewhat similar meaning, Walter Benjamin said that "memory is not an instrument for exploring the past but its theatre. He who seeks to approach his own buried past must conduct himself like a man digging" (Benjamin 1979, 314). Two barely compatible metaphors – theater and digging – reveal the problem of mourning. A man who digs into his own past is also a performer who plays his role in public. Whether he performs digging in the soil, in the archive, or in popular culture, this is a practical activity, the work of mourning. But this work does not end once the past has simply been dug up and revealed. Only when they become public, as in a theater, do these excavations of the past, buried and unburied, complete the work of mourning.

In contrast to the Nazi terror that featured a crystal-clear boundary between the victims and perpetrators, the Soviet terror targeted many ethnic, professional, and territorial groups. Though in some waves of terror the Poles, the Ukrainians, the Chechens, or the Jews suffered more than others, there were other waves when the terror chose Russians. Some of these operations focused on the peasants and others targeted the intelligentsia, but some periods extracted a particularly heavy toll from the state and party apparatus. It was a rule rather than an exception that the perpetrators of one wave of terror became victims of the next, with a lag that was measured in months or years. Though in every singular act of torture or murder, the victim and the executioner were separated by an enormous distance, the fact was that a little later, in several months or years, the executioner would likely become a victim of the same treatment. The victims did not know that they would be avenged by the same system that murdered them. This rotation makes it very difficult to reach any historical, philosophical, or theological – in fact, any rational – understanding of these events. Nikolai Shivarov, an investigator who forced Osip Mandelstam, and several other poets and writers, to acknowledge their "criminal" enmity towards the Soviet system, committed suicide as a convict of the gulag in 1940 (Nerler 2010, 29). After hundreds of thousands perished on the construction site of the Belomor Canal, the head of this construction project, Semen Firin, was sentenced and shot in 1937. After millions died in the gulag, its organizer and chief administrator, Matvei Berman, was sentenced and shot in 1939. Thousands of perpetrators were purged, arrested, tortured, and executed in the waves of repressions that decimated the bureaucratic bodies responsible for repressions, the NKVD (People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs) and related bodies of the Communist Party, in Moscow and the provinces. Victims and perpetrators were mixed together in the same families, ethnic groups, and lines of descent. Sometimes they also found themselves mixed together in the same cells and barracks. Unlike their

[1] For the distinction between communicative and cultural memory: Assmann 1996, 123-134 and 2008, 49-72.

peers in the colonial domains of the socialist empire such as Ukraine or the Baltic states, who felt oppressed by a foreign power and were eager to resist it, and unlike even the peasants in Russian villages who perceived collectivization as the ruthless imposition of an urban and therefore foreign order, the victims from the Russian intelligentsia perceived the terror as senseless and monstrous precisely because it was self-inflicted. Indeed, at the Moscow trial of 1992 that failed to ban the Communist Party as a criminal organization, its attorneys produced a bizarre argument: since communists suffered from "repressions" more than others, their organization could not be blamed for these crimes, even though it had organized them. Since their peers have already punished some perpetrators, this argument goes, there is no need to punish these people again.

In the stories of Victims' Balls, participants come together physically in a ritual of collective mourning, a behavior that we often observe among survivors of a catastrophe and the first generation of their descendants. Later generations continue to mourn and share, but they do not feel this need to bond and dance with their peers. As time passes and generations replace one another, their mournful, mimetic performances migrate to the increasingly virtual spaces of theater, art, literature and then, to film, TV-shows, and social media. Academic historiography also plays its role in this broad process. While Europeans are talking about the "mnemonic age," a "memory fest," and a growing obsession with the past "around the globe," some Russian authors complain about the "historical amnesia" in their country. Unlike the treatment of former Nazi officials in Germany, no professional ban was ever instated for former leaders of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, let alone its rank-and-file members. Only negligible compensation has been provided to those victims who have been officially "rehabilitated". Many more of those who were robbed by the Soviet communists, such as the millions of collective farmers whose fates differed little from that of those who were sent to the gulag, for example, will never see any form of compensation whatsoever. This unfinished business is one of the reasons for the obsessive return of history in contemporary Russian culture and politics.

From Pushkin's major works *Boris Godunov* (1825) and *Eugene Onegin* (1833), both of which analyze remorse for an unjustifiable murder, to Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (1866), and then to Aleksandr Blok's *Retribution* (1919), the classics of Russian literature provide spectacular templates for mourning, shame, and repentance. Rediscovering these classical examples after a long period of revolutionary enthusiasm, the late Soviet culture produced its own ways of coming to terms with the horrible past. Three cultural genres led the Soviet mourning: literature, music, and film. In literature, mimetic mourning and political protest melded in such works as Boris Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* (published in the West in 1957 and in Russia in 1988), Anna Akhmatova's *Requiem* (1963, 1987), the memoirs of Nadezhda Mandelstam (1970-72, 1999), Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago* (1973, 1989), Varlam Shalamov *Kolyma Tales* (1978, 1987), and Vasily Grossman's *Life and Fate* (1980,

1988). Another leading genre was music, a traditional medium of mourning which had the additional advantage of being impenetrable for the censors. Dmitry Shostakovich composed a series of major works that mourned the victims of the Soviet period, from his Seventh "Leningrad" symphony (1942) to his late works (1962-72) that combined music with political poetry. I have argued that a number of major Soviet films belong to the same pantheon of mourning.

If the Nazi Holocaust exterminated the Other, the Soviet terror was suicidal. The self-inflicted nature of the Soviet terror has complicated the circulation of three energies that structure the post-catastrophic world: a cognitive striving to learn about the catastrophe; an emotional desire to mourn for its victims; and an active drive to find justice and take revenge on the perpetrators. As in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, these three impulses – to learn, to mourn, and to avenge, – compete for the limited resources of the melancholic mind. The suicidal nature of the Soviet atrocities made revenge all but impossible, and even learning very difficult. To learn about oneself is the toughest among the challenges of learning. Mourning, however – the third of our three post-catastrophic energies – has had no limits.

There was no external authority, such as occupying forces or an international court, to dispense justice; and there has been no serious philosophical debate in Russia, secular or religious, over problems of collective guilt, memory and identity. Despite an attempt made in the early 1990s to initiate such a debate by the historian and gulag survivor Dmitry Likhachev, Russian intellectuals have not produced anything comparable to the great book by Karl Jaspers, *The Problem of Guilt* (Jaspers 1965). In Germany or France, denial of the Holocaust is a crime, but in Russia a politician or professor can disseminate propaganda for the Soviet past and ignore or deny its crimes without subjecting him- or herself to the slightest risk. Nostalgia has become a fashionable word and an important element of post-Soviet culture (Boym 2001). Allusions to the past make up an important part of the political present. Political opponents in Russia differ most dramatically not in their understanding of economic reforms or international relations, but in their interpretations of history. Discussions of current policy issues rarely go without reference to historical experience. Concepts and labels like "Stalinism", "the cult of personality", "political repressions" are rhetorically employed as often as modern legal or economic terms. The events of the mid-twentieth century still make up a living, contentious experience that threatens to return again and therefore, feels frightening and uncanny. Post-Soviet memory operates as a living combination of various symbols, periods, and judgments, which are experienced simultaneously. The present is oversaturated with the past, and this solution refuses to produce any sediment. As Tony Judt put it, in Western Europe, the problem is a shortage of memory, but in Eastern Europe and Russia, "there is too much memory, too many pasts on which people can draw" (Judt 1999, 299; Esbenshade 1995, 72-96).

Too much or too little, one thing is clear: it is the very nature of the Soviet terror that makes it difficult to comprehend, remember, and memorialize. To the scholars of

Stalinism, there is nothing more foreign than the German-Jewish idea of the uniqueness of the Holocaust, and the reason for this is not only the desire to receive the proper recognition for the victims of Stalinism on a par with the victims of Nazism, but also the intuitive understanding of the multitude of genocides and democides that constitute Stalinism (Rabinbach 2005, 397-420; Sznaider 2011).[2] There were many waves of "repressions", and most of them were repetitive, chaotic, confusing, and overwhelming. Even though their total numbers can be set forth in the homogenous statistical language of demographic losses, in other respects they defy standardization, spread out as they were over a good part of the twentieth century and across the gigantic and endlessly diverse space of Eurasia. The descendants of these repressions' survivors do not share the concepts that were crucial for the perpetrators and fatal for the victims. The "kulaks", the "saboteurs", the "bourgeoisie", the "social parasites", "anti-Soviet elements" and other "class enemies" were exterminated for belonging to these categories, which have no meaning for us. Remembering the Soviet terror often entails disbelief that such things could have happened. This is a productive feeling, but the least appropriate response to it would be a redemptive narrative that demonstrates the functionality of terror.[3] The victims' suffering and the perpetrators' intentions are both unbelievable in man-made catastrophes, and "suspension of disbelief", a popular literary convention, cannot help us to learn their lessons. The Holocaust historian Saul Friedlander writes about disbelief as a deep and common response to the Nazi terror. He states that though a common goal of historical writing is "to domesticate disbelief, to explain it away", the research on the Holocaust should resist this temptation (Freidlander 2007, xxvi). Scholars of the Soviet period should aspire to do the same. Writing history does not imply resolving its warped contradictions in a smooth, functional narrative. Making sense of the memory of the past does not require sharing its weird presumptions. We do not need to comprehend the murderer's motives in order to mourn his victim, though many mourners do know the desire to understand what happened, and why, and what it meant.

At the end of the twentieth century, many influential thinkers, particularly in the field of economics, connected socialist ideas with Stalinism and claimed that striving for full equality and universal justice logically leads to state-sponsored terror. Yet we also know ample historical instances of terror committed for the sake of private property, both in colonial and domestic contexts. Whether socialism inescapably led to Stalinism or whether the latter was a result of unique and unfortunate choices and circumstances, there is no doubt that the Soviet regime compromised the ideas of socialism gravely, and maybe even irreversibly. As a result, mourning for the human victims of the Soviet

[2] For a survey of the Soviet genocides see Naimark 2010; for the concept and statistics of democide see Rummel 1992 and 1996.

[3] For criticism of redemptive narratives of the Holocaust, see Lawrence 1991 and LaCapra 2001.

experiment co-exists with mourning for the ideas and ideals that were also buried by this experiment. This is double mourning, for the people who were murdered for the sake of ideas, and for these ideas, which were also killed by this violence: a warped concept in itself.

I rely on the concept of mourning more than on other concepts that have been tested in this field, most notably trauma.[4] As Sigmund Freud classically defined it, mourning is an active, realistic, and healthy process. It has its limits, both in time and in intensity. It has its interminable counterpart, melancholia, though of course there is much uncertainty about the boundary between them. Freud was a great mourner in his late years, and the concept of mourning was at the center of his thinking, close to but different from the concept of trauma. Trauma is a response to a condition that had been experienced by the self; mourning is a response to a condition of the other. An individual subject who has suffered a trauma, such as shell shock, cannot represent the traumatic situation; this representational inability is precisely what constitutes trauma.[5] In contrast, mourning is all about representation. Nadezhda Mandelstam knew exactly whom she lost, when she saw him for the last time, and what the circumstances of the loss were. There is no such knowledge in trauma.

Re-membering its losses, a post-catastrophic culture lives on through the subsequent generations, as the survivors who struggle with their traumas give way to the descendants who mourn the victims of the catastrophe. We mourn for our grandparents whether we remember them or not, and we mourn for the victims of the Soviet or French revolutions whom we do not remember. For reasons that are demographic rather than psychological, it is easier to understand Marianne Hirsch's concept of "postmemory" as a domain of mourning rather than a domain of trauma or the post-traumatic (Hirsch 2008, 103-128; Hirsch 2012). The alternative idea, that trauma with its subtle psychological dynamic can be passed down through generations is conceptually more complex and empirically less verifiable.

Different in their relations to representation, the two conditions, mourning and trauma, are similar in relation to repetition. In mourning as well as in trauma, the subject obsessively returns to certain experiences of the past, and these returns obstruct this subject's ability to live in the present. Sometimes – in those cases when, as Freud put it, the subject loses her ability "to love and work" – this obsession with the past is clearly pathological, but sometimes it is temporary and reversible. After World War I and the revolutions that ended it, Sigmund Freud formulated his newest discovery, the "compulsion to repeat". Easily explained by the pleasure principle when the repetition involved pleasurable gratification, it became a puzzle when, as Freud observed, the

[4] I benefitted a great deal from reading, among other studies on mourning, Winter 2005, Homans 2000, Leader 2008 and Butler 2004.

[5] See Felman and Laub 1992, Caruth 1996, Lambek and Antze 1996, Leys 2000, Kaplan 2005, Ball 2007, Lays 2009.

subject and the process of repetition were both excruciating. It is not only that wounding experiences of the past turned into painful memories in the present. Freud discovered more than this: the past's uncanny ability to contaminate the present. To account for this anachronistic phenomenon, Freud revised his whole system, looking far beyond the pleasure principle. The new dichotomy that he devised juxtaposed remembering, which relates to the past as past, and repeating, which re-enacts the past in the present.

As Freud notes, his patients tended "to *repeat* the repressed material as a contemporary experience instead of, as the physician would prefer to see, *remembering* it as something belonging to the past". The physician would prefer to see remembering, but like his distant colleagues, historians, he often sees repetitions. In remembrance, the past and the present are distinct; in repetition, they are fused, so that the past prevents the subject from seeing the present. The therapist's duty is to short-circuit these cyclical reverberations of the past by helping the patient "to re-experience some portion of her forgotten life" so that it might be remembered rather than re-enacted. "The ratio between what is remembered and what is reproduced varies from case to case", but the patient needs "to recognize that what happens to be reality is in fact only a reflection of the forgotten past". Commenting on this idea, anthropologist Michael Taussig postulates a "double action": the subject both re-experiences her past and distances herself from it, she is both in and out of this past, and it is at that point that she realizes that what she is confronting "is not the past but a memory" (Freud 1975, 18-20 and Taussig 2006, 63).[6]

In his introduction to the German translation of Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, Freud gives a challenging example of the mimetic nature of mourning. Interpreting Dostoevsky's epileptic seizures, Freud declares: "We know the meaning and intention of such death-like attacks. They signify an identification with the dead person, either with someone who is really dead or with someone who is still alive and whom the subject wishes dead" (Freud 1990, 447).[7] Though mourning usually strives to revivify the past, it can also be anticipatory: the subject imagines or rehearses a future horror, something that he fears could happen, or something that he fears he will bring to pass through his own guilty desires. In this remarkable construction, Freud allows for

[6] See also Dufresne 2000 and Davis 2007.

[7] Here and elsewhere, I am using the idea of mimesis in the broad Aristotelian sense specified by two French theorists, René Girard and Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen. For a genealogy of the concept that leads to Girard, see Gebauer and Wulf 1995. For my reading of Girard, see Etkind 2011, chap. 12. Borch-Jacobsen has shown that the idea of mimesis structured many of Freud's texts, even if Freud never acknowledged it. According to Borch-Jacobsen, mimesis is rooted in Freud's intuition of sympathy or identification with other people. This is probably a reason why Freud did not feel the need to explain mourning, which figures in some of his texts as a primary motivation (Borch-Jacobsen 1993). On mimesis and anti-mimesis as conceptual dimensions in trauma theory see Leys 2000.

the possibility of re-directing the mechanisms of mourning towards other purposes, such as revenge, rebellion, or forewarning.

What we usually fear is the uncertainty of the future, but we often imagine this future as a repetition of the past. Only an "impulsion to remember", writes Freud, can overcome the "compulsion to repeat", but the forces of resistance work against this process: "The greater the resistance, the more extensively will acting out (repetition) replace remembering" (Freud 2001, 151). The dichotomy between repeating and remembering is central for Freud's "technique", but culture blurs these processes. On the stage of post-catastrophic memory, the dialectics of repetition and remembering produce warped imagery, which combines the analytic, self-conscious exploration of the past with its reverberations and transfigurations. Spirits, ghosts, demons, and other creatures conflate re-enactments with remembrances in creative forms that can be naïve or sophisticated, regressive or productive, influential or isolated.

Psychoanalytic studies of post-traumatic syndromes in Germany suggest that traumatic experience is transmitted transgenerationally. The second, and even third, generations following a social catastrophe manifest "subnormal" psychological health and social performance, and this is claimed to be true both for the descendants of the victims and the descendants of the perpetrators.[8] If the loss is not recognized, it is repressed; when repressed, it turns into new and strange forms; henceforth, it threatens to return as the uncanny. Following the classic study of "phantoms" which was based on deciphering a secret language of Freud's Russian patient, Sergei Pankeev, some scholars believe that similarly subtle, mysterious mechanisms govern the transmission of transgenerational memory.[9] I believe that before formulating such complex hypotheses, we need to look at what culture, high and low, presents in the plain view. In the modern world, novels, films, school textbooks, museums, monuments, guided tours and finally, historical studies present rich narratives about the past, and transmit these narratives from generation to generation.[10]

In Russia, a land where millions remain unburied, the repressed return as the undead. They do so in novels, films, and other forms of culture that reflect, shape, and possess people's memory. The ghostly visions of Russian writers and filmmakers extend the work of mourning into those spaces that defeat more rational ways of understanding the past. Embracing the confusion of present and past, the obsessive re-enactment of the loss, and the disturbed and disjointed nature of the relationship to the present, the melancholic dialectic of re-enactment and defamiliarization produces a rich but puzzling imagery.

[8] See Volkan, Ast and Greer 2002; Schwab 2010.

[9] See Abraham and Torok 1986 and 1994. For criticism, see Davis 2005, 373-79.

[10] For a psychological approach which emphasizes intergenerational negotiations and the agency of the younger generation, see Tschuggnall and Welzer 2002, 130-45; and Markowitsch and Welzer 2010.

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KAROL SAUERLAND

MY UNBURIED FATHER

For two, perhaps three, years I used to have a photograph cut out of a Polish newspaper hanging from my bookshelf. It showed a worker holding up a human bone. He had found it while working on a road in Moscow. I thought to myself that bone might have been one of my father's, who was murdered in Lubyanka prison. At the time, those who had been shot were not cremated, but simply carted off somewhere. The photograph has unfortunately disappeared. It is likely that I had not fastened it to the shelf firmly enough. The cleaner will have been delighted to take the opportunity of throwing it out. My father was executed on 22 March 1938. It was, however, not until 1963 that my mother received information of his death. I had just passed my master's examination in mathematics when her letter arrived with this news. Although I had stopped harbouring any illusions that he might still be alive, I was deeply shaken and burst into tears. I read the letter on the bus and so failed to notice the stop where I should have alighted. I finally found myself in a village a long way from Warsaw and had to wait there for several hours until there was transport back again.

As communists, my parents had emigrated to Paris in March 1933, travelling separately, only days after they had looked on as SA men had ransacked their Berlin flat on the same day as the Reichstag fire. My parents had returned from somewhere that evening, probably from a party gathering or an editorial meeting, when the concierge warned them to stay out of their flat because there were thugs in there. The two of them went into a building across the road, from where they watched those men throwing books out of the window. A pre-empted autodafé. Since May 1929, my father had been editor-in-chief of a periodical called *Roter Aufbau*, which was published monthly by the Münzen Group, the second largest media undertaking in the Weimar Republic. *Roter Aufbau* was regarded as the only theoretical communist magazine. In 1932, my father had published a highly controversial book with the title of *Der dialektische Materialismus*. In Paris he worked as an editor on the magazine *Unsere Zeit*. The acquaintances with whom my parents used to drink coffee in Paris included the formerly influential official of the German communist party, Horst Neumann, who was proud to have once visited Stalin, his partner, Margarethe Buber-Neumann, and other leading communists of that time. They also met up again with Karl August Wittfogel

(who is known today particularly as the author of the book *Der orientalische Despotismus*) after he had been released from Emsland concentration camp in December 1933. Wittfogel would have liked to persuade my father to go to America with him. I regret right up until the present day that he did not accept that proposal. I would have been born in New York! It was in 1991 that I first visited that city, where I was able to admire Wittfogel's large apartment in Manhattan. His secretary had taken it over. He told me that he had mentioned my father in his work on Wittfogel. It was only three years after the latter's death that I paid my visit to New York! He had lived to be 92.

It was as early as May 1934 that my father was invited – or it might be better to say ordered – to go to Moscow to take up a post with in the Communist International or Comintern. He travelled to the Soviet metropolis with my mother through Sweden and Finland. He apparently expressed doubt while in Stockholm as to whether he was doing the right thing, and wondered whether they should not turn round. After all, he spoke perfect French. During the occupation of the Rhineland, when my father had a senior position in the post office in the Deutz district of Cologne, he had polished off the language he had learned at school with the help of a French officer billeted with them. It seems probable that while they were in Stockholm they stayed with my mother's younger sister, who had fled from Berlin with her husband shortly before for political reasons.

At the beginning of his time in Moscow, my father worked as a head of section in the publishing house of the Communist International. At the same time, the Academy of Sciences of the USSR chose him to be their honorary German member, probably on account of his book and a work translated into Ukrainian presenting an overview of the development of German philosophy; allegedly, it was published without his consent. Later on, he was given a job in the section of Bela Kuns' bureau of the executive committee of the Communist International. In August 1939, Kuns suffered the same fate as my father and was also arrested on the same day. I wonder if they shared the same cell, at least for some of the time. My father was subjected to continuous interrogation. It is reported that he remained in an optimistic frame of mind for a long time, believing that a mistake had been made. When he appeared before the notorious court troika, he did not confess to any guilt, but admitted that he had not reported on one encounter with comrades in Paris. The discussion with this kangaroo court lasted something like fifteen to twenty minutes (for a long time, I had been assuming it was half an hour). After that, the death sentence was read out to him and it was carried out the same day. I spent years believing that he might have had one last night in a special cell and imagined him wanting to write a letter to us. But farewell letters were not envisaged in that system. It came as a big shock to me several years ago, through a Russian film reporting on how four daughters found out about the fate of their father, to learn that the detainees were locked up in prison underground and thus never saw the light of day. I doubt there was anything like walks in the yard. Those nine months of

Lubyanka imprisonment keep coming back to occupy my thoughts. What ups and downs (with more downs than ups) might my father have gone through there?

My parents lived in the famous Hotel Lux in Moscow, and right next to them was Palmiro Togliatti, who was to become secretary general of the Italian communist party after the end of the war. My mother stressed this neighbourly relationship on several occasions. That made Togliatti appear like a good acquaintance. The same could be said of Georg Lukács, who reportedly often engaged in debate with my father. I tried to convince my mother to get in touch with him again, but she declined. It was only later that I realised that she did not feel herself to be intellectually up to his level.

The room in the Hotel Lux must have been a big one, because my mother told me proudly several times over that she had put curtains up in the middle, making a separate bedroom and a living room.

I am regarded as a Hotel Lux child. I do not know how many of us there are. There has never been a reunion of Hotel Lux children. Nearly all of them must have had some tale of suffering to tell. I had been an unwanted baby, as I was repeatedly told. My existence, however, made my mother's struggle for survival easier, given that she had someone to provide for, or rather someone to look after: her baby son, whom they had even wanted to take away from her. I was to be brought up in a children's home to become a genuine Soviet citizen. I had already been moved to a highly polished institution on the Crimea fit for the purpose, but somehow or other, however, my mother managed to retrieve me. Later on, at the age of 14, I attended Birkenwerder Boarding School near Berlin, where I got to know four girls and boys who had been brought up in homes in the Soviet Union. They preferred to speak Russian with one another. It was only in 1950 or thereabouts that they had returned to their German parents or next of kin. We felt a tinge of pleasure at that. In them I saw potential companions in distress. They had only recently got to know their German parents, at least those parents who were still alive. The four disappeared relatively quickly to another boarding school. It is not until now that I have started wondering if there might have been some reason for that.

After I had reached a certain age, my grandmother and aunt on my father's side used to comment that, on coming in through the door, I looked like my father (presumably in his younger years) or shared his mannerisms. After some time had gone by, this apparent similarity began to annoy me. That was probably also the reason why I let my beard grow at a very early age – much to my mother's disdain. I gave in the first time she complained and shaved it off again, but after that the change in my external appearance had come to stay. At the same time, my mother also wanted to see in me the husband she had never stopped loving. That did not even change when she married Paul Friedländer, also a communist, who had survived the Third Reich as an emigrant in Sweden. I do not know how he put up with the competition with my undead father. He certainly did not have an easy time with my mother. After a while, I struck up a very good rapport with him. When my mother, however, proposed that I change my

surname from Sauerland to Friedländer I bluntly refused. I had always been called Sauerland, and it would be to betray my father. The answer came to me so much as a matter-of-course, that I never even thought about it, although it is certainly worth pondering on. Why did I want to cling to the man who was almost certainly dead? For me, he remained undead in reality, especially since he kept on being presented to me as a role model. He always used to read the latest books and review them in *Roter Aufbau*. These reviews took the form of short annotations, as I found out later on. In order to make sure that he was writing comprehensibly, he often read his texts aloud to my mother, who came from a simple background. She had progressed no further than primary school, but it must have been a very good school, since there was never a hint of spelling mistakes in anything she wrote. She endeavoured constantly to better herself.

The fact of reading aloud exercised my thoughts in my younger years. How simple ought writing to be, I wondered, as it began to dawn on me that I was growing into a writer too. In the final analysis, explaining things simply means having to get by without complicated lines of thought. I believe that the conclusion I drew from all this was that it would always be wrong to lapse into scientific jargon, because that would put off any reader not initiated to that sort of language. However, the writer must always also set his or her sights high in order not to be spurned by the true and less-true specialists.

Amongst the few mementos of my father there used to be a small, black, round writing table, which had somehow been kept through the years of the Third Reich. I took it over when I asked to be allowed to live in the Finish-style cabin standing in the grounds of the house my parents had moved into on the outskirts of Berlin. My mother gave me permission, although I was still not fifteen. There I was able to do what I wanted at night (like walking in the woods or meeting a girl) without my parents knowing anything about it. I had the inside walls of the cabin painted white in oil paint, which was difficult to come by at the time, and got my grandfather to construct some large shelves for me. I was then able to sit at my father's writing table and study all sorts of things, not just the anatomy of butterflies (which it was my passion to catch for some time, and whose wings I was able to explore more precisely under the microscope) but also the volumes of Lasson's edition of Hegel, which my father had adorned with his initials. I had discovered it in my aunt's flat and taken it with me. She was pleased that I was interested in her beloved brother. Perhaps it was those volumes of Hegel that made me determined to study philosophy – against my mother's will. She was afraid that I, like my father, might go astray, and she was not entirely wrong in that. It was only very much later that I discovered his student records, which showed that he had attended lectures by Max Scheler at Cologne University. He also participated in a seminar on Marx's *Capital*. Without knowing that at the time, I had studied the first volume meticulously at the age of sixteen and had forced my parents to listen to the fruits of my reading. They sat obediently at a table and listened to me giving my interpretation of *Capital*. My methodology was structuralist, as people would say today. My stepfather

made a relatively cautious reference to the classical historical sequence: primitive society, slavery, feudalism, capitalism. In short: I ought to read Marx historically, in the categories of historical materialism. That would be more opportune – is what he seemed to be wanting to say.

Somehow we were convinced that my father had been sentenced to twenty or twenty-five years of banishment. I had read numerous stories about the banishing of Russian intellectuals in the days of the czars. They were not placed in a gulag but in a shack far away in Siberia, where they did a lot of reading and had contact with women. Some even escaped. There used to be fantastic tales about Stalin's secret trip to and escape from Siberia. One thought that used to fill me with fear was that my father might turn up one day with a Russian woman – particularly wondering what my mother would have to say. She was a jealous woman, and the Russian woman might have been a Sonya, who had always been there to assist my father. At all events, I was unable to imagine him "womanless", which was the term people used at the time.

The idea that he had been banished arose fairly early. After her husband's arrest, my mother had regularly taken small parcels to the Lubyanka, but one day they were no longer accepted. He is no longer here, she was told. In those days, that used to be interpreted as sentenced to the usual twenty years of banishment, added to which she had been told in 1939 that her husband was in a remote camp where he was prohibited from writing. That is when the search began to find where that camp was. Naturally, nothing came of it. I remember that, at the end of the 1940s and in the early 1950s, my mother thought about writing a letter to Stalin. One of us was to ask if he might not be able to tell us the whereabouts of Kurt Sauerland, the upright communist. She was obviously convinced that Stalin knew nothing of his innocence. He would stand up for him, especially since my father had included the following quotation in his 1932 book on dialectic materialism:

> There exist a dogmatic and a creative Marxism. I have decided in favour of the latter.[1]

As a young lad, I naturally took this motto very literally. I was always on the side of creativity. It became a tenet of my academic activity and teaching. In other words, I demanded creativity both of myself and others. At some point I recognised, probably with the assistance of my stepfather, that this had been a gesture of might: it is I, Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin, who determine what is creative and, above all, it is I too who determine what is to be condemned as dogmatic. My father is counted as having been a Stalinist, in other words as having been one of those who helped steer the party line the way Stalin wanted it. My mother kept on stressing that it was on account of the

[1] Stalin at the Sixth Bolshevik Party Conference, August 1917.

controversy surrounding his book that he had been summoned to Moscow, where he met with support from Kuusinen, a Finn by birth. Kuusinen had been the secretary of the executive committee of the Communist International after the defeat of the communists in Finland in 1921. He held the post until 1939 and the key decisions were in his hands, although Sinovyev figured as first secretary. My father had produced a separate statement defending the book against the reproaches from his German comrades, and my mother considered that to have been decisive. He had a small number of copies of his statement printed in the publishing house as galley proofs. When Thomas Höhle referred to this statement of defence in the preface to his book about Franz Mehring in 1956, he attacked it in Marxist-Stalinist jargon, prompting my mother to demand that she be given access to it. Ernst Engelberg, a leading historian in the German Democratic Republic and still known today as the author of a two-volume work on Bismarck, had lent it to Höhle, who was then a student of his. It is claimed that Höhle returned it. My mother therefore wrote to Engelberg asking him to make the statement of defence available to her, as it had never been intended for publication. After some considerable pressure, he explained that he had kept it hidden in a secret compartment of his bureau throughout the entire Nazi period but that it had now been mislaid. Extensive correspondence exists on this subject. As misfortune would have it, Höhle became professor of German studies in Warsaw a few years later, and my mother requested me to draw his attention to this document once again – perhaps it was still in his possession after all, or at least a copy of it. The replies I received from Höhle were very hostile. It was a really convoluted situation. I did not know what was in Kurt Sauerland's statement of defence; I had in the meantime become extremely bothered by the Stalin quotation in my father's book; but I found Höhle's work on Mehring dogmatically clumsy. I also found it hard to believe that the document had simply been lost. At the same time, I was a student of Höhle's, who held the chair in German studies at Warsaw University, and was thus dependent on him. At the end of the day, I was going to have to sit examinations under him. I was annoyed by his style of lecturing, which was one of extremely popularised science, but always adhering strictly to the party line. Thank heavens that he left Warsaw again after two years. The statement of defence has never reappeared.

That was already the time when it was clear that my father had been among the victims of the great purge, when there no longer had to be fuzzy answers to the questions about my father's whereabouts. There is one incident that I still remember particularly well. It was in the boarding school and I was in the eighth year, i.e. the last compulsory year, and somehow I had let it out that my father was a victim of the Soviet

regime. The headmaster, a young graduate of the "worker and peasant faculty",[2] who had been appointed instead of a so-called bourgeois headmaster, summonsed my parents in order to find out if there might be any truth in my comment. I shall never forget his name; it was "Lade" (for which there are several possible translations, one of which is "summons"). He died while still fairly young, as I found out later on. Being the son of a "traitor to the grand cause", someone excluded from the communist ranks, I faced the threat of expulsion from the boarding school. I denied to my parents that I had said anything specific about my father to the headmaster. He must have got hold of the wrong end of the stick. I was not present at the conversation he had with my parents. It ended on a more or less conciliatory note. I take it that the headmaster had felt afraid of my parents, who at the time held relatively high functions within the GDR regime. My mother was no less than a deputy in the People's Chamber during the first legislative period following the creation of the GDR in October 1949. At the same time, she was principal secretary of the Association of German Consumer Cooperatives and for some time head of the press department.

In 1955, a friend of my mother's, Elfriede Klaege, returned from the Soviet Union. Legend has it that she had been the first person to take me in hers arms when I was born. Following my father's arrest, she refused to shake hands with my mother any more, which my mother hardly forgave, even after her return, although she had subsequently had much to endure in the Soviet empire. Elfriede Klaege first spent some time in a camp in the far north. After that, like many Germans and Poles, she had been transferred to Karaganda in Kazakhstan, where she had to construct a mud hut for herself along with others. She, the piano-playing daughter from a sheltered bourgeois home, was allowed to work as a cleaner in a hospital. In 1956, a job was found for her at the *Komisches Oper* in East Berlin, looking after Russian ballet dancers, which she did with great passion. In my eyes, she had become very Russian. She also spoke about my father in a tone of utmost esteem. She did not allow herself to be drawn on the subject of what might have happened to him. Speculation on questions of that nature seemed not to have been permitted. The subject was taboo amongst comrades. It was not the done thing to ask direct questions. Elfriede Klaege had gone to Moscow in 1933, even before my parents' arrival there, following a Polish-Jewish communist, an actor and a big favourite with the ladies. There she had lost track of him. I do not know if the same fate befell him as my father before her arrest or if there were other reasons for it. When I went to Poland, she asked me to look for him. He had been expelled from the Soviet Union. It was possible he might after all have survived, she felt. It goes without saying

[2] In German "ABF" or "Arbeiter- und Bauernfakultät". In the GDR this was a fast-track route for preparing for the "abitur" (secondary-school leaving examination) for young people considered to be workers or peasants.

that there was no trace of him to be found. It emerged sometime later that he, like Münzenberg, had been murdered in France. Doubtlessly the work of KGB agents.

I did not have a clear picture of my father's probable fate until the occasion of the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party and Khrushchev's "secret speech" of 25 February 1956. I managed to get hold of the text when I was permitted to travel on a summer holiday to visit my aunt and grandmother, who used to live in Göttingen. Despite the open border, someone like me, the son of party members, was not automatically able to travel to the West. I smuggled the secret speech across the border and handed it to my parents. We already knew more or less what was in it from western wireless broadcasts, but now we were able to read sentence for sentence how Stalin had treated his comrades-in-arms. It prompted my mother to try once again to find out more. She contacted the comrades she still knew from Moscow, although she had only little confidence in them. They had, after all, not helped her in Moscow – on the contrary: a mere month after his arrest, Kurt Sauerland had been expelled from the party at their request, and after the war they had not even allowed her to attend the party academy (*Parteihochschule*). In 1949, she had been going to spend a year there, studying Marxism-Leninism and the history of the workers' movement. Since, however, she was still searching for her husband, a party inquiry was launched against her, without her knowing about it. A certain Phillip Daub, the head of the cadre department in the SED's central committee finally suggested to the party's first secretary, Walter Ulbricht, that she should not be admitted to the party academy. She was not to be trusted. She had after all been married to Kurt Sauerland. "He will not be unknown to you", he wrote, "he was taken by the scruff of the neck in 1937". That is the way people used to talk in those days: "take someone by the scruff of the neck". On the one hand, it is a contemptuous way to refer to human beings, considering the consequences that such arrests used to have. On the other hand, those who used it seemed to have known full well that innocent people might also be drawn into this mill (presupposing that there was any scope for a concept of guilt in this situation). Kurt Sauerland's wife had not been arrested – Daub added in a tone that made that sound astonishing. And, in point of fact, it was, but it was Daub's supposition that was something about which my mother would not come clean.

In 1962, people working for the SED's central committee advised my mother to contact the Red Cross. She regarded that organisation as bourgeois and most certainly not at all interested in communist victims. She was, however, assured that the Red Cross in the GDR was firmly in the hands of the comrades. Through that route she was told, in 1963, the precise date of Kurt Sauerland's death, seven years after the Twentieth Party Congress. She went wild with disgust at having been treated in such a way by her comrades and wrote the following letter to Hermann Matern, who was in charge of such questions:

Esteemed Comrade Hermann Matern!

> I write to you about my husband, Kurt Sauerland, whose death was reported to me by the German Red Cross in May 1963. The content of that letter is, I believe, known to you as well. For half a year, I have been waiting in vain, day in day out, for an expression of sympathy from my party, of which I shall have been a member for forty years in July. For Kurt Sauerland, 22 March 1938 was the last agonising day of his life. He was taken away from us, my son and me, under a false name on 15 May 1937 and ten months later he was dead, then aged 32. For 26 years, I endeavoured to shed light in the darkness. Now it has been established that Kurt Sauerland never left the Moscow prison walls. Now, small pieces of mosaic are being added to one another, and I see a plastic image in front of me. I have often asked you to obtain news about Kurt Sauerland. I was repeatedly fobbed off. In 1962, after 25 years, I received the recommendation from you to do my own research, since nothing had come of all your efforts. That is what I did. It took no longer than May 1963 for me to receive an answer from the Red Cross. Now tell me, please, how am I still to believe that you did everything to obtain news from Moscow?
>
> Comrade Matern, was Kurt Sauerland's life of sacrifice worth so little in the ranks of the German communist party and Comintern? Is it not unspeakably hard to have to die in emigration, in Soviet emigration, and then to be forgotten as well? And have I, as an activist, dedicated solely to youth and party work since the age of fifteen, not deserved to receive more than a formal notice from the Red Cross? I, who had to go through indescribable suffering on account of the arrest of my husband in the Soviet Union but who never once departed from the Marxist-Leninist path, who in 1940, three years after the arrest, arranged to have myself sent to Germany to fight illegally against fascism. And do you believe that before the Twentieth Party Congress it was easy to get by as the wife of a comrade arrested in the Soviet Union?

After this letter, the party's central control committee, which was chaired by Matern decided to rehabilitate Kurt Sauerland. That happened on 24 April 1964, after my stepfather had already died. My mother was not given it in writing, rather a special delegation of three comrades was dispatched to see her. They probably felt it would be possible to calm her down that way. I found the whole thing to be objectionable play-acting. What was the word rehabilitation meant to mean here? More would have needed to be done to achieve that. After all, Münzenberg's reputation was at stake too, he having worked closely with my father.

After the change in system and German unification, my mother did receive another letter from the PDS. She showed it to me. I recorded in my diary how I reacted to it:

"Train journey from Berlin to Bonn on 8 November 1989: Today, my mother showed me the letter written to her by the PDS leadership, in which it informed her of Kurt Sauerland's renewed 'political rehabilitation'. That had been decided on by an 'arbitration panel'. My name was also mentioned. My mother was appalled that I was not at all happy with this letter. I said that such a rehabilitation was worthless if it failed

to recount the role of people like Pieck, Florian or Ulbricht. I thought to myself that it was just one big pile of dirty linen. My mother was snarling with rage when I took leave of her. On the way to the train, I found myself thinking for the first time about the word rehabilitation. Rehabilitation does, after all, presuppose that the person rehabilitated is pleased to figure in the party annals once again. Deep inside, I hope that he has long since written it off for good, but that is not something I can say to my mother, since she seems to be a wholehearted member of this PDS. Considered strictly, however, she cannot be interested in a complete disclosure of the history of the party and Comintern, because this Münzenberg undertaking had a much too pro-Soviet leaning. It did much to make Stalin internationally acceptable, until he was drawn into conflicts, when he had answered the call of duty. Just one big pile of dirty linen. Personally, I was angry that I had lost so much of my life through all these things. That cannot be changed any more now. It is as if one has lived life in vain. Circumstances being what they were, I followed my own particular path, but the price was high.

I do, however admire my mother for taking revenge on the comrades on the occasion of Paul Friedländer's funeral when she had his name and that of Kurt Sauerland inscribed on the headstone and underneath them her name and date of birth. It was then my sister's and my job to add the date of death. The grave is in Ilmenau. Every time I go there, my thoughts go out to the three of them. My mother did not ask anyone for permission, but no one protested either that no mortal remains of my father's had been laid to rest there.

In the early 1960s, I had established contacts with the circle of people around Leszek Kołakowski and Bronisław Baczko. They were primarily concerned with working through the history of Marxism. Revisionism was what it was called at the time. What were the sources of Marx's and Engels' thinking? They looked back into Rousseau, Schiller, Hegel, Moses Hess, Stirner, the French utopian socialists and many others. It was as if they were following Goethe's dictum that all ideas and inspirations are the fruit of an intellectual collective. I was fairly actively involved in that revision work in that I attended as many meetings as I possibly could, made presentations of my own and in the end translated some of the work of Kołakowski, Baczko and Stefan Morawski from Polish into German. Unfortunately, this intellectual idyll came to an end in 1968, when the Polish party leadership decided to clean things up entirely and to chase Jews and factious intellectuals out of the country. By chance, I was not in Warsaw at the time. The Polish Ministry of Education had given me a ten-month grant to finish off my dissertation in libraries in East Berlin. When I returned, most of my teachers and also most of my colleagues had already left and gone into exile. It was no longer possible to think of organising interdisciplinary gatherings along the lines of seminars. I found myself thinking back to the dark times. More than one person asked me; are you emigrating or not? These were the same questions as had been asked in Germany in 1933. The only correct reaction then would have been to leave the country.

Now I had made the move to Poland because the fundamental changes following 1956 had given rise to hope in me that something new might come into being here, something that would be neither bolshevist nor capitalist. But a deep-seated reason will probably also have been that I felt drawn to being somewhere between Berlin and Moscow, between two wrong-doers in the history of the twentieth century, to be amidst a people that had been through the worst from both sides. And in point of fact an essential impetus for the decline of the Eastern empire did originate here. And without Poland turning away from the Soviet imperium German unity would not have come about. Back in 1988, I had addressed a conference on Central Europe in West Berlin and had said that, if Poland were to gain its sovereignty, Germany would be reunited, since Russia would not be able to tolerate a divided, i.e. weak, one-third German state to the west of Poland. Poland would then simply become too strong a state. Of course, none of those present wanted to believe me.

In the 1980s, after Jaruzelski had declared martial law on 13 December 1981, when I was subjected to all sorts of harassment and had to feel afraid that I was going to be put into prison, I used often to think of my father. Not even in my dreams, however, did it ever occur to me he would be the pretext for accusations levelled against me once again. Jaruzelski's wife, who was employed in the German faculty of Warsaw University, spread it about that I had had a dubious past, that I was the son of a traitor. It was as if the Stalin period had returned. Mrs Jaruzelska had picked up this opinion from those closest to her, the circles of the nomenclature, who had probably never come to terms with their own past. They were rightly forced to resign, but accounts were never settled with them. The dead never experienced the satisfaction which Benjamin spoke about in his correspondence with Horkheimer.

I include that correspondence, only slightly abridged.

In his essay on Eduard Fuchs, Benjamin had written that the work of the past was never finished by historical materialists. It was an assertion with which Horkheimer had felt unable to agree:

> Since then, I have long been thinking about the question of whether the work of the past is complete. Your formulation can certainly stand as is. I have but one personal reservation: that I think this a relationship only to be perceived dialectically. The pronouncement of incompleteness is idealistic if it does not incorporate completeness as well. Past injustice is done and finished. Those who have been beaten to death really are dead. Ultimately you are making a theological statement. If one takes incompleteness absolutely seriously, then one must believe in the Last Judgment. My thinking is too contaminated with materialism for that. Perhaps there is a distinction between positive and negative incompleteness, so that the injustice, the terror, the pain of the past are irreparable. The justice in practice, pleasures and

> works behave differently in relation to time, since their positive character is largely negated through transitoriness. This is indeed true for individual life, for which death validates its unhappiness, but not its happiness. Good and bad do not relate to time in the same way. Thus discursive logic is inadequate for these categories too (Benjamin 1972ff, 2/3,1332ff).

Benjamin sent an immediate answer to this letter:

> I find your excursus on the completeness or openness of the work of the past very significant. I think I understand it thoroughly and, if I am not mistaken, your idea corresponds to a theme than has often concerned me. To me, an important question has always been how to understand the odd figure of speech: to lose a war or a court case. The war or the trial are not the entry into a dispute but rather the decision concerning it. Finally, I explained it to myself thus: the events involved for a person who has lost a war or a court case are truly concluded and thus for that person any avenue of praxis has been lost. This is not the case for the counterpart, who is the winner. Victory bears its fruit in a way much different from the manner in which consequences follow defeat. That leads to the exact opposite of Ibsen's phrase: "Happiness is born of loss. Only what is lost is eternal" (Benjamin 1972ff, 2/3,1338).

An indirect reply is to be found in the manuscript for the Arcades Project, which cites the passage from Horkheimer's letter quoted above and adds the following commentary:

> The corrective to this line of thinking may be found in the consideration that history is not simply a science but also and not least a form of remembrance. What science has "determined", remembrance can modify. Such mindfulness can make the incomplete (happiness) into something complete and the complete (suffering) into something incomplete. That is theology; but in remembrance we have an experience that forbids us to conceive of history as fundamentally atheological, little as it may be granted us to try to write it with immediately theological concepts (Benjamin 1972ff, 5/1, 589).

Benjamin seems to be in agreement with the charge that a consistent materialist ought not to speak about incompleteness. The slaughtered have been slaughtered once and for all; nobody is going to bring them back from their graves. It is thus consistent to renounce any *necromancy,* which is how Marx wanted it. In order to escape from being pinned down to thinking in this way, Benjamin declares history to be not just a science but also a particular form of remembrance. As such, it is by no means restricted to dealing only with what is complete, but also with the continuing impact of the past, in

particular suffering, in other words also with the fact that particular people were slaughtered, were murdered. The present cannot simply gloss over that. It must retain its clandestine connection to the past, which is expecting a form of redemption to come from us, to use Benjamin's metaphorical language.

In my father's case, the conclusion to be drawn from this is that he is not only waiting for rehabilitation, but resurrection – resurrection in the sense of the course of his life being presented as it really was, however misguided that may have been. In the end, he would like justice to be done to him. That is when, for me in particular, the undead person will turn to being truly dead.

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GERHARD FRIEDRICH

BETWEEN PSYCHIATRY AND POPULAR FANTASY: TRAUMA, GHOSTS AND REVENANTS IN THE 'NEW GERMAN DOMESTIC NOVEL'

"It doesn't end. Never will it end" (Grass 2002, 216; 2003, 234). It is with this bleak view of recent German history as an 'infinite loop' that Günter Grass concludes and reopens his novella *Crabwalk*, thereby seemingly providing authoritative expression to a leitmotif of the 'new German domestic novel': that of the inability to end, the eternal return of the past. The texts are 'enlivened' by revenants (Grass and Wackwitz), ghostly apparitions (Wackwitz 2003), the 'undead' (Treichel 1998) and by compulsively repeated traumatic experiences (Grass, Timm 2003, Treichel). The present appears overwhelmed, threatened by a usurpatory spectral, at times even vampiric (Treichel), 'undead' past. Yet the majority of critics and the public understood the intention of most of these authors as an attempt to re-engage emotionally, within the private sphere, with the German past through the memory of – real or fictitious – relatives who became victims of the Second World War in various ways, and thus, at least 'partially reconciled' with this past, to be able to shape the present and future of the united Germany. However, it appears that the attempt has left them with the conundrum of the magician's apprentice: they cannot rid themselves of the 'ghosts' that they, literally, called up.

The image of wandering, unredeemed souls is accompanied by old folk fantasies and fantasy stories, combined with the Christian notion of purgatory as an interim realm between life and final destination – redemption or damnation. Common to these figures in the interim realm is their unredeemed nature, resulting from misdeeds suffered and left unavenged or misdeeds that they themselves had committed. Only the ultimate atonement can absolve them and release them to a peaceful death – or to heaven.

The implicit recourse to the topoi and narrative of the inhabitants of an interim realm as a waiting room for redemption indicates, firstly, the authors' intention to 'SAVE', but, secondly, also their difficulty in clearly justifying, historically and morally, this intention to save, as well as the danger presented to the living themselves of becoming victims of the evoked past – through the revenant.

However, the revenant motif does not simply represent the condition of the unredeemed in limbo, awaiting some future justice, but also a modern and scientifically underpinned model of experience, in which individuals fall 'out of time' and tying them, until such time as they are redeemed, to a single terrible moment: the trauma. The traumatic experience leads into the threshold area of death, threat of death, deadly danger, in the face of which the affected individual has no behavioral framework on which to draw. As it is impossible to react meaningfully – and here that means reacting in such a way that life is preserved – the experience cannot be ascribed any meaning, thus it cannot enter into the production of meanings; that is to say, become part of a linguistic and symbolic process. In his report of the total destruction of Hamburg after the extensive bombing, Hans Erich Nossack produced an impressive image for the impossibility of being able to express in words the experience of a scene of death:

> Was uns umgab erinnerte in keiner Weise an das Verlorene. Es hatte nichts damit zu tun. Es war etwas anderes, es war das Fremde, es war das eigentlich *Nicht-Mögliche*.
> Im Norden Finnlands gibt es vor Frost erstarrte Wälder. Wir hatten ein Bild davon in unserer Wohnung hängen. Aber wer *denkt* dabei noch an Wald? Es ist nicht einmal das Gerippe eines Waldes. Gewiß, es ist etwas da, sogar mehr, als wenn es nur Gerippe wäre, aber was bedeuten diese Zeichen und Runen? Vielleicht die *unausdenkbare* Umkehrung des Begriffes Wald? (Nossack 1971, 45-46, emph., G.F.).

> What surrounded us did not remind us in any way of what was lost. It had nothing to do with it. It was something else, it was strangeness itself, it was the essentially *not possible*.
> In northern Finland, there are forests that are frozen solid. We had a picture of one hanging in our apartment. But who still *thinks* of a forest in the face of this? It is not even the skeleton of a forest. Something is there, to be sure, even more than, if it were only a skeleton, but what is the meaning of these signs and runes? Perhaps the *inconceivable* inversion of the concept 'forest'? (Nossack 2004, 37-38).

No 'teachings' can be gained or behavioural modifications made from such experiences in death zones.[1] The I must live as if it had never had this experience; it separates the experience from itself, thus losing its status as subject in relation to its existential experiences – these only belong to the I in the physical sense, they are alien to its consciousness. No doubt this is the source of the metaphorical formula of trauma as "in den Körper eingeschriebene Erfahrung" ["inscribed in the body"] (Assmann 2006, 94). This separation of bodily experience and consciousness results in the

[1] See Wittgenstein (1980, 81): "Der Tod ist kein Ereignis des Lebens.- Den Tod erlebt man nicht".

inability to be able to assign experienced pain or mortal fear to a causal external agency. What remains is sensation. The conscious entity that would have been able to differentiate the sensation from its cause has been shut off. The result of the joining of situation and sensation, of the agent causing pain or mortal fear and the pain or mortal fear itself, is the autonomisation of sensation, or "object-less sensation" (Bohleber 2007, 311) that is characterised by its autonomy on the one hand (i.e. it cannot be located within any space-time coordinates), so it cannot be remembered either – and on the other hand is characterised as timeless present, like a disease that reappears in stages, re-occurring at any time as if it were the first time. In the literary, metaphorical language of the texts examined here, this frequently turns into revenance, into the unredeemed 'ghosts' of traumatised individuals, or means that their trauma appears to them as an alien entity, as a phantom.

Claude Lecouteux provides this summary definition of the 'phenomenon' of the revenant:

> Die Wiedergänger sind störende Gestalten: sie trotzen jeder logischen Erklärung und übertreten die Naturgesetze. So stellen sie das seit Jahrhunderten langsam gereifte und kluge Bild eines zweigeteilten Universums in Frage, wonach die Welt in zwei Teile gespalten ist: Einerseits haben wir das Reich der Lebenden, andererseits das der Verstorbenen. Die Wiedergänger fügen sich nicht in dieses Schema und eröffnen einen dritten Weg, bzw. ein drittes Reich, das Niemandsland zwischen Leben und Tot, zwischen hienieden und „drüben", wo sie sich niederlassen (Lecouteux 1987, 183).

> Revenants are disruptive figures. They defy all logical explanation and violate the laws of nature. Thus they call into question the intelligent image of a dual universe, which has developed slowly over centuries and according to which the world is split into two parts: one the one hand, the realm of the living; on the other hand, that of the dead. Revenants do not fit into this schema, instead opening up a third way or a third realm – the No Man's Land between living and dead, between down here and 'over there', where they abide. [My translation]

Just as the revenant relativises the strict distinction between death and life, the presentation of the trauma as a phenomenon of revenance relativises a rigid distinction between past and present, so that past events continue to have a spectral effect – intangible, uncontrollable – in the present. Just as the old religion brought the line between death and life into 'disorder' because the previously living figure, now a revenant, demands the resolution of unresolved debts from beyond the grave, thereby suggesting, in ghostly form, a continuity of the law beyond the death of the individual – Jacques Derrida calls "justice […] beyond all living present" the "spectral moment" (Derrida 1994, xviii-xix) – so the traumatised individual, now a revenant, creates

disorder in the relationship between past and present. The 'frozen' internal time of the individual trauma becomes, through the fantastical images of the revenant, an interpretation of the relationship between past and present, it is a disaster that preceded this hermetic reproduction, which conveys the demand for retribution for actual or perceived injustice according to the conception of justice that was valid in the past. A specific revenge becomes a timeless postulation, beyond any changes in the legal system or ethical-moral standards.

1. *Crabwalk*

In Günter Grass's novella *Crabwalk* the author orientates himself according to the model of traumatic experiences. This is the case even in the selection of the fictitious I-narrator, Paul, by the figure who appears in the text as the "old man", but who is really the author Grass in disguise. Paul reports, or rather, Grass has Paul report, on why "the old man" has given him of all people the responsibility of the narrator. After the narratorial "omission" of Mr Grass to turn to this subject earlier has been spoken of, he continues: "Ersatzweise habe er mich zwar nicht erfunden, aber nach langer Sucherei auf den Listen der Überlebenden wie eine Fundsache entdeckt. Als Person von eher dürftigem Profil, sei ich dennoch prädestiniert: geboren, während das Schiff sank." ["He hadn't invented me as a surrogate, rather he had discovered me, after a long search, on the list of survivors, like a piece of lost property. Although I had a rather meager profile, I was predestined: born as the ship was sinking"] (Grass 2002, 78; 2003, 80). Playing with the appearance of fictional reality, Grass emphasises that he did not invent his narrator, but rather found him. Knowing, however, that Grass had actually invented him, we can scrutiny the author's motives in inventing him according to the criteria he gives: "Although I had a rather meagre profile, I was predestined: born as the ship was sinking." Despite his only moderate suitability as a narrator – any possible literary quality does not, therefore, count for much – his selection is made exclusively according to the criterion of the extent to which the narrator is directly affected, his individual and existential connection with the historical catastrophe. Paul is not only involved in it, the coincidence of sinking and his birth connects him existentially to the catastrophe and symbolically shows that his life will be lived in its shadow. It is clear that here is shown a lifetime that is a sinking ship.

Grass charges the justification for his choice of narrator with even more meaning. Although Paul is physically, temporally-spatially present at the sinking as a newborn child, he is not called to be a conscious eye witness. So why him of all people and above all what is he supposed to narrate? It is clear that he cannot be considered as a first person eye witness. Somebody or something else must speak through him. Paul can only be a kind of medium through whom is articulated an experience in which he took part physically, certainly, but not consciously. Paul's situation as a newborn in the catastrophe on which he is to report presages through highly focused symbolism the

constellation of the novella, the organising principle of its fictional dimension – that of the traumatic experience[2] – the encapsulation of the trauma and its transferral from one generation to the next, where the future generations, acting as the media or organs for the trauma of previous generations, are alienated from themselves. Later, while enacting his duties as chronicler on behalf of his mother and the "old man", it seems to Paul "als dürfe nur unter Zwang geschrieben werden, als könne nichts ohne Mutter geschehen" ["as if all this could be written only under duress, as if nothing could get down on paper without Mother"] (Grass 2002, 99; 2003, 104).

While Paul in his newborn state allegorically represents the trauma – the fact that newborn children can be assigned unusual roles has been a theme in Grass's work since *The Tin Drum* – it is his mother Tulla, already familiar from Grass's works *Dog Years* and *Cat and Mouse*, who shows herself to be traumatised through the specific ways, as described in the psychiatric system of symptoms, in which she processes the sinking experience. Frequently, when she mentions the catastrophe, she is – literally – haunted by it: she gets her "I'm not home look" or her "I'm not home face". She is no longer there, is absent, disappears into another temporal-spatial dimension, that of the sinking, which is not past, but rather in these moments is her present. This mirrors a significant finding of trauma research whereby the trauma is not remembered – the memory separates present and past – but afflicts the traumatised individual like a disease as a perpetual, timeless present state, disconnected from its actual historical coordinates and its causal nexus. The experience of deadly threat and defencelessness in the traumatic situation cannot be interpreted by the affected subject, as they are unable to react meaningfully to it. In essence, it is the impossibility of attributing subjective meaning, its non-narratibility, that makes the traumatic experience as a decontextualised sensation absolute and timeless. In the little that Tulla expresses verbally about the sinking there are a number of clues to her traumatised state: "Ich kann es nicht beschreiben. Niemand kann das beschreiben" ["I can't describe it. No one can describe it"] (Grass 2002, 102; 2003, 107). Her story is an "Endlosgeschichte" ["neverending story"], (Grass 2002, 133; 2003, 141) the sinking is "ewigwährend" ["eternal"] (Grass 2002, 33; 2003, 33), the ship is "immerfort" ["everlastingly sinking"] (Grass 2002, 146; 2003, 156), and elsewhere "das fortwährend sinkende Schiff" ["the everlastingly sinking ship"] (Grass 2002, 157; 2003, 168). In her Kashubian dialect, she laments "Das heert nie auf" ["It never leaves you"] (Grass 2002, 57; 2003, 57) and the cries of the drowning accompany her constantly: "Son Jeschrai kriegste nich mehr raus aussem Jehör" ["A cry like that – you won't ever get it out of your ear"] (Grass 2002, 146; 2003, 155).

Although Paul must write as if "under duress", he succeeds in being only partially integrated into the maternal trauma by means of a kind of apathetic indifference – here

[2] See also: Fricke 2000, 161-168.

Grass reflects the critically distanced behaviour of the first post-war generation towards their parents – but Paul's son and Tulla's nephew Konrad becomes a fully integrated part of his grandmother's trauma. He becomes that which trauma research has called a "commemorative candle"[3]: the subconscious conditioning of subsequent generations by the traumatised generation so that they consume themselves completely in their function of assuaging, compensating or even avenging past suffering, which is present as trauma, as if it concerned their lives and their present; they help to establish the past as a spectral pseudo-present in which they act as its self-alienated protagonists.[4] The psychotherapist Nicholas Abraham has introduced the concept of the "phantom" into pyschiatric discourse to define transgenerationally transferred trauma: "Das wiederkehrende Phantom ist der Existenzbeweis für etwas, das in einem anderen begraben liegt" ["the revenant phantom is the existential proof for something that lies buried in another"] (Abraham 1991, 696). The trauma is that of another, an individual from a previous generation. Abraham's recourse to a term from the field of the fantastical reflects the high degree of illusory independence, of alienness, with which the mediated trauma takes root in the psyche of the affected individual. This individual becomes a "ventriloquist" (Abraham 1991, 694), who lends the "other" their voice.

Grass models the relationship of grandmother Tulla and grandson Konrad on this. Thus, for Paul, Konrad's description of the sinking seems "auf penetrante Weise bekannt vor" ["had an alarmingly familiar ring"] (Grass 2002, 73; 2003, 75), because "Großmutter spricht aus Konrad" ["I could hear his grandmother speaking through him"] (Grass 2002, 89; 2003, 92). Moreover, the activity of the young Neonazis, full of nostalgia for Gustloff on their websites in cyberspace, is recognisable as an element of this vampiric dynamic; the use of the internet as a medium of virtual reality is clearly intended to emphasise the undead-spectral nature of this present past. "Mit dem wie aus der Gegenwart hallenden Ruf ‚Die *Gustloff* sinkt!' stieß die Homepage meines Sohnes aller Welt ein Window auf" ["With the exclamation, seemingly emanating from the present, "The *Gustloff* is sinking!," my son's home page opened a window to the entire world"] (Grass 2002, 216; 2003, 234). The murder of Wilhelm Gustloff is treated "als wäre der Mord von Davos gestern geschehen" ["As if the murder in Davos

[3] The term was coined - in relation to the children of victims of the Holocaust - by the Israeli psychotherapist Dina Wardi (1997).

[4] "Das Kind wird von den Eltern seelisch an sich gerissen und narßistisch funktionalisiert. Indem die Geschichte eines anderen in es hineinprojeziertz wird oder eindringt, wird das Kind fremdbestimmt und hat in einem Teil seines Selbsts ein Gefühl der Entfremdung. [...] Das Verschwimmen der Grenzen zwischen den Generationen ist auch ein Grund dafür, dass das Zeiterleben dieser Kinder gestört ist, vor allem das Empfinden und die Wahrnehmung eigener Lebenszeit sowie das Identitätsgefühl. Diese Kinder können die Lebensgeschichte der Eltern und ihre Identifizierung mit ihnen nicht durch Abgrenzung und Auseinandersetzung als Basis dafür nutzen, sich eine eigene Geschichte zu schaffen." Bohleber 1998, 262, 273.

had taken place just yesterday"] (Grass 2002, 63; 2003, 64), "wie eine Neuigkeit" ["a breaking story"] or even "erst neuerdings" ["only recently"] (Grass 2002, 64; 2003, 65), "als seien bestimmte Zeitungsartikel gestern noch druckfrisch gewesen" ["as if the newspaper accounts were hot off the press"] (Grass 2002, 63; 2003, 65).

Grass melodramatically and highly artificially intensifies the spectral compulsion – emanating from the trauma and going in circles – to repeat history through the role play of Wilhelm-Konrad and David-Wolfgang in the son's chatroom, which ends with the murder of the pretend Jew Wolfgang by the pretend Gustloff-Konrad. Using phrases such as "Schlagabtausch im Jenseits" ["exchange of blows taking place in the hereafter"] (Grass 2002, 48; 2003, 47) and "geisterhafte(s) Rollenspiel" ["ghostly role-playing"] (Grass 2002, 49; 2003, 49), the narrator emphasises how contemporary actions are determined by the coordinates of a distant past. Different time domains merge and the apparent consequence of the events is merely the reproduction of that which has already happened; it is not determined by objective, external time, but rather by the internal halt of time, the frozen time of the traumatic event.

In allowing the actions of the two figures – as given in the abovementioned characterisations and conditioned as they are by the trauma – to trickle over into the field of the spectral, Grass mystifies the pathological hermetic conditions of the trauma and transforms them into the metaphysical revenant whose precise origins are lost within its fantastical autonomy. The image of the revenant prevents any possibility of potential cure or potentially adequate therapy for the trauma and its cause, and so the trauma is immortalised in the fundamentally inaccessible reality of the phantom. Its pseudo-life, consisting of waiting and warning immortalises its demand for retribution according to the ideas and emotions of the past, which are not accessible to any learning process from history. The Gustloff-revenant must conserve the sense of right and wrong of National Socialism, and its retribution can only be according to the standards of the past 'law'. History repeats itself as a recitation, comically, theatrically, yet the revenant cannot as such be conscious of its role as a comic actor. It must conduct itself in earnest.

Grass undertook meticulous research for his novella and integrated detailed real material into the text – from the technical details of the *Gustloff*, the structure and activities of the National Socialist Strength Through Joy Movement, to reconstructing the biographies of the historical figures of Gustloff, Frankfurter and the Soviet submarine commandant Marinesko, and of course the details of the sinking – yet, although this all comprises a considerable amount of the text, the objective, 'external' history is 'gutted', in accordance with the fictional narrative concept based on the trauma model. In relation to the static condition of the trauma, it possesses no present-time dynamic. It is only present as a cause of disease in history, bringing the latter to a standstill. The trauma model, which tends to be mystified within the revenant motif, dominates the extensive historical material so comprehensively that nothing

substantially new can occur, only the sterile reproduction of past violent irruptions that have fallen out of time.

2. *In My Brother's Shadow*

Uwe Timm's work *In My Brother's Shadow* also concerns a lost brother who fell on the Eastern Front. Here, almost sixty years after the end of the war, Timm writes up the research on his brother Karl Heinz, who voluntarily joined the SS and then fell in 1943. He begins with the only remaining early childhood memory he has of this brother. His is ushered into the kitchen by his parents and told to look around: "Dort, das hat sich mir als Bild genau eingeprägt, über dem Schrank, sind Haare zu sehen, blonde Haare. Dahinter hat sich jemand versteckt – und dann kommt er hervor, der Bruder, und hebt mich hoch" ["I can see hair showing above the top of the cupboard, that image impressed itself on me very distinctly, fair hair. Someone has been hiding behind the cupboard – and then he comes out, my brother and lifts me up into the air"] (Timm 2003, 9; 2005, 1). The same memory appears over a decade earlier in Timm's autobiographical text about his stay in Rome, *Vogel friss die Feige nicht* [Bird, Don't Eat the Fig]. "Träumte von meinem Bruder, der – meine einzige Erinnerung an ihn – sich hinter einem Besenschrank versteckt hält. Er will mich, seinen kleinen Bruder, überraschen. Aber ich sehe seinen Kopf, sein blondes Haar" [I dreamed of my brother, hiding behind a broom cupboard – my only memory of him. He wants to surprise me, his little brother. But I can see his head, his blond hair] (Timm 1989, 17). Evidence of the appearance of this memory in another of Timm's texts, long before his project of more focused research on his brother, should be viewed as proof of its authenticity and its intensity. The brother did not appear in the life remembered by Timm only in texts written after the year 2000, when published memoirs of German war victims became fashionable literature. Nevertheless, this memory is given a much greater significance in the later text than is evident in Timm's earlier work.

It is with this sole early childhood memory of his brother that Timm marks the start of his self-consciousness, his I-identity. His memory of his brother and his I-identity seem indissolubly connected. And a further significant detail in comparison to the earlier text is that his brother approaches him and there is physical contact. "ich werde hochgehoben – ich schwebe" ["being raised in the air – I'm floating"] (Timm 2003, 9; 2005, 1). Here, Timm heightens the perceived proximity of his brother so that it becomes an experience of the dissolution of identity boundaries. The constitution of I-identity and its ecstatic coalescence in that single moment of the sole memory of physical contact with his brother bestows such a great psychodynamic charge on authentic early childhood memory that it, as the opening scene of the text, is the igniting spark that unleashes the psychological energy which then drives Timm's subsequent investigations and reflections, and gives them their experiential and emotionally involved nature. The initial psycho-energetic impetus does not mean,

however, that the writing process can develop freely and without resistance. Quite the opposite. The text develops contrapuntally. In a personal conversation, Timm explained that he structured it according to the principles of the musical fugue. The counterpoints to his remembered experience of being one with his brother are his dreams:

> Ein Traum hat sich mir recht genau eingeprägt. Jemand will in die Wohnung eindringen. Eine Gestalt steht draußen, dunkel, verdreckt, verschlammt. Ich will die Tür zudrücken. Die Gestalt, die kein Gesicht hat versucht sich hereinzuzwängen. Mit aller Kraft stemme ich mich gegen die Tür, dränge diesen gesichtslosen Mann, von dem ich aber bestimmt weiß, dass es der Bruder ist, zurück. Endlich kann ich die Tür ins Schloss drücken und verriegeln. Halte aber zu meinem Entsetzen eine raue, zerfetzte Jacke in den Händen (Timm 2003, 12).

> One of [the dreams] has left a precise impression on me. Someone is trying to break into my home. A figure stands outside, dark, dirty, covered with mud. I want to close the door. The faceless figure is trying to force his way in. I brace myself against the door with all my might, forcing back the man who, faceless as he is, I know for certain is my brother. At last I manage to push the door shut and bolt it. But to my horror I am holding a rough, ragged jacket in my hands (Timm 2005, 4).

The brother, part of the author's I-identity, is pushed away to the outside, a faceless threat. The "rough, ragged jacket", which remains behind as evidence of his brother's existence, indicates his origins in a dangerous, strange counterworld – a dimension that is also called to mind a page previously in the fairytale of Bluebeard and his closed door, behind which awaits a river of blood. However, what causes Timm's resistance, his dissociation from that part of his self which is occupied by his brother, now a grim threat? Initially, Timm seems to call on the model of the traumatic experience and its mode of processing the dissociation or isolation from the existential threat or injury – in this case the loss of the brother – that cannot be controlled by the I. This impression is confirmed by a later description of a flash-back experience, which is connected with his brother's loss and which follows the model of injury through trauma. This will be analysed in more detail below. However, a closer reading shows that while the author is, on the one hand, affected by the trauma of loss, on the other hand, it is ultimately his knowledge of history – not in his dreams, but in reality – that leads him to repel his brother.

At the consciousness level, it is Timm's knowledge of the war crimes committed by the Wehrmacht on the Eastern Front and, more generally, his knowledge of the criminal nature of the Nazi regime that brings him to see the effect of the traumatic damage done to his I-identity as a moral decision and brings him to accept the anonymisation of his brother. This apparent identity of deep-seated psychological

damage and moral response is only dissolved and a new engagement with the brother opened up when Timm recognises in him an instance of his dissociated I-identity – without modifying his moral and political judgement. In accepting the intruder as the dissociated part of his self, he occludes the perspective of it as a phantasmagorical, autonomous being, which allows it to become a revenant. Thus, he is in a position to engage with his brother and to subject his brother's moral judgement to renewed critique, as a layer separate to that of his defence against the trauma. When reading his brother's war diary, Timm comes across the following entry: "*Brückenkopf über den Donez. 75 m raucht Iwan Zigaretten, ein Fressen für mein MG*" ["*Bridgehead on the Donez. 75 m away Ivan smoking cigarettes, fodder for my MG*"] (Timm 2003, 19; 2005, 10; italics in original). The author comments: "Das war die Stelle, bei der ich, stieß ich früher darauf [...] nicht weiterlas, sondern das Heft wegschloss. Und erst mit dem Entschluss, über den Bruder, *also auch über mich*, (emph. G.F.) zu schreiben, das Erinnern zuzulassen, war ich befreit, dem dort *Festgeschriebenen* nachzugehen" ["This was the place where, when I came upon it earlier [...] I read no more, but closed the notebook. It was only with my decision to write about my brother, *and thus about myself too*, to unleash memory, that I felt free to look closely at what he had *recorded* there"] (Timm 2003, 19; 2005, 10).

The moral and cultural distance from his brother, which the war diary lays bare, remains at this level, but it becomes open to scrutiny, open to a critical process through which the traumatically separated brother is accepted as part of Timm's own I-identity. The moral shock is dissociated from the trauma and, over and above the gesture of defence, can also be transferred into a critical discourse on cultural ideology and mentalities that draws in the whole family, especially Timm's father. Matteo Galli has commented on this: "Selten wird jedoch auf eine so offene, brutale und insistierende Weise [...] das kommunikative und soziale Gedächtnis der Vätergeneration geschildert" [the communicative and social memory of the parental generation is, however, rarely depicted in such an open, brutal and insistent way] (Galli 2006, 169). The two levels remain closely interlinked throughout the entire text and their interconnection is reflected in the German title, which expresses simultaneous proximity and distance, intimicy and generalisation: *Am Beispiel meines Bruders* (literally: through the example of my brother). In the detailed analysis of his diary, the brother becomes on the one hand a warning example for criticism of the traditions of blind Prussian obedience and the right-wing conservatism of nationalism – conveyed by the Freikorps via the father – which views morality and humanity as the criteria by which to judge the use of violence by others, but then never acknowledges its own violence. The brother appears as representative of a specific type, but he is barely tangible as an individual and his notes do not make it possible to reconstruct the authentic experience of a German soldier on the Eastern Front – that of the sensations felt in his subjective inner existence. Instead, he is an arrangement of well-known stereotypes.

The critical perspective of an individual writing today on the German history of the World War is decisive: Timm's connection to his brother cannot produce any understanding or empathy. Helmut Schmitz has remarked: "Throughout his narrative, Timm thematises the act of memory and the 'Gefahr, glättend zu erzählen' [danger of narrative glossing, M.B.]. His narrative reflects on itself as a self-conscious public act of creating meaning through narration. As an *a posteriori* explanation it documents the essential unavailability of a 'naïve' perspective together with the necessity to narrate" (Schmitz 2007, 215). On the other hand, however, Timm's dreams of his brother do not stop. These are dreams of a repeated and ultimately always failed attempt to engage, of unsuccessful communication. "Der Bruder steht da, das Gesicht schwarz, der Anzug – oder eine Uniform? – hell. [...] Plötzlich wirft er mir eine Birne zu, die ich nicht fangen kann. Mein Schreck, als sie zu Boden fällt. Und dann sagt seine Stimme: Doldenhilfe" ["My brother is standing there, black-faced, his suit – or a uniform? – light-coloured. [...] Suddenly he throws me a pear which I fail to catch. My alarm when it falls to the ground. And then his voice speaks to me... Floweraid, he says"] (Timm 2003, 141; 2005, 128).

According to a written statement by the author, "Floweraid" is a "dream word" of uncertain meaning. Rapprochement cannot take place, but the unfulfillable need for it – made tangible in the paradox of the meaningless word – is strong, because Timm's concern is for nothing less than the integrity of his own personality. A sense of proximity cannot be obtained from painstaking research in documents pertaining to his brother's life – here the brother simply becomes the example of a mentality that Timm criticises. But Timm does share that sense of proximity as the trauma of the loss of his brother by making his dreams accessible to us. At this level, however, the main concern is the suffering caused by the injury done to the integrity of his current I – not the suffering of others in the past. This distinction is the first criterion for identifying the trauma as such. On one occasion, though, Timm's current suffering and the past suffering of his brother come close to converging in his imagination, so that the brother begins to possess the author through his revenance. The location and time of Timm's pain are converged with the location and time of his brother's death, and his mental pain becomes physical. The past intrudes as a seemingly present event into the present. It is not the loss of his brother that causes pain here, but rather that the death of the brother is re-enacted. Precisely this is the hour of the revenant.

> Am Tag meiner Ankunft (in der Ukraine, G.F.), es war zufällig die Zeit, in der der Bruder verwundet worden war, wurde ich morgens im Hotel durch Telefonschrillen geweckt. Ein Traum, ein dunkler, ein im plötzlichen Erwachen nur noch undeutlicher Traum, in dem er auch schattenhaft vorgekommen war. Im Schreckzustand versuchte ich aufzustehen,. Ich konnte nicht. In beiden Beinen war ein unerträglicher Schmerz. (...) In der Kaffeepause ging ich zur Toilette. Ich

> blickte in den Spiegel und sah einen anderen. Das Gesicht bleich, fast weiß, die Augenhöhlen tief verschattet, violett, wie die eines Sterbenden (Timm 2003, 125).
>
> On the day after my arrival, which happened to be the time of year when my brother had been wounded, I was woken in my hotel in the morning by the telephone. I had been dreaming, a dark dream which became even more obscure as I woke with a start, but he had figured in it, in a shadowy way. Alarmed, I tried to stand up. I couldn't. I felt intolerable pain in both legs. [...] In the coffee break I went to the lavatory. Looking in the mirror, I saw someone else. A pale face, almost white, the eye sockets deeply shadowed and violet, like those of a dying man. (Timm 2005, 112-113).

This pain, emanating from the past but experienced now and with the accompanying timelessness that characterises the trauma, here creates the illusion that it is currently taking place in the time and space of the past. And so it is in the apparent reconstruction of the trauma's origin and its context in its past detail (geography and time of year) – or rather, the trauma reconstructs its context – that the revenant comes into being. However, this experience remains episodic and does not become a leitmotif, as it does in the other texts discussed here.

The view that suffering resulting from the trauma is to be relieved through rigorous separation of the present from the past, and absolutely not through its spectral revenancy, is definitive, for it is in the latter form that the trauma is fueled, through the removal of that boundary. A particular characteristic of Timm's book lies in the clear separation between the historical, ideological and culturally critical discourse that is developed around the brother and the family history on the one hand and the therapeutic, analytical discourse that affects Timm himself on the other hand. He strictly separates his spiritual and mental suffering from the problem Germany has with its history. And he separates psychiatry from politics. The fact that his mental suffering is originally linked with German history does not result in combining the healing methods that are brought into consideration. On the one hand, the self-analytical response to the need for reintegration of that part of his I which is traumatically separated and bound to his brother; on the other hand, the decisive, anonymising distancing from his brother as an *example* of a criminal and failed political barbarism and individual mentality. Essentially, Timm is arguing, himself highly disciplined, for the separation of the two disciplines. A great synthesis of them as a fictional engagement with the topic does not materialise. Perhaps this explains why Timm's highly personal book was included in the *Spiegel* bestseller list under the label 'nonfiction'.

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JENS BROCKMEIER

RIVELAZIONE E SIMULTANEITÀ: LA MEMORIA CULTURALE DELL'INDIVIDUO*

I.

La memoria di ognuno include molto più di quanto essa stessa non riconosca. Include di più ed è molto di più perchè – se la si considera per un momento come un testo scritto in modo fitto, come un palinsesto – essa è inestricabilmente intrecciata agli innumerevoli testi e contesti della cultura; è parte di un intertesto infinito che si espande non solo nel presente ma anche nel passato, aprendo uno spazio simbolico all'interno del quale le nostre memorie prendono forma e significato. E' questo spazio simbolico, costituito dalle nostre azioni, dalle nostre lingue, dai nostri artefatti e da altre forme di vita, che comprende anche le risorse narrative delle nostre storie autobiografiche. Queste risorse comprendono a loro volta il repertorio di storie di vita che circolano in una cultura: le storie di vite reali e possibili, che segnano l'orizzonte storico all'interno del quale ognuno di noi si vede come un sè. In questa prospettiva, pensando alla memoria personale come un singolo istante nello spazio senza inizio e senza fine della storia e della memoria culturale, la coscienza autobiografica ricopre soltanto una piccola isola di consapevolezza, che riaffiora temporaneamente in un mare di sconosciuta e inconoscibile grandezza.

Ma c'è dell'altro. Vi sono le improvvise fratture in cui l'inconsapevole diventa consapevole, i momenti in cui questa dimensione umana inconscia affiora alla coscienza, la situazione nella quale noi stessi ci troviamo inaspettatamente coinvolti in zone inesplorate e dimensioni sconosciute della nostra esistenza storica. Il tempo scivola, il respiro si ferma, sopraffatto da questa visione improvvisa, una nuova visione del mondo e del significato delle nostre vite. Joyce chiamava questi momenti epifanie, Benjamin parlava di esperienze di "shock" e William James le considerava rivelazioni mistiche e, in definitiva, forme di esperienza religiosa.

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Seguendo una lunga tradizione fenomenologica sull'introspezione, l'americano Mark Freeman, studioso di memoria e narrazione, ha offerto un acuto resoconto di un simile momento o, più esattamente, del "movimento interiore" che avviene in un simile momento. Nel suo saggio *Charting the Narrative Unconscious: Cultural Memory and the Challenge of Autobiography* (2000), Freeman descrive un episodio della sua vita – un viaggio a Berlino – durante il quale sperimentò un'improvviso sopravvento del tempo passato sul tempo presente e l'intrusione della storia, conosciuta e sconosciuta, nei suoi pensieri e nelle sue sensazioni. Trovandosi per la prima volta in quella città, diviene inaspettatamente consapevole di una realtà di cui non era stato consapevole fino ad allora. Pur non avendo mai sentito con forza le sue radici ebraiche – linguistiche, etniche, religiose, culturali – era ed era sempre stato inestricabilmente legato agli orribili avvenimenti che tre, quattro generazioni prima, erano stati concepiti e messi in atto proprio a Berlino, il centro del potere nazista. Dal confronto con questo passato che, sebbene all'apparenza distante a livello sia temporale che spaziale, diviene d'improvviso parte della sua storia personale, ha inizio il lavoro dell'autobiografia. Gran parte del saggio di Freeman è, in realtà, una riflessione su quello che egli ritiene essere il processo di rivelazione autobiografica, processo che definì, in un testo precedente, "riscrivere il sè" (Freeman 1993). Integrando questa dimensione cruciale della memoria collettiva degli ebrei europei alla propria identità autobiografica, il ricordo di quel viaggio a Berlino diventa una "densa descrizione" di come la memoria collettiva e quella individuale si intreccino.

Leggendo quel resoconto, ho pensato al mio primo soggiorno a Berlino e al ruolo che questa città ha avuto nella mia vita. Come per Freeman queste esperienze hanno finito per dar forma al mio riflettere su tali questioni, sia riguardo al modo di concepire la mia personale autobiografia che riguardo alla comprensione teorica del processo autobiografico in sè. Tuttavia, sembra che alcune delle conclusioni teoriche che ho tratto da queste esperienze e riflessioni differiscano da quelle di Freeman, benchè il mio punto di vista sull'interazione fra la memoria individuale e quella collettiva sia radicata in presupposti ermeneutici e psicologico-culturali che sono molto simili a quelli che danno fondamento al resoconto di Freeman. In altri termini, pur condividendo in certa misura le stesse premesse, vorrei offrire una descrizione delle dinamiche della memoria culturale secondo una diversa prospettiva, facendo luce sul gioco mnemonico tra l'individuale e lo storico da un diverso punto di vista. Per ragioni di brevità espositiva, dirò che l'opinione di Freeman sul gioco in questione è basata su un modello di rivelazione. Questo modello riconosce quel "movimento interiore" come evoluzione verso un *telos*, il punto d'arrivo di un affiorare alla coscienza, in cui le radici storiche nascoste di un individuo vengono alla luce e "l'inconscio narrativo", come Freeman l'ha descritto nel suo saggio, diviene parte della sua storia.

Affiancherò a questa prospettiva un modello basato sulla simultaneità. Quest'ultimo prende in considerazione la presenza degli strati – dei molti strati – di memoria culturale nei quali noi viviamo nello stesso momento, e dei quali siamo più o meno

consapevoli, a seconda delle particolari circostanze storiche che condizionano il nostro modo di ricordare e dimenticare.

II.

Cresciuto nella Germania dell'ovest del secondo dopoguerra, avevo già all'attivo un po' di "scoperte" sulla storia più recente del mio Paese quando, da giovane, arrivai a Berlino. È risaputo che in questa città tutte le ferite e le cicatrici della storia recente sono più profonde e durature. La maggior parte della superficie materiale della città è una memoria culturale della violenza e della brutalità del secolo scorso. Il primo edificio in cui abitai al mio arrivo era ricoperto di buchi lasciati dalle granate durante gli ultimi giorni della Battaglia di Berlino. Grazie all'educazione impartita da insegnanti giovani, democratici e decisamente antifascisti, io e i miei amici eravamo abbastanza informati su ciò che era accaduto nella Germania dei nostri genitori e dei nostri nonni. Giornali, film, documentari e libri ne offrivano, anche nelle prime due decadi dopo la fine del Fascismo, un'immagine abbastanza esaustiva; per chi desiderava sapere. E i giovani, il più delle volte, desiderano sapere. Circondati da quei luoghi, da quelle tracce, da persone e ideologie che ci parlavano di un passato che era tutto fuorché passato, diventammo ancor più sospettosi riguardo alla tendenza dominante a minimizzare, negare, "dimenticare". L'esperienza di vivere simultaneamente in epoche differenti, passate e presenti allo stesso modo, aperte e nascoste, dominate da tendenze contrastanti – ricordare e dimenticare – venne resa ancora più intensa dalla lettura di autori contemporanei, come Heinrich Böll e Günter Grass. Tutte le loro opere si incentravano attorno a quest'esperienza con precisione; uno strato spesso e soffocante di memoria culturale tedesca.

Spesso, inoltre, il tempo a cui si guardava in queste narrazioni non era il presente, il nuovo dopoguerra tedesco, o il suo possibile futuro, ma un passato ancor più lontano: o gli anni della Repubblica di Weimar tra la Prima Guerra Mondiale e l'ascesa al potere di Hitler, o gli anni del vecchio Reich imperiale che era crollato nel 1918. Mio zio, ad esempio, aveva vissuto i suoi anni migliori nella Berlino degli anni '20. In tutte le sue evocazioni piene di affetto, raccontandoci dei caffé, dei *cabarets* inquieti, dei locali gay e delle riviste politiche di sinistra, ci comunicava l'impressione che per lui quegli anni avessero rappresentato il massimo livello non solo del divertimento, ma anche di una vita libera e piena. Per la nonna, invece, il regno storico della felicità era finito, una volta e per sempre, ancora prima: quando Berlino smise di essere la capitale della Corte Imperiale.

L'idea che noi – io, i miei amici, i miei compagni di classe – fossimo nati in una società in cui una schiacciante maggioranza aveva, fino a pochi anni prima, sostenuto attivamente, o almeno tollerato, un regime che aveva commesso quei crimini inimmaginabili, era inquietante. Uno dei primi strati della mia memoria autobiografica in cui uno sfondo storico fa capolino, riguarda proprio questa specie di sfida, o

dilemma, se vogliamo. Che si trattasse, in senso molto soggettivo, di un intenso e contraddittorio strato di memoria, diventa evidente appena entra in scena mio padre. In tutti i miei ricordi lui appare come una persona amorevole, piena di attenzioni, un grande amico e compagno di giochi. Ma fu anche, naturalmente, soldato nella Seconda Guerra Mondiale, come già lo era stato nell'esercito del Kaiser: pilota pluridecorato della Prima Guerra Mondiale. Quando, anni dopo la sua morte – morì quando avevo sei anni – ritrovai in una valigia fotografie, medaglie e ritagli di giornale che riguardavano le sue vittorie ad alta quota, subito mi apparve in una luce diversa che evocava molte memorie immaginate, o così mi sembra oggi.

Gli storici hanno suggerito che il coinvolgimento della generazione dei padri nel Terzo Reich fu una delle ragioni che diedero impulso al movimento studentesco del '68, che in Germania aveva come centro Berlino. Così, per me e i miei compagni, non c'erano dubbi su quale città scegliere per iscriversi all'università. Non solo sembrava stesse emergendo un'alternativa – per quanto utopica fosse, e ingenua, senz'altro – a una società di cui disprezzavamo il passato e il presente, che ci appariva dominato dal conformismo e dalla commercializzazione. Vivere e studiare a Berlino sembrava anche offrire l'accesso a una tradizione politica e a risorse culturali che contrastavano tutto ciò da cui volevamo fuggire. Sapevamo, naturalmente, che c'erano sempre state persone in Germania, così come in tutto il mondo, che provavano repulsione per ciò che noi consideravamo come l'establishment e il discorso politico basato sul potere. Storicamente, Berlino era sempre stato un luogo privilegiato per ogni sorta di contro-cultura, di movimento di opposizione, di rivolta in cui intellettuali democratici, artisti e scienziati avevano contribuito alla creazione di un ulteriore – e molto diverso – strato di memoria culturale tedesca ed europea. Che fossero borghesi, aristocratici, o socialisti; che fossero ebrei, cristiani o atei, non era solo il regime nazista che aveva forte interesse nel metterli a tacere e che riuscì, infine, a metterne a tacere la maggioranza.

Arrivati a Berlino, era questo lo strato di memoria storica a cui ci sentivamo più vicini. In pochi mesi conoscevamo già i luoghi in cui Brecht aveva vissuto e lavorato, avevamo scoperto quali erano stati gli appartamenti di Kafka e di Benjamin, visto tutti i dipinti di Grosz e Beckmann che si potevano trovare nei musei di Berlino Ovest e Est. Tutto questo era anche simmerso in una rete di narrativa letteraria contemporanea – che includeva, ad esempio, il romanzo/saggio in tre volumi di Peter Weiss *Estetica della resistenza*, che descrive le contro-narrative di un gruppo di lavoratori e intellettuali antifascisti, con base a Berlino, le cui lotte contro il regime nazista si fondevano con una visione e un approccio del tutto nuovi all'arte e alla letteratura come strumenti di resistenza al potere e come modo di riscrivere se stessi. In altre parole, Berlino divenne un luogo – l'unico immaginabile, per noi – dove tracciare quello che noi, in quegli anni, consideravamo lo strato fondamentale della nostra memoria culturale. Era un luogo denso di testi e trame culturali che noi andavamo cercando per poterli intessere nel tessuto della nostra memeoria autobiografica: testi e trame popolati di outsider, ribelli, rifugiati, e di critici, nel pensiero e nella vita, che si erano opposti a quel sistema

societario che vedevamo dietro la memoria-storia delle guerre e dei crimini lasciatici in eredità.

III.

Mi capitò, in seguito, di vivere in altre città e in altri paesi, sperimentando non solo realtà culturali diverse ma l'emergere di nuovi strati passati della mia memoria culturale. I discorsi e le contestazioni di Berlino persero molta della loro rilevanza alla luce di quelle nuove esperienze. Il loro colore e peso mnemonico sbiadivano, mentre nuovi interessi e progetti guadagnavano il centro della scena, fornendo al lavoro autobiografico nuovo materiale (e trasformando quello vecchio). Tuttavia, non hanno fatto sparire né rimosso gli strati precedenti. Non li hanno nemmeno assorbiti; le nuove esperienze non si sono trasformate in memorie completamente autonome dalle precedenti. Tutte – e anche qualcuna di più – sono ancora lì, e di tanto in tanto spuntano in modo inaspettato e imprevedibile. E sono "lì" non solo perché ho ancora (più o meno) lo stesso cervello che avevo quando vivevo nel palazzo ricoperto dai buchi lasciati dalle granate, ma anche perché (e prima di tutto, suppongo) stanno ancora circolando nelle innumerevoli narrazioni della memoria culturale in cui siamo immersi oggi. Queste narrazioni della memoria non hanno una mera esistenza mentale o neurologica, ma sono concretizzate in infiniti artefatti mnemonici simbolici, dagli appunti personali e le conversazioni, ai sistemi semiotici e agli artefatti che formano lo spazio simbolico della nostra cultura. Leggere la lettera di un vecchio amico, vedere una foto su un giornale o intercettare qualche parola sulla metropolitana può riportare alla memoria un episodio lontano, o un'atmosfera – non necessariamente proveniente da un'esperienza "autentica", ma, più probabilmente, da un discorso della memoria precedente in cui era stata usata quell'immagine o in cui si faceva riferimento a quell'atmosfera.

È soprattutto nelle storie autobiografiche e nelle storie di vita che possiamo studiare in maniera molto dettagliata cosa significa vivere simultaneamente in diversi mondi di esperienza presente e passata. Qui possiamo esplorare i mutamenti stilistici, metaforici, narrativi, discorsivi, percettivi che ci permettono di fluttuare tra tempi e vite diverse in modo così spontaneo e, in un certo senso, inconscio, da pensare che tale dinamica sia dovuta a uno speciale potere o a qualche sostanza nascosta e autonoma: "l'inconscio", per l'appunto. Credo che, ai fini di questa esplorazione della natura fugace e cangiante della vita, la nozione di simultaneità sia fondamentale. Introdurre la categoria della narrazione nello studio della vita e della memoria dell'uomo significa aprirsi una realtà a molti strati, una realtà che, dopotutto, può risultare indistinguibile da altre realtà diverse, ma presenti simultaneamente. In altre parole, una delle implicazioni dell'idea che vivere, ricordare, capire una vita sia inestricabilmente mescolato al narrare, sta nel prendere atto che la realtà esperita della vita è la realtà di tante, possibili altre vite. Non

esiste vita umana che possa essere esaurita in un racconto o in una storia autobiografica; sempre rimane un residuo non detto, un surplus di significato (Brockmeier 2015).

Ciascuno degli strati di memoria a cui ho accennato (e le loro combinazioni) compongono un tessuto di significato che potrebbe essere sufficiente, forse, a suggerire un valido ormeggio storico per una storia di vita. Potrebbe fornire abbastanza materiale per una plausibile costruzione d'identità, per una possibile vita reale. L'idea che la coscienza autobiografica di un individuo sia ancorata a varie vite possibili implica una nozione polisemica non solo della vita, ma anche del tempo. Il tempo dell'autobiografia, articolato in tutte le forme del racconto di vita, non solo si muove avanti e indietro, in cerchi, spirali o ellissi; è anche organizzato in *gestalt* temporali, parallele e sovrapposte, di vite possibili. Il nostro io è sempre più ricco di quanto non lo sia nel momento presente, e può essere articolato nel momento presente perché la particolare forma di vita in cui ci troviamo in questo stesso momento è soltanto una delle configurazioni accidentali della realtà, una fra molte, ugualmente possibili, realtà.

Reali o immaginate, narrate o messe in atto, scoperte nel passato o proiettate in un futuro, le nostre vite possibili sono una parte costitutiva dei nostri progetti identitari. Ci legano simultaneamente a diversi mondi sociali e storici e, così facendo, creano quella che può essere chiamata la nostra narrazione identitaria estesa. Vivere vite possibili in mondi possibili è insito nella condizione umana, per inquadrare la questione da un punto di vista filosofico più generale; è insito nella nostra natura tanto quanto la categoria dell'ipotetico – il congiuntivo – è insita nella mente umana. Una conseguenza di questa prospettiva è l'impossibilità di dare per scontato che ci sia solo una storia, un racconto autobiografico, un'unica, vera rappresentazione della vita.

IV.

In questo saggio ho sottolineato che l'essere umano ha sempre un certo numero di progetti di vita, varie tipologie di identità autobiografiche, un assortimento di diverse risorse di senso. Chiaramente lo spettro di opzioni cambia nel tempo e a seconda del mondo culturale. L'avere un insieme di narrazioni autobiografiche per diversi ambienti sociali è fondamentale nelle società occidentali della tarda modernità, e la maggior parte delle persone è capace di costruirne di nuove al presentarsi di nuove occasioni. Questo repertorio culturale di modelli narrativi e altri registri discorsivi indirizza le nostre idee su chi siamo, e lo fa in modalità delle quali, normalmente, non siamo a conoscenza (Brockmeier 2014). Ognuno di noi ha sviluppato un *portfolio* di identità possibili che sono disponibili e possono essere realizzate in vari contesti culturali, a seconda delle diverse strategie discorsive. Anche nel limite di un particolare scenario interattivo – ad esempio una conversazione, una discussione in famiglia, un dibattito accademico – non è difficile vedere che spesso vi è più di un progetto identitario in gioco. Siamo di norma coinvolti, al tempo stesso, in più di un contesto d'azione o interazione, posizionati in più di uno spazio discorsivo e impegnati in più di un progetto di vita a lungo termine.

Credo che molte delle categorie tradizionali abbiano fallito nel catturare questo multiforme tessuto di tentativi simultanei in cui siamo impegnati, un tessuto – e questo peggiora ulteriormente le cose – che non rispetta le linee di confine troppo nette fra regno del reale e regno della finzione, né tra vite reali e possibili.

Nel suo saggio, Freeman ci fornisce un resoconto differenziato su questo multiforme tessuto narrativo di memoria individuale e storica o collettiva (Freeman 2010). Nella sua visione dell'identità umana e del suo sviluppo, però, egli segue il percorso freudiano, il quale ha un obiettivo chiaro: trasformare l'*es* in *io*, l'inconscio in conscio, il lato oscuro dell'anima in una parte trasparente della nostra mente e del nostro sè. Nel processo autobiografico il passato represso o ignorato viene "elaborato" e trasformato nel presente riconosciuto. Nella sua teoria dello sviluppo mentale, Freud, a sua volta, seguì il classico percorso illuminista: rischiarare il buio con il lavoro della ragione e dell'intelletto – una visione di rivelazione (o rivelazioni) riflessa in quel quintessenziale genere narrativo illuminista che è il *Bildungsroman.*

Ho cercato di integrare quest'immagine teleologica, sviluppando un concetto di memoria culturale che si focalizzasse sulla continua interazione fra aspetti storici e individuali del ricordare e del dimenticare, anziché su un insieme di memorie collettive date. Ho cercato di dimostrare che il lavoro dell'autobiografia non è necessariamente il risultato del rendere conscio un unico inconscio narrativo, bensì dell'esprimere possibili *gestalt* della vita di un individuo, o *gestalt* di vite possibili.

Qualunque sia la storia espressa, se la si considera un'elaborata costruzione autobiografica di significato, essa non può pretendere di essere ontologicamente "più profonda" e basata su strati storici più "fondamentali" di qualunque altra storia, raccontata o non raccontata; e nemmeno si può provare che la vita vissuta antecedente alla *prise de coscience* narrativa fosse superficiale, falsa, o insignificante. Di fatto, entrambe le letture, di Freeman e mia sulle esperienze a Berlino, suggeriscono che ciò che fa sogere tali pretese di maggior autenticità non è la pressione del passato, come affermava Freud, ma la pressione del presente. Sono le circostanze specifiche di una situazione locale – come pure quella che Freeman definisce la "predisposizione ermeneutica" di una persona – che guida la narrativa del nostro progetto di vita lungo la traiettoria discorsiva di quella situazione culturale. Indubbiamente, queste circostanze possono trasformare una città in una testimonianza vivente di un passato di orrori, così come possono trasformare la stessa città in una testimonianza vivente della resistenza contro quegli stessi orrori.

Visto così, il processo autobiografico non compare come processo teleologicamente diretto verso la scoperta di un particolare passato, fino a quel momento ignorato, represso o dimenticato. Risulta piuttosto che esso sia un flusso continuo di interazioni discorsive e interpretazioni che muovono una grande varietà di esperienze, passate, presenti e future.

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GUIDO FRANZINETTI

ROUND TABLE: REMEMBERING COMMUNISM

The papers presented by Alexander Etkind and Karol Sauerland would require an extensive discussion. In this context I will limit myself to a few footnotes to their discussion.

1. In a Russian-oriented discussion, it is surely appropriate to start with an *anekdot* (which I owe to the late Wojciech Jekiel, a colleague of professor Sauerland at Warsaw University).

In 1967, in Paris, a French journalist goes to interview a Russian princess, who has lived in exile since the Bolshevik revolution. He asks her at one point: "Which was the best year of your life?". She answers: "1917". The journalist is bewildered. He says: But how is that possible? Your family was destroyed, you had to go into exile…". She answers: "You fool! In 1917 I was twenty years old!".

What does this *anekdot* prove? It proves that all memory, even the most traumatic, reflects first and foremost one's subjectivity. In the case of Communism, this means that the life experience of Communists (and, even more, of ex-Communists) conditions one's reading of Communism.

> Etkind refers to Friedländer's intimation to resist the temptation of domesticating disbelief (Friedländer 2007, xxvi). Etkind points out that "Making sense of the memory of the past does not require sharing its weird presumptions". On this point I would like to simply refer to a remark by Trevor Blackwell and Jeremy Seabrook, questioning E. P. Thompson's use of the category of experience: "Of all things, experience cannot be inherited" (Blackwell and Seabrook 1986, 28).

Ernest Gellner made a related point:

> We do not perform the acts we perform because we believe that certain things had happened: we believe that certain crucial events had happened because we do what we do. England does not have a great landed aristocracy because of the Battle of Hastings. The Battle of Hastings is invoked because England has a great landed aristocracy (Gellner 1987, 63).

In other words, the present explains the past, rather than vice-versa. This also applies to the memories of Communism. The current wave of *Ostalgie*, of nostalgia of Communism, all over Europe, is an illustration of this mechanism.

2. Sauerland's paper is a lucid argument in favour of finally presenting the course of Kurt Sauerland's life "as it really was". This expression seems to consciously echo Ranke's famous dictum, on depicting history "*wie es eigentlich gewesen*". This is by no means an obvious point, and it should be used as a starting-point for a truly historical discussion (and remembrance) of Communism as it really was (as opposed to the individual – inevitably sentimental – memories of it). Eric Gordy – a specialist of Serbian history – has argued that the opposite of memory is not forgetting: it is incoherence (Gordy 2014; see also Gordy 2013). This incoherence is precisely the stage at which many memories of Communism currently are, in many European contexts, not only in the Eastern part.

3. I will conclude with another anekdot, appropriately enough. It was a story told at the time at which the Chinese Communist leadership proclaimed that "Imperialism is a paper tiger" (and therefore it could be defeated, at whatever human cost). Mao and Khrushchev go on a hunting spree. Suddenly, a tiger jumps in front of them. Khrushchev promptly shoots and kills the tiger. He then says: "Thank goodness I shot it in time!". Mao answers: "What tiger?".

The moral of the *anekdot* is the following: victims can relax. Communism happened in 'an absence of mind'. It never happened, in fact. People who still talk about 'Communism' are deluded. They are speaking a dead language.

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DIANA OSTI

ROUND TABLE: "UNBURIED MEMORY" – THE LITERARY RESPONSE TO HISTORICAL VIOLENCE

I.

It's been a long time since Adorno declared that "poetry is impossible after Auschwitz". The original quote (always taken out of context and rarely footnoted) can be found in the concluding passage of a 1949 essay, *Cultural Criticism and Society*.

> The more total society becomes, the greater the reification of the mind and the more paradoxical its effort to escape reification on its own. Even the most extreme consciousness of doom threatens to degenerate into idle chatter. Cultural criticism finds itself faced with the final stage of the dialectic of culture and barbarism. To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric. And this corrodes even the knowledge of why it has become impossible to write poetry today. Absolute reification, which presupposed intellectual progress as one of its elements, is now preparing to absorb the mind entirely. Critical intelligence cannot be equal to this challenge as long as it confines itself to self-satisfied contemplation (Adorno 1949, 34).

It is a difficult passage from a very difficult essay, particularly if considered out of context. Adorno's meaning, particularly what he means by the word "reification", becomes clearer when read in light of two earlier sentences in this same page-long paragraph: "In the open-air prison which the world is becoming, it is no longer so important to know what depends on what, such is the extent to which everything is one. All phenomena rigidify, become insignias of the absolute rule of that which is" (Ibidem).

I assume the interpretation of the main sentences suggests that to persist, after Auschwitz, in the production of monuments of the culture that produced Auschwitz is to participate by denial in the perpetuation of that barbaric culture and to participate in the reification that renders fundamental criticism of that culture literally unthinkable. In his late work Negative Dialectics he offers this conditional revision, a revision that is, in

its own way, perhaps even more devastating than the final paragraph of Cultural Criticism and Society:

> Perennial suffering has as much right to expression as a tortured man has to scream; hence it may have been wrong to say that after Auschwitz you could no longer write poems. But it is not wrong to raise the less cultural question whether after Auschwitz you can go on living, especially whether one who escaped by accident, one who by rights should have been killed, may go on living. His mere survival calls for the coldness, the basic principle of bourgeois subjectivity, without which there could have been no Auschwitz; this is the drastic guilt of him who was spared. By way of atonement he will be plagued by dreams such as that he is no longer living at all, that he was sent to the ovens in 1944 and his whole existence since has been imaginary, an emanation of the insane wish of a man killed twenty years earlier (Adorno 1966, 175).

His "request for silence" was not only a public call for shame; it was a lucid account of a dialectical short-circuit. The issue with poetry concerns the bourgeois self and society – but the philosopher is not denying survivors the possibility to witness as the arousal of an unspoken content of collective memory. He takes side against both monopolist capitalism and collective socialism, criticizing the decline of human relationships, the individual life reduced to pure fiction, to the mere field of consumption. Reification brings humans to alienation, and alienation brings to dehumanization.

In Negative Dialectics Adorno wants to break down this dialectical short-circuit trying to set free the dialectic from its affirmative nature, stating that – in response to Wittgenstein's axiom – the subject of philosophy's discourse should be exactly the "unspeakable". That is also the parenthesis I would like to open.

The aim of this brief essay is to focus on the period of time that goes from the second part of the nineteenth century till nowadays, moving forward from Adorno's assumptions, extending the field to postcolonial literature, or – I prefer to specify – to those narratives which have flourished and continue to flourish in war and post-war realities, historical fractures, traumatic collective episodes.

II.

Firstly, it is necessary to introduce a fundamental subject. It is impossible, in fact, to talk about the twentieth century's historical violence without mentioning the concept of trauma. Trauma is a concept that emerges within modernity as an effect of the rise, in the nineteenth century, of the technological and statistical society that can generate, multiply and quantify the 'shocks' of modern life. Here again, a product of alienation: the first traumatized subject is the injured worker. The industrial accident becomes a

constant variable in the life of modern man; a variable which is domesticated with social insurance. The political tangibility of the shock and symptoms of the industrial accident start to redefine the identity paradigm of modern man's life, but the first mass phenomenon of traumatic experience is undoubtedly the First World War. In fact, it is with WWI that a psychological aspect, until then only associated to hysterical women, was added to the consideration of trauma, beforehand thought of as mere physical pain. For the first time, trauma was identified and diagnosed in terms of a sudden laceration of the protective shield of the ego due to a fearful and unforeseen experience to which the person was not prepared. The excess of energy released from the violent emotion is behind the repression of the event: not being integrated in conscience, there are no words to recall it. Then, it is registered in the unconscious, in a traumatic memory dimension parallel to the ordinary one (Freud 1920).

If the soldier suffering from shell-shock is the first iconic figure of the survivor, it is with the Holocaust, however, that contemporary trauma theories are historically defined. This historical event has a privileged role in Trauma Studies, because it contributes in a determinant way to a view of trauma as an aporia of representation that continues today to be of particular importance. There are two important issues the reflection upon the Holocaust has brought to light: one is the importance of testimony and the other is the wider question of the effective representativeness of the traumatic experience. Hannah Arendt's 1961 work *Heichmann in Jerusalem. A report on the banality of evil* contains the reportage of Adolf Eichmann's trial, during which a survivor, Yahiel Dinoor, is called to give evidence against the ex-SS colonel. Dinoor, who became a writer under the pseudonym K-Zetnik, collapsed during the evocation of his personal experience after the court interrupted him. He spent several weeks in hospital, recovering from coma, and became the symbol of the incommunicability of human deportation and the example of the man traumatized by the encounter with a past of violence he cannot bear nor revise.

III.

It's far from my intentions to take an aesthetic drift. What I want to consider reflect upon is the vastness of mass traumatic phenomena that have occurred in our recent past and the non-stop flourishing literature that comes out from historical wounds of many countries and peoples.

After the fall of the Empires many countries started a path of readjustment that led them through civil wars and often to totalitarianism.

If we mention postcolonial India, we cannot neglect the huge mass deportation that took place in 1947 during the Partition. In the riots which preceded the partition in the Punjab region, between 200,000 and 500,000 people were killed in the genocide between the religions. The UNHCR estimates 14 million Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims

were displaced during the partition; it was the largest mass migration in human history (Brass 2009, 71–101).

It is almost mandatory, at this point, to make a comparison with the way in which postcolonial writers elaborate the question of trauma through the use of language. Trauma always has to do with violence, and in this case with colonial violence (which is, anyway, a form of historical and political violence). The phantom of colonial violence is a *topos* in postcolonial writings, and it generates various forms of creative expression, such as, for example, magic realism, which has its maximum exponent in Salman Rushdie. What I personally also found in my research upon Arundhati Roy's use of language in *The God of Small Things* (Osti 2014) is a rich layer of intertextual material, disseminated through the text. These intertextual references, if revealed, show us a map of signification which brings to light the very nature of autobiographical and historical trauma.

From the analysis of literary texts we assume that trauma is very often transmitted transgenerationally, like a discontinuity point in a family narrative, or a phantom, indeed, an unburied memory. Though, as Yahiel Dinoor's story reminds us, that unspeakable point *is* already the discourse. Using structural analysis – dismantling the text, inquiring into it, reassembling it – we are able to find more about those unspeakable entities which populate trauma narratives. The narrative exists and there is a discourse inside it, be it hidden in an enigmatic form or plot. I will not put postcolonial literature under the aegis of postmodernism; I want to suggest, instead, that trauma narratives should be drawn together in a common field. In this field, authors like Edmond Jabès, Amelia Rosselli, Tahar Djaout, but also palestinian writers or Syrian refugees' narratives could be approached with a multidisciplinary method. In this historical period, after a long and climaxed craving for realism and a spectatorial position toward crimes perpetrated in the world, refugees are coming to our cities to say that the other *really* exists. It will be suitable to learn how to *really* cope with it.

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ALICE BALESTRINO

ROUND TABLE: MIMETIC MOURNING AT THE 9/11 MEMORIAL MUSEUM

Alexander Etkind, in his study *Warped Mourning: Stories of the Undead in the Land of the Unburied*, advances the concept of Mimetic Mourning: "a recurrent response to loss that entails a symbolic re-enactment of that loss," an experience epitomized by the Victims' Balls in eighteenth century France. By transposing this notion to contemporary America, the permanent exhibition at the 9/11 Memorial Museum – dedicated in New York City in 2014 – may emerge as one more prototypical case of the elaboration of trauma through the exteriorization and re-enactment of the loss it brought about. Regarding collective memory as a negotiation between past event and contemporary culture – as postulated by Maurice Halbwash in Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire as early as 1925 – one may point out that the visit to the 9/11MM is informed by Mimetic Mourning in the sense that the explanation of the traumatic event is expressed through means pertaining to contemporary American culture as the Victims' Balls pertained to post-revolutionary French society.

The narration of the 9/11 terroristic attacks is staged according to principles and sensibilities that are touchstones of our experience as individuals historically, geographically and socially situated in contemporary Western society: multi-sensoriality, importance of personal commodities as emblems of the individual, and predominance of immediate, visual performance over detached narrative. The exhibition offers the visitor a synesthetic encounter with the day of September 11, 2001: the visitor's phenomenological journey is studded with screens endlessly showing the images from the attacks and the subsequent rescue efforts, and touch displays providing access to the museum's registries (such as the Witnesses and Survivors Registry and the Memorials Registry). The exhibition halls resonate with the contemporary TV and radio coverage of the event and the voices of the victims' phone calls and taped messages trying to reach loved ones. The interactive timeline (covering 39 different moments of that day) and the "Wall of Faces" – an exhibition corridor along which photographs of the nearly 3,000 victims are hung and more touch screens allow the visitors to learn about each person by displaying photographs, images of

personal belongings and producing audio remembrances by their family – broaden the observer's learning about the historical occurrence and, at the same time, intensify their emotional involvement.

This recreated, synesthetic reality, together with the emotional response it raises, are furthered by the great display of personal, every-day objects which the curators turned into mementos: enshrined in glass cases and spot lit, these items remind the observer of the victims' lives and, furthermore, they evoke the momentousness of the instant that interrupted them because they captured it in their wrecked condition forever. Todd Beamer's Rolex watch, Florence Jones' Kenneth Cole pumps, and Giovanna Gambale's wallet are only a few examples of the nearly 800 artefacts on view at the Museum; items that bear the aura of intertwined dichotomies: a personal story with a universal significance, a sign of death conveyed by every-day life objects, the ordinariness of common things and the extra-ordinariness of a pivotal, historical event.

The immediacy of the sensory historical account at the 9/11MM provokes in the visitor feelings of emotional identification and empathy representing the milestones of the commemorative experience. This sentimental, rather than cognitive, involvement appears to be in line with the most recent studies in the field of Cultural Memory, such as Marienne Hirsh's concept of "post-memory" (the cultural transmission of traumatic memories, which are consequently deprived of their specific historical, geographical and societal connotations); Eva Hoffman's "hyper-mediated memory" (the fetishisation of memory through media fostering empathic feelings); and the meditations on the relevance of the instant usability of history in contemporary society. Therefore, at the 9/11MM the mimetic mourning seems to be performed as re-enactment of the 9/11 trauma through videos and audios (by extension, through media as cyphers of our time); through the empathic identification with the victims engendered by their individualization (by means of photos, personal belongings and private anecdotes) and, hence, through the active role that the visitor is called to play in the construction of the narrative of the event. This understanding of collective memory highlights the importance of sharing in mourning and emphasizes the connection between past event and present memorialization.

This last thought introduces one more concept drawn from Etkind's argument, the Fifty- Year Effect. According to Stephen Greenblatt and Dmitry Bykov (both quoted by Etkind), it takes two cultural generations "for literature to estrange the tragic past, process its experience and elaborate a convincing narrative" and considering that the 9/11MM was conceived of shortly after the attacks and dedicated thirteen years on, it is safe to state that the cultural memory developed there has not benefited from the Fifty-Year Effect yet. Etkind frames his discussion in this trans- generational context, and he outlines the different responses entailed by a catastrophic event in the subsequent generations: loss for the first generation, trauma for the second, and mourning for the third. In this light, the narrative of the 9/11 attacks presented at the 9/11MM appears to weave together these three aspects thus producing an intertwined account and a

multi-layered reading. The victims and their loss, the survivors' trauma and the need and will to mourn on the part of America and the world are all essential threads of the exhibition's fabric.

Collective memory is, therefore, both symbolically and materially illustrated by the communal activity of quilting, of which the Victims' Quilt displayed at the 9/11MM is a result.

The patchwork quilt may be assumed as metaphor not only for the juxtaposition, within the framework of the memorialization of 9/11 at the Museum, of differing degrees of emotional response, but also for the coexistence, in the 9/11MM narrative, of "the three energies structuring post-catastrophic world" postulated by Etkind: the cognitive striving to learn about the occurrence; the emotional desire to mourn its victims; and the will to find justice and take revenge against the perpetrators. If in post-Soviet Russia the first and third energies are difficult or virtually impossible to be pursued, one may conversely assert that at the 9/11MM the narrative of the events is informed by all the three dynamics and this heterogeneous nature of the mimetic mourning at the 9/11MM seems to suggest that 9/11 mourning is also a warped memorialization.

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