

DOWNLOAD PDF NABOKOV'S ART OF MEMORY AND EUROPEAN MODERNISM

Chapter 1 : french echoes in "mademoiselle o'

CHAPTER 1 The European Nabokov, the Modernist Moment, and Cultural Biography CHAPTER 1 *The European Nabokov, the Modernist Moment, and Cultural Biography* (pp.) *The European Nabokov remains an enigma. Readers throughout the English-speaking world remember the author of Lolita, of course, and how.*

That evening at the Pen Club was such a success that he was asked to read the same text again in Paris. In the early s, Nabokov called on her in Lausanne, Switzerland. After this visit and the announcement of her death, he took her as a model for his fiction, first in the short story entitled "Easter Rain" in Nabokov rewrote the text of "Mademoiselle O" numerous times and subsequently translated it into English. It appeared in the final English version of his autobiography *Speak, Memory: An Autobiography Revisited* in According to Foster, however, the original French version of the story "marks his closest approach to France and French modernism and clearly ranks with *Invitation to a Beheading* as one of the major breakthroughs in his career. Even before Nabokov lived in France from January to May , his family had regularly travelled there for the holidays. In autumn , they went to Biarritz, in south-western France, to spend two months. It is here that Nabokov met his first love, an event he narrates in the seventh chapter of his autobiography. At the time he was only ten years old, and the girl, whom he calls Colette in *Speak, Memory*, was in fact a Parisian girl named Claude Despres. The Nabokovs returned to France several times. At the beginning of the seventh chapter of *Speak, Memory*, Nabokov writes: Much later in life, to the question as to which of the languages he spoke he considered the most beautiful, he answered: In "Mademoiselle O," Nabokov mentions in a paragraph that he was to omit from the later English version of the story that in Russia at the time of his childhood so strong was the French tradition that French was commonly spoken, though interspersed with Russian terms. This was a distinctive variety of French that mimed Russian syntax but sometimes reached a high level of mastery, in keeping with the kind of poetic language that Russian readers esteemed. Nabokov distinguishes the French literature read by Russian readers of that era and the French literature praised by Mademoiselle from the works he himself read with pleasure and perhaps took as models. In the first category he places French romantic poets of the nineteenth century such as Prudhomme and Musset, as well as the French and Belgian poets Maeterlinck, Verhaeren and Rostand. As for Mademoiselle, she had a mania for Racine and Corneille, the great classic writers of the seventeenth century known for the purity, simplicity, and loftiness of their style. This Nabokov loathed, considering this type of writing both commonplace and poor. Unsurprisingly, Nabokov felt at ease with the baroque energy of Rabelais and Shakespeare. Couturier even concludes his article by asserting: Introspection, being the art of observing oneself, is particularly characteristic of the writings of Montaigne, whom Paul de Man described as "a man who observes himself in the act of writing. He is both the subject and the object of his observation. He wrote his *Essays* in Two centuries later, Rousseau was to declare in his own address to the reader: The common thread linking Montaigne, Rousseau and Nabokov is their desire to create a new kind of writing through the description, analysis and portrayal of their own selves. Both Rousseau and Nabokov treat the theme of childhood to give depth and authenticity to the construction of their selves, but Nabokov, in writing of his childhood, seems to be reacting against the encroachment of fiction-writing on his past, his memory, and his self. Such reaction has been explained by French philosopher Maurice Blanchot, who believes that when fiction writers keep diaries, it is because they want to remain linked to reality and real life. He asserts in *The Literary Space*: It is a chronicle. What must writers remember? Themselves, the ones they are when they do not write, when they live everyday life, when they are alive and true, and not dying and without any truth. Whereas Montaigne, in the wake of Greek philosophy, wrote in the *Essays* that he wanted to learn how to die, Gide could be said to be learning how to live. I would argue then that the plea for life that appeared in the second half of the twentieth century in French philosophy as expounded by writers such as Derrida had already been present in the beginning of the century in France among authors as different as Gide and Nabokov. Gide and Nabokov

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resemble one another in their plea for life through a personal quest for happiness. For him, "life had a wild and sudden flavour" and he was glad that "happiness here should be like an efflorescence upon things dead. Everything is as it should be, nothing will ever change, nobody will ever die. For Gide, happiness is the result of the intensity of the pleasures he experiences in life. Thus, the narrator exclaims: In the envoy of Lectures on Literature, Nabokov concludes his book as follows: The main thing is to experience that tingle in any development of thought or emotion. We are liable to miss the best of life if we do not know how to tingle, if we do not learn to hoist ourselves just a little higher than we generally are in order to sample the rarest and ripest fruit of art which human thought has to offer. Literature aims at an effect that must affect the whole being. Nevertheless, death plays an important part in the story: For Gide, on the contrary, one must live here and now, in the presence of the moment. For him, memory allows the past to live again but in a comforting way. Living, for Nabokov, is equally the experience of a gift, as is writing. In the first paragraph of the story, he declares that every time he offers some part of his past to one of the characters in his books, he feels dispossessed of himself. Playing on the semantic chain of "lending, taking, giving, losing," Nabokov explains how he has the impression that his characters have "appropriated" his past whenever he lent them some portion of it. Writing is therefore associated with the act of giving something of oneself, losing it, and nevertheless feeling that it has somehow managed to survive. Survival is a term that does not appear per se in the French version of "Mademoiselle O," but it is mentioned in the last paragraph of the final version in *Speak, Memory*, to which Nabokov added the following information: When I first wrote it I did not know about certain amazing survivals. Moreover, Nabokov explains how he has the strange and paradoxical impression that he has invented his governess when writing about her as if she were a mere character in his fiction and not a real person. Wondering if she really did live, he seems to answer in the negative: He has made her exist by giving her a name and a body. Writing is not merely a mark of gratitude, the acquittal of a debt; it is beyond a mere exchange between having, giving and thanking; it is giving what one does not have, to borrow a formula of the French psychoanalyst and philosopher Jacques Lacan, for whom loving is giving what one does not have. Unsurprisingly, it was during the same period, the late 1920s, that Nabokov was writing a book which he was to entitle *The Gift*. That Nabokov read Montaigne, Rousseau and Gide 24 is not of major importance. Princeton University Press, Foster, John Burt, Jr. Princeton U Press, *An Autobiography Revisited* Harmondsworth: Strong Opinions New York: Nabokov, Strong Opinions Prometheus Books, 9. Pocket, 32 [my translation]. *Fruits of the Earth*. Nabokov, *Speak, Memory* Fredson Bowers Orlando: Harcourt Brace,

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Chapter 2 : Project MUSE - Nabokov's Art of Memory and European Modernism

Despite Vladimir Nabokov's hostility toward literary labels, he clearly recognized his own place in cultural history. In a fresh approach stressing Nabokov's European context, John Foster shows how this writer's art of memory intersects with early twentieth-century modernism. Tracing his interests.

Today it is the site of the Nabokov museum Russia[edit] Nabokov was born on 22 April 10 April Old Style , in Saint Petersburg , [a] to a wealthy and prominent family of the Russian nobility, which traced its roots back to a fourteenth-century Tatar prince, Nabok Murza , who entered into the service of the Tsars, and from whom the family name is derived. His father was a leader of the pre-Revolutionary liberal Constitutional Democratic Party and authored numerous books and articles about criminal law and politics. Sergey 1845 ; Olga 1878 ; Elena 1877 and Kiril 1877 Nabokov spent his childhood and youth in Saint Petersburg and at the country estate Vyra near Siverskaya , to the south of the city. His childhood, which he had called "perfect" and "cosmopolitan", was remarkable in several ways. The family spoke Russian, English, and French in their household, and Nabokov was trilingual from an early age. He relates that the first English book his mother read to him was *Misunderstood* by Florence Montgomery. In *Speak, Memory* Nabokov recalls numerous details of his privileged childhood, and his ability to recall in vivid detail memories of his past was a boon to him during his permanent exile, and it provided a theme that echoes from his first book *Mary* to later works such as *Invitation to a Beheading* or *Invitation to a Wedding*: While the family was nominally Orthodox , they felt no religious fervor, and Vladimir was not forced to attend church after he lost interest. In 1917, Nabokov inherited the estate Rozhdestveno , next to Vyra, from his uncle Vasily Ivanovich Rukavishnikov "Uncle Ruka" in *Speak, Memory* , but lost it in the October Revolution one year later; this was the only house he ever owned. Nabokov possessed it for less than a year before losing it in the October Revolution. In 1917, Nabokov had his first collection of poetry published, *Stikhi "Poems"* , a collection of 68 Russian poems. At the time, Nabokov was attending Tenishev school in Saint Petersburg, where his literature teacher Vladimir Vasilievich Gippius had been critical toward his literary accomplishments. After the withdrawal of the German Army in November and the defeat of the White Army early 1918, the Nabokovs sought exile in western Europe. They settled briefly in England and Vladimir enrolled in Trinity College of the University of Cambridge , first studying zoology , then Slavic and Romance languages. His examination results on the first part of the Tripos , taken at the end of second year, were a starred first. Nabokov feared that he might fail the exam, but his script was marked second-class. His final examination result was second-class, and his BA conferred in 1919. Nabokov later drew on his Cambridge experiences to write several works, including the novels *Invitation to a Beheading* and *The Eye*. Nabokov followed them to Berlin two years later, after completing his studies at Cambridge. In *Pale Fire* , for example, one interpretation of the novel has an assassin mistakenly kill the poet John Shade, when his actual target is a fugitive European monarch. *Sirin* a reference to the fabulous bird of Russian folklore. To supplement his scant writing income, he taught languages and gave tennis and boxing lessons. He lived within the lively Russian community of Berlin that was more or less self-sufficient, staying on after it had disintegrated because he had nowhere else to go to. He knew little German. He knew few Germans except for landladies, shopkeepers, the petty immigration officials at the police headquarters. In the same year, Nabokov began seeking a job in the English-speaking world. Here he finished *Invitation to a Beheading* and started writing *Pnin*. The position, created specifically for him, provided an income and free time to write creatively and pursue his lepidoptery. The Nabokovs resided in Wellesley, Massachusetts , during the 1942 academic year. In September they moved to Cambridge where they lived until June 1943. Following a lecture tour through the United States, Nabokov returned to Wellesley for the 1945 academic year as a lecturer in Russian. In 1955, he became a naturalized citizen of the United States. His classes were popular, due as much to his unique teaching style as to the wartime interest in all things Russian. Among his students at Cornell was future U. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg , who later identified Nabokov as a major influence on her development as a

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writer. He called her the best-humored woman he had ever known. There he finished *Lolita* and began writing the novel *Invitation of a Small Evening*. He roamed the nearby mountains looking for butterflies, and wrote a poem called *Lines Written in Oregon*. On 1 October, he and his family returned to Ithaca, New York, where he would later teach the young writer Thomas Pynchon. His son had obtained a position as an operatic bass at Reggione Emilia. In he was hospitalised with a fever doctors were unable to diagnose. He was rehospitallised in Lausanne in suffering from severe bronchial congestion. He died on 2 July in Montreux surrounded by his family and, according to his son, Dmitri, "with a triple moan of descending pitch". The incomplete manuscript, around handwritten index cards long, [27] remained in a Swiss bank vault where only two people, Dmitri Nabokov and an unknown person, had access. Portions of the manuscript were shown to Nabokov scholars. In April, Dmitri announced that he would publish the novel. In the accompanying article Herwig concludes that *Lolita*, although fragmentary, is "vintage Nabokov". It was printed in the December issue. He lamented to the critic Edmund Wilson, "I am too old to change Conradically" — which John Updike later called, "itself a jest of genius". This lament came in, when Nabokov had been an apprentice American for less than one year [31]: He never sinks to the depths of my solecisms, but neither does he scale my verbal peaks. His trilingual upbringing had a profound influence on his artistry. Nabokov himself translated into Russian two books that he had originally written in English, *Invitation of a Small Evening* and *Lolita*. Writing the book, he noted that he needed to translate his own memories into English, and to spend a lot of time explaining things that are well known in Russia; then he decided to re-write the book once again, in his first native language, and after that he made the final version, *Speak, Memory*. Nabokov first wanted to name it "Speak, Mnemosyne". I trained my inner telescope upon that particular point in the distant future and I saw that every paragraph, pock-marked as it is with pitfalls, could lend itself to hideous mistranslation. In the hands of a harmful drudge, the Russian version of *Lolita* would be entirely degraded and botched by vulgar paraphrases or blunders. So I decided to translate it myself. Nabokov is noted for his complex plots, clever word play, daring metaphors, and prose style capable of both parody and intense lyricism. This and his other novels, particularly *Pale Fire*, won him a place among the greatest novelists of the 20th century. His longest novel, which met with a mixed response, is *Invitation of a Small Evening*. He devoted more time to the composition of this novel than any of his others. For example, his short story "The Vane Sisters" is famous in part for its acrostic final paragraph, in which the first letters of each word spell out a message from beyond the grave. In another of his short stories, "Signs and Symbols", Nabokov creates a character suffering from an imaginary illness called "Referential Mania," in which the afflicted is faced with a world of environmental objects exchanging coded messages. That commentary ended with an appendix titled *Notes on Prosody*, which has developed a reputation of its own. On the other hand, he viewed the much older English iambic tetrameters as muddled and poorly documented. In his own words: Nabokov frequently endowed his protagonists with a similar gift. In *Invitation of a Small Evening* Krug comments on his perception of the word "loyalty" as being like a golden fork lying out in the sun. Many of his characters have a distinct "sensory appetite" reminiscent of synesthesia. During the 1920s, as a research fellow in zoology, he was responsible for organizing the butterfly collection of the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard University. His writings in this area were highly technical. This, combined with his specialty in the relatively unspectacular tribe *Polyommata* of the family *Lycaenidae*, has left this facet of his life little explored by most admirers of his literary works. He described the Karner blue. The genus *Nabokovia* was named after him in honor of this work, as were a number of butterfly and moth species. It is not improbable that had there been no revolution in Russia, I would have devoted myself entirely to lepidopterology and never written any novels at all. Gould notes that Nabokov was occasionally a scientific "stick-in-the-mud". For example, Nabokov never accepted that genetics or the counting of chromosomes could be a valid way to distinguish species of insects, and relied on the traditional for lepidopterists microscopic comparison of their genitalia. Conversely, others have claimed that his scientific work enriched his literary output. Gould advocates a third view, holding that the other two positions are examples of the post hoc ergo propter hoc fallacy. Chess problems[edit] Nabokov spent considerable time during his exile on the composition of chess problems. He

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describes the process of composing and constructing in his memoir: To him, the "originality, invention, conciseness, harmony, complexity, and splendid insincerity" of creating a chess problem was similar to that in any other art. Unfortunately, Russians today have completely lost their ability to kill tyrants. New tenement houses and old churches do not interest me. The hotels there are terrible. I detest the Soviet theater. Any palace in Italy is superior to the repainted abodes of the Tsars. The village huts in the forbidden hinterland are as dismally poor as ever, and the wretched peasant flogs his wretched cart horse with the same wretched zest. As to my special northern landscape and the haunts of my childhood – well, I would not wish to contaminate their images preserved in my mind. In he declared: He wrote to Edmund Wilson, who had been making suggestions for his lectures: They are in another class. What chance has a lonely surfer boy For the love of a surfer chick, With all these Humbert Humbert cats Coming on so big and sick? The novelist John Hawkes novelist took inspiration from Nabokov and considered himself his follower. His date of birth in the Julian calendar was 10 April ; in the Gregorian, 22 April Nevertheless, it was so misapplied by some writers, and 23 April came to be erroneously shown in many places as his birthday. In his memoirs Speak, Memory Nabokov indicates that 22 April was the correct date but that he nevertheless preferred to celebrate his birthday "with diminishing pomp" on 23 April p. As he happily pointed out on several occasions during interviews, this meant he also shared a birthday with William Shakespeare and Shirley Temple [80] [5].

Chapter 3 : nabokov studies

Despite Vladimir Nabokov's hostility toward literary labels, he clearly recognized his own place in cultural history. In a fresh approach stressing Nabokov's European context, John Foster shows how this writer's art of memory intersects with early.

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CHAPTER 1 1 The European Nabokov, the Modernist Moment, and Cultural Biography THE EUROPEAN Nabokov remains an enigma. Readers through-out the English-speaking world remember the author of Lolita, of course.

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A book could be written on Nabokov's relations to modernism. It might not be a very rewarding book, since modernism, like all group labels, was a concept that never engaged Nabokov.

Chapter 7 : Project MUSE - Nabokov's Art of Memory and European Modernism (review)

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