On November 9, 1929, Kirill Zajcev, a Russian critic, law professor, and a monk later in his life, published an article entitled "Buninskij" mir i "Sirinskij" mir' ("Bunin's" World and "Sirin's" World') in the Paris newspaper Rossija i slavjanstvo (Russia and Slavdom). Although Zajcev appeared well familiar with Nabokov's output of the 1920s, both in poetry and in prose, his article was an immediate response to the first installment of Zaščita Lužina (The Defense), published in volume XL of Sovremennye zapiski (Contemporary Annals) in the same issue with a section of Bunin's Žizn' Arsen'eva (The Life of Arsen'ev). "There are very few books," Zajcev wrote, "which bring joy to the reader." He likened reading Bunin's novel to having a gulp of oxygen and suggested that "from the heights of Bunin's poetry one falls into the sheer darkness of Sirin's spiritual underground". Zajcev went on to praise Nabokov's artistic brilliance, and yet concluded that one finishes Nabokov's novel with a sigh of relief: "Thank God, one does not need to read this depressing and most talented description of people who have nothing to live by, to strive for. [...] How terrifying it is to see life as Sirin sees it! What a joy it is to see life as Bunin sees it!" (Zajcev 1929).

However wrong or blind K. Zajcev may have been in his assessment of Nabokov's achievement, the very fact of the appearance of such a comparative article as early as 1929 signals that the émigré critics were ready to regard (and attack) Nabokov as Bunin's literary rival. By November 1929, when Zajcev's article was published, Nabokov (Sirin) had to his credit two
Maxim D. Shrayer

poetry collections and two novels, published in Berlin, as well as numerous periodical appearances, predominantly in the Berlin newspaper Rul’ (*The Rudder*). Nabokov’s first collection of short stories and poems, *Vozvrášenie Čorba* (*The Return of Chorb*), was very soon to come out. Although he had had several poems and a short story published in the leading Paris review *Contemporary Annals* by 1929, Nabokov was not well known in Paris, then the literary center of the Russian emigration, before the publication of *The Defense* in 1929. Indeed, it was the appearance of Nabokov’s third novel that startled émigré literary circles. To quote Nina Berberova, “a great Russian writer, like a phoenix, was born from the fire and ashes of revolution and exile. Our existence from now on acquired a meaning. All my generation were justified. We were saved” (Berberova 1983: 225).

The critic and poet Michail Cetlin (Amari) was probably the first to point out the connections between Nabokov’s and Bunin’s art in a 1928 review of *Korol’, dama, valet* (*King, Queen, Knave*) (Cetlin 1928). In 1930, in a literary questionnaire published in *Čisla* (*Numbers*), Georgij Fedotov spoke of Bunin’s and Nabokov’s texts as the major works of their time (‘Literaturturnaja anketa’ 1930: 322). By the mid-1930s, the number of articles, interviews, and questionnaires where Bunin and Nabokov were compared, juxtaposed, or merely listed side by side as the authors of the best contemporary works increased steadily as Nabokov’s literary star shone brighter and brighter over the horizons of Russia Abroad. In a 1931 questionnaire, ‘Best Work of Russian Literature of the Last Decade’, conducted by the Paris weekly *Novaja gazeta* (*The New Paper*), two masters of the older generation named works by Bunin and Nabokov. Aleksandr Kuprin chose Bunin’s ‘Solnečnyj udar’ (*The Sunstroke*, 1925), Valentin Kataev’s *Rastrat’iki* (*The Embezzlers*, 1927) and Nabokov’s *The Defense*, while Vladislav Chodasevič picked *The Life of Arsen’ev* from the works of the older generation of writers, and *The Defense* and Jurij Oleša’s *Zavist* (*Envy*, 1927) from those of the younger (‘Samoe lučše proizvedenie russkoj literatury’ 1931: 1-2).

The Nabokov-Bunin opposition even made its way into Western criticism as part of the larger juxtaposition between the older and younger émigré authors. In the first English-language survey of Russian émigré letters, the American Slavicist Albert Parry complimented Nabokov while marking off Bunin among the figures of the literary past: “There is no hope, perhaps, for such fossils as Bunin, Smellev, or Ossorgin [sic] to do fine, creative work about their milieu in exile – they are too sunk in their Russian past and traditions – but Sirin, Aldanov, Berberova and other youngsters [...] can, and do, produce fine work on non-Russian themes” (Parry 1933: 317). Parry was short-sighted in respect to Bunin. His article came out in July 1933, only a few months before the announcement of Bunin’s Nobel Prize, which finally recognized Bunin’s contribution, made him into a world-wide literary celebrity, and boosted his popularity among fellow exiles. Students of the period
know of the catalytic impact Bunin’s award had on the cultural climate of Russia Abroad. Bunin’s prize came after a wave of critical discussions and polemics that had swept across Russian émigré publications from Paris to Riga, from Harbin to Chicago. The polemics focused on the future of Russian literature in exile. Is it possible to maintain a literary culture apart from its organic linguistic substratum? What distinguishes Russian émigré literature from its Soviet counterpart? What will happen to the literature of Russia Abroad within the next several decades? Who will be the heirs of the great Russian literary traditions that the older generation of writers in exile was seen to have rescued from Bolshevik disfigurement? Such were the questions the émigré critics and writers mulled over in the late 1920s-early 1930s. Bunin’s Nobel Prize refocused critical attention. A vehemently anti-Soviet Russian exile, Bunin became the first Russian writer to be awarded the world’s highest distinction. Therefore, the emphasis was shifting away from the justification of the present of Russian émigré literature to prognoses about its future. Because by the mid-1930s Nabokov had become a leading émigré writer, critics both well- and ill-disposed towards him were naturally inclined to contrast him with Bunin. Nabokov’s name came up more and more frequently, both in print and in Montparnasse café discussions, as the new master of Russian literature in exile, and, ipso facto, both an heir and a rival to the Nobel-crowned old master.

The notion of the poetics of rivalry which I would like to explore in this essay suggests that I will read the literary and personal relationship between Nabokov and Bunin as a dialogic text in which the two masters challenge each other to greater artistic achievements. Beyond mere mentions of Bunin as one of Nabokov’s literary models, virtually nothing has been done in post-World War Two criticism to explore the relationship between the two writers. In Russia, up until the late 1980s, literary critics were not free to discuss Nabokov; nor did Bunin scholars have access to Western archives. In the vast body of Bunin criticism produced in the Soviet Union, one finds two principal references to Nabokov. The first was made by the poet Aleksandr Tvardovskij, a Soviet cultural eminence, who labeled Nabokov Bunin’s “epigone” in his 1965 preface to the nine-volume edition of Bunin’s works published in Moscow (Bunin 1965-1967, 1: 30). Tvardovskij’s words were reiterated by the ranking Bunin specialist, Oleg Michajlov, who called Nabokov “the Peter Schlemihl of [Russian] émigré literature” (Michajlov 1973: 50). In the West, many critics have been misled by Nabokov’s scarce references to his émigré years. In his memoir, Speak, Memory, as well as in the interviews and letters published during his American period, Nabokov downplayed and obfuscated the role of the émigré cultural contexts, and specifically of Bunin, in his artistic development. Moreover, Nabokov was able to foist this view not only upon his naive and sensationalist first biographer, Andrew Field, but also upon the
author of the recent monumental biography, Brian Boyd (Boyd 1990; 1991). Boyd, for instance, seems neither aware of nor curious about the possibility that Nabokov corresponded with Bunin for many years and that the two writers left major imprints in each other’s lives and texts.

I have studied what remains from an extremely interesting correspondence between Nabokov and Bunin spanning almost twenty years. I have also perused the complete diaries of Bunin and his wife, currently known in their edited version. Finally, I searched for possible cross-references in the letters to and from, as well as the recollections of those littérateurs who knew both Bunin and Nabokov: Adamovič, Aldanov, Berberova, Gul’, Odoevceva, Sedych, Zajcev, and others. Archival and testimonial research combined with a comparative analysis of Nabokov’s and Bunin’s oeuvres have allowed me to reconstruct the peripeties of the writers’ escalating relationship, a friendship turned rivalry.

The story of the Nabokov-Bunin relationship is one of love and jealousy, of opposites that attract and affinities that repel, of admiration, irony and bitterness, and, in the end, of a literary duel. Chronologically, their relationship falls into three phases. The first lasted from the 1920s until 1933, when Bunin received the Nobel Prize and the two writers finally met in person. The second continued roughly until Nabokov’s departure for the New World in 1940; this was the period of his rapid ascent to first-rate literary stardom which eclipsed Bunin’s own fame. The third centered on Bunin’s composition of Temnye allei (Dark Avenues) and lasted until his death in 1953.

In this essay I wish to show that as a young writer in the 1920s, Nabokov capitalized on landmark stylistic achievements of Bunin, his senior contemporary (Bunin was thirty years older than Nabokov and already famous in the Russia of Nabokov’s childhood). By the middle of the 1930s, Nabokov had developed into the most original émigré author of the younger generation. He continued the stylistic traditions of Tchéchov and Bunin, yet “opened”, in Bunin’s own words, a “whole new world” (“otkryl celyj mir”) in Russian literature (Kuznecova 1967: 184). Regarding Nabokov as his only rival, and haunted by his fame, Bunin decided to reclaim his literary status as the foremost living Russian writer by creating his masterpiece and his testament, Dark Avenues. In the latter part of this essay, I will inquire into the principal aesthetic, ethical, and metaphysical issues which shaped the dialogue between Bunin’s Dark Avenues and Nabokov’s stories of the late 1930s. I will also consider the theoretical implications of their literary rivalry for an understanding of the engine that drives literary evolution. I am thinking in particular of the Russian Formalists’ idea that writers reach back to grandfathers or great-uncles. While Bunin did to some extent reach back to Lev Tolstoï and Ivan Turgenev, he also reached forward, in Dark Avenues and elsewhere, to his literary “nephew” Vladimir Nabokov.
In order to unravel the complex bundle of authorial and textual interconnections between these two twentieth-century Russian literary giants, it is best to start at the very beginning. Nabokov's father, a leading Constitutional Democrat, and Bunin, who belonged to the camp of liberal writers, became acquainted in Berlin in 1920. In a letter of 12 December 1920, V.D. Nabokov mentioned his son's poetry and referred to the long poem 'Les' ('The Forest') published in *The Rudder* under a provisional nom de plume, "Cantab": "If you saw in *The Rudder* my son's poetry (signed 'Cantab'), would you drop me a few lines with your opinion of it." Bunin sent V.D. Nabokov a copy of his recently published collection *Gospodin iz San-Francisko* (*The Gentleman from San Francisco*, 1920) which included some of his best pre-1917 stories and poems. In the accompanying letter, he evidently complimented Nabokov's poem. This, in turn, encouraged V.D. Nabokov to enclose in his next letter to Bunin a clipping from the 1921 Christmas issue of *The Rudder* which contained three poems and a short story ('Sprite') signed with the now permanent "Vlad. Sirin". V.D. Nabokov asked permission to send Bunin a batch of his son's poems.

On March 18, 1921, Nabokov sent Bunin his first letter along with a number of poems. In the letter, suffused with the pathos of admiration and gratitude, Nabokov thanked the master for his encouragement: "[...] the kind words are coming from you, the only writer in our blasphemous and graceless age [v naš koščunstvennyj i kosnojazyčnyj vek] who serves beauty apprehending it in everything [...]. Forgive my clumsy expressions, but this is as hard as confessing love – an old love." Nabokov treated Bunin as a mentor, someone he could "turn to in the days of great loneliness". In the next letter, written in Berlin in November 1922, Nabokov spoke of how happy he was to know Bunin's poetry by heart. "I only want you to understand," he wrote, "with what strict admiration [s kakim strogim vostorgom] I look from my hill at the shining mountain peak where you have carved in the rock your eternal, incomparable words." Nabokov enclosed a poem which he composed with a dedication to Bunin. The poem, "Kak vody gor, tvoj golos gord i čist..." ("Like mountain streams, your voice is proud and clear...") was printed in *The Rudder* under the title 'I. A. Bunin' ('To I.A. Bunin') and later included in Nabokov's third collection, *Grozd'* (*The Cluster*, 1923). Of special interest for our discussion is the final, fifth stanza of the poem:

Безвестен я и молод, в мире новом,
кошунственном, – но светит все ясней
мои строгий путь: ни помыслом, ни словом
не согрешу пред музою твоей.
("I am unknown and young in the new / blasphemous world, but my de-
manding path / shines brighter and brighter: neither in thought nor in word / 
will I sin before your muse").

In the poem, Nabokov reiterates several ideas expressed in his first two 
letters to Bunin. A case in point is his use of the word "koşčunstvennyj" 
 blasphemous). In the first letter to Bunin, Nabokov described his time as a 
"blasphemous age". In the poem, "blasphemous" refers to the world sur-
rounding Nabokov. Both the letter and the poem regard Bunin’s poetry as an 
aesthetic beacon guiding the young poet. This, in turn, prompts the first ques-
tions about the nature of the Nabokov-Bunin relationship spanning thirty 
years. What formative role, if any, did Bunin’s poetry play in Nabokov’s de-
development? What did Nabokov learn from Bunin the poet?

Nabokov’s exposure to Bunin’s poetry was most intense in the 1900s-
1910s. Later, in a well-known 1949 letter to Edmund Wilson, he claimed that 
“Blok, Bely, Bunin [...] wrote their best stuff in those days” (Karlinsky 1980: 
220). Throughout the 1920s-1950s, Nabokov revisited Bunin’s poetic 
eouvre, as a reviewer of Bunin’s 1929 Selected Poems, 1900-1925, as a co-
contributor to various émigré periodicals in the 1920s and 1930s, and as a 
teacher of Russian literature in the 1940s and 1950s. In a postcard to Bunin, 
sent from Ariège in the Pyrénées in 1929, Nabokov wrote that he had known 
many of Bunin’s verses since childhood and noticed some changes Bunin 
had made in the new volume: “I read them, think of them, and – of course – 
this is the most beautiful creation of the Russian muse over the past thirty 
years.”17 In a letter, written after his review of Bunin’s volume had already 
been sent off to The Rudder, Nabokov confessed to Bunin that he could not 
help quoting – from memory – a poem not included in the Selected Poems. 
He also praised Bunin’s precise description of a butterfly and defined it as 
Vanessa urticae, “krapivnica” in Russian. (Many years later, in a passage of 
Speak, Memory, Nabokov returned to the butterfly from Bunin’s remarkable 
poem “Nastanet den’ – isčeznu ja...” [“The day will come – I will dis-
appear...”] 1916): “In the works of major Russian poets I can discover only 
two lepidopteral images of genuinely sensuous quality: Bunin’s impeccable 
evocation of what is certainly a Tortoiseshell: ‘And there will fly into the 
room / A colored butterfly in silk / To flutter, rustle and pit-pat / On the blue 
ceiling...’ and Fet’s ‘Butterfly’ [...]”; Nabokov 1966: 128.) The review of 
Bunin’s Selected Poems, the only piece of criticism that Nabokov ever wrote 
solely on Bunin, helps to understand what Nabokov saw in his older con-
temporary:

Bunin’s poems are the best the Russian muse created over several 
decades. In the past, during the loud Petersburg years, the glamorous 
clanking of the modish lyres deafened [Bunin’s poetry]; but this 
poetic noise is gone without a trace, the “masters of blasphemous
words” have been forgotten, only cold air wafts from the dead conglomerates of Brjusov’s verses; once deceiving one with its musicality, Bal’mont’s poetry now seems out of key; and only the trembling of one lyre, a trembling unique only to deathless poetry, moves us just as it used to, no, stronger than before, and it now seems strange that in those Petersburg years, not everyone hearkened to it, not every soul was struck by the voice of a poet who had no peers since Tjutčev. (Nabokov 1929)

Nabokov’s assessment of Bunin’s place in Russian poetry reflects his own biases circa 1929. One notices in the review a negative reaction to much of the poetry of Russian Symbolism. While Nabokov named two of its leaders, Brjusov and Bal’mont, the third reference is to Blok’s poem ‘Za grobom’ (‘Following the Coffin’, 1908) which describes the funeral of a young author: “Byl on tol’ko literator modnyj, / Tol’ko slov koščunstven-nych tvorec...” (“He was only a fashionable littérature / Only a master of blasphemous words”).

Nothing could have pleased Bunin more than a comparison with the Symbolists, specifically with Blok, in which he emerges as the winner! Nabokov’s review contributed to the growing rapprochement between him and Bunin during the first phase of their relationship and culminated in 1933 when they finally met. Nabokov continued to regard Bunin’s poetry highly throughout his career. In fact, he had several independent occasions in the late 1930s-1950s to voice his opinion of Bunin’s poetry. In a 1938 letter to an American Slavicist, Elizabeth Malozemoff, at the time working on a Bunin dissertation, Nabokov named Chodasevič and Bunin as the foremost poets of their time. He also praised Bunin’s masterful translation of Longfellow’s The Song of Hiawatha which, he said, at times read better than the original. At the same time, Nabokov’s poetic orientation shifted as he turned into an accomplished professional author. Chodasevič gradually ousted Bunin as Nabokov’s poetic favorite among his senior contemporaries. It is, therefore, not by chance that in his Chodasevič obituary, Nabokov spoke of his deceased literary ally as “the greatest Russian poet of our time, Puškin’s literary descendant in Tjutčev’s line of succession” (Nabokov 1973: 223). It is not hard to notice that both Bunin (in the 1929 review) and Chodasevič (in the 1939 obituary) receive the same highest marks from Nabokov and are placed within the same Tyutchevian line in Russian poetry. It seems hard to imagine two poets more dissimilar both in poetic technique and projected worldview than Bunin and Chodasevič! Still, ten years after Chodasevič’s death, in 1949, Nabokov taught a seminar on Russian poetry at Cornell, where he treated Bunin as part of a distinct vein (Puškin-Bunin-Chodasevič), the other two veins being Tjutčev-Fet-Blok and Benediktov-Belyj-Pasternak. Most likely, such a classification, in which Bunin and Chodasevič
were no longer "in Tjutčev’s line of succession", but derived directly from Puškin, best reflected Nabokov's own poetic quest around the 1940s. This was, after all, the time when "self-imposed shackles" (Nabokov 1970: 14) of a distinct poetic lineage had been shaken off to result in such liberated prosodic structures as that one of 'Slava' ('Fame', 1942), where the classical anapest literally grows out of a twentieth-century accentual verse, or 'O praviteljach' ('On Rulers', 1944). Nabokov’s representation of the three highways in Russian poetry made him heir to all three.

At its various stages, Nabokov's poetry exhibits some features of every poet he examined in the Cornell seminar with the exception, perhaps, of Benediktov. The variety and eclecticism of Nabokov’s poetic influences makes it difficult to identify distinct traces of Bunin in his verse. In the initial period of Nabokov’s verse-making, one finds echoes of Bunin’s first collection, Listopad (Foliage, 1901). Compare, for instance, ‘Vesna’ ('Spring', 1916), the opening poem of Nabokov’s first poetry collection, and Bunin’s famous poem, ‘Listopad’ ('Foliage', 1900):

Улыбка, воробьи и брызги золотые...
Сегодня все с весной веселые спешат...
Осколки от теней на лужи голубые
Упали и дрожа отчетливо скользят.
Вся улица блестит и кажется лиловой...
Прорвали белый сон лазурью небеса [...]  
(Nabokov 1916: 5)

Лес, точно терем расписной,
Лиловый, золотой, багряный,
Веселой, пестрою стеной
Стоит над светлою поляной.
Березы желтою резьбой
Блестят в лазури голубой [...]  
(Bunin 1965-1967, 1: 120)

Literal English translations:

Smiles, sparrows and golden splashes...
Today, merry, they all rush along with spring...
Smithereens of shadows fall upon blue puddles,
Tremble and slide in perfect lines.
The entire street shines and looks purple...
The azure sky has interrupted the white slumber.  
(Nabokov)

The forest, like a painted palace,
Purple, golden, crimson,
Stands over a bright clearing  
Like a merry, motley wall.  
The birches' yellow carvings  
Shine against the azure [sky].  
(Bunin)

And yet, on the next page of Nabokov’s 1916 collection one finds a markedly Blokian poem, ‘Pascha’ (‘Easter’):

Ты – в белой шляпе с огнем в очах –  
Ко мне прижалась; и все видели,  
И все смеялись. Уста пылали;  
И мы смеялись с весной в устах.  
(Nabokov 1916: 6)

(“You in a white hat with fire in your eyes – / Pressed yourself to me, and all could see, / And all laughed / Lips were burning; / And we laughed with spring on our lips.”)

In Nabokov’s later verse, one finds, side by side, seeds of Bunin, Belyj, Chodasevič and Pasternak, often, but not always, planted in an organic Pushkinian, Tyutchevian, or Fetian topsoil.

Nabokov’s period of “private curatorship” when he explored Biblical and “Byzantine” motifs in his poetry (Nabokov 1970: 13) yielded a number of poems with religious themes, like the 1918 ‘Angels’ cycle, the 1923 “Kogda ja po lestnice almaznoj...” (“When up the diamond stairs...”) or the 1924 ‘V peščere’ (‘In the Cave’). Knowing the entire corpus of Bunin’s poetry, Nabokov was certainly aware of his ingenious treatment of Biblical motifs. A case in point is Nabokov’s 1925 poem ‘Mat’ (‘Mother’) modeled in part after Bunin’s poem of the same title dated 1912. Compare the opening stanzas of the two poems:

Мать

Смеркается. Казнен. С Голгофы отвалив  
спускается толпа, виясь между олив,  
подобно медленному змью;  
и матери глядят, как под гору, в туман  
увещевающий уводит Иоанн  
седую, страшную Марию.  
(Nabokov 1979: 160)

Мать

На пути из Назарета  
Встретил я Святую Деву.
Both poems evoke the Gospel narrative, but do so via disparate styles and techniques. A comparison of the two stanzas demonstrates that Nabokov did not learn much from Bunin’s verse on the formal and compositional level. Bunin employs a transparent trochaic tetrameter with all feminine clausulae. The plain rhythmic contour, with only two rhymes punctuating the simple syntax of the opening stanza, supports, but never outweighs the poet’s account of an encounter with the allegorical Virgin Mary. In Nabokov’s poem, which describes the mother of Christ after the crucifixion, the arcane verbal structure clashes with the tragic and solemn subject matter. Such antiquated forms as the obsolete verbal adverb “vijas” (“while streaming”) or the heavy consecutive rhyming “otvaliv-oliv”, in fact make the poem unnecessarily loaded and graceless. Ultimately, the difference between Bunin’s and Nabokov’s handling of Biblical motifs is one between allegory and stylization.
Nabokov did adopt two specific elements of Bunin’s poetic technique. The first concerns Bunin’s recurrent device of repeating a word or cluster of words for rhythmic and/or emphatic purposes. Naturally, the device was not invented by Bunin. However, Nabokov praised this device in his review as Bunin’s particular forte, and armed himself with it. One finds a number of poems in which Nabokov employs Bunin’s stylistic hallmark:

И на земле мы многое забыли:
лишь изредка вспомнится во сне
и трепет наш, и трепет звездной пыли,
и чудный гул, дрожавший в вышине.

(“And on earth we have forgotten much: / only rarely we recall in a dream / our tremble, tremble of stardust, / and wondrous hum, trembling in the sky”; added italics; Nabokov 1979: 11)

The second borrowing has to do with what Nabokov described – in a letter to the Bunin scholar Malozemoff – as Bunin’s powerful gift for “color distinguishing”. Nabokov called Bunin “cvetovidec” (literally: “color perceiver”). Nabokov was especially enthusiastic about Bunin’s use of the color purple which he associated with “the growth and maturity of literature”: “Bunin saw purple keenly as an extreme degree of density in the blueness of the sky and sea.” Nabokov was perfectly right about Bunin’s effective use of the hues of purple. Shades of purple (“lilovyj”, “sirenevyj”, etc.) are also omnipresent in Nabokov’s own verse: “Vsja ulica blestit i kažetsja lilovoj” (1916); “Jasna – sirenevaja dal’” (1916); “Tuča belaja iz-za lilovoj tuči” (1921); “Na pljače v polden’ lilovatyj” (1927) (added italics). In the 1922 poem Nabokov wrote for Bunin, he used the epithet “purple” both as a Bunin-specific device and as a sign of his admiration for Bunin’s craft:

Ты любишь змей, тяжелых злых узлов
лиловый лоск на дне сухой ложбины.
(Nabokov 1979: 38)

(“You like snakes, the purple luster / of their weighty vile knots on the bottom of a dry ravine.”)

Finally, Nabokov adopted a feature that distinguished Bunin’s original collections from books by his contemporaries. As early as the 1910s, Bunin began to publish his short stories under the same covers as his poems. Nabokov did the same in the collection The Return of Chorb (1930), which signaled, among other things, a transition to the stage when he “illustrate[d] the principle of making a short poem contain a plot and tell a story” (Nabokov 1970: 15).

In sum, Nabokov regarded Bunin as one of his poetic predecessors while in fact taking very little from the older master. While Nabokov’s poetic
orientation oscillated throughout the 1920s and early 1930s among various poetic schools, Bunin himself remained remarkably consistent in his poetic direction. Having coined his own unmistakable unique poetic intonation as early as the 1900s, Bunin continued to produce first-rate verse throughout the 1910s and in emigration, although his output did go down drastically. Due to a certain bias, going back to the Symbolists and especially the Acmeists, Bunin’s poetry was frequently regarded as an artificial extension of mid-nineteenth century Russian lyrical verse. Nabokov spoke against this bias in his review. He did not say, however, and he could not say it because of his own poetic agenda, that Bunin was as much a modernist as the poets with whom he was contrasted, Blok, Belyj or Brjusov. A modernist from within, a “covert modernist”, Bunin was in this sense akin to Mandel’stam or Achmatova, bringing classical poetic form to the point of absolute if at times obsessive perfection, as in this poem of 1898:

Я к ней вошел в полночный час.
Она спала, – луна сияла
В ее окно, – и одеяла
Светился спущенный атлас.

Она лежала на спине,
Нагие раздвоивши груди, –
И тихо, как вода в сосуде,
Стояла жизнь ее во сне.
(Buin 1965-1967, 1: 110)

(“I came to her in a midnight hour. / She slept – and the moon gleamed / Through her window – and the blanket’s / Drooping silk shone.// She lay on her back, / Spreading her naked breasts, / And quietly, like water in a vessel, / Her life stood still in her sleep.”)

To a student of Russian poetry, Bunin always sounds like Bunin, while Nabokov often sounds like a potpourri of the nineteenth- and twentieth century poetic repertoire, a Puškin, a Fet, a Bunin, a Blok and a Pasternak all at once. To quote David Bethea’s ruthless comment, “despite its occasional charm and ‘neo-Acmeist’ specificity of detail, [Nabokov] was at best a ‘Blokian’ and at worst a ‘Balmontian’” (Bethea 1994: 221; passim in Rodnjanskaja 1995: 88). Jurij Tynjanov wrote in 1924 that “each new appearance in poetry is marked first and foremost by a novelty of intonation” (Tynjanov 1977: 179). Although a profusely gifted poet, Nabokov did not find an original intonation in poetry; in this respect, Nabokov was never, and could never be either an heir or a rival to Bunin. Bunin was well aware of that; not until the almost simultaneous appearance of Nabokov’s collection The Return of Chorb, the short story ‘Pil’gram’ (‘The Aurelian’, 1930) and the
novel *The Defense*, did he begin to sense that the younger man might represent real competition.

3.

In May 1926, Nabokov sent Bunin a copy of his first novel, *Mašen’ka (Mary)*, garnished with an endearing inscription:

Глубокоуважаемый и дорогой Иван Алексеевич,
мне и радостно и страшно посылать вам [Nabokov did not capitalize the second personal formal pronouns in his correspondence – M.D.S.] мою первую книгу. Не судите меня слишком строго, прошу вас.

Вся душой ваш,
В. Набоков.

(“Most respected and cherished Ivan Alekseevič, I am both happy and terrified at sending you my first book. Please do not judge me too harshly. Very truly yours, V. Nabokov.”)²⁸

*Mary* has been called the most Buninesque of all Nabokov’s prose (Kaganskaja 1978).²⁹ Bunin’s wife, Vera Muromceva-Bunina, who preferred *Mary* to all of Nabokov’s later novels, reported that Bunin liked Nabokov’s first novel.³⁰ Only one comment in Bunin’s hand has survived in his copy of *Mary*—“Ach, kak plocho!” (“Oh, how awful!”).³¹ Bunin made this comment in reference to the following passage in chapter VIII of the novel: “Èto bylo ne prosto vospominanie, a žizn’, gorazdo dejstvitel’nee, gorazdo ‘intensivnee’ – kak pigut v gazetach, – čem žizn’ ego berlinskoj teni. Èto byl udi-vitel’nyj roman, razvivajuschčijsa s podlinnoj, nežnoj ostorožnost’ju” (“It was not simply reminiscence but a life that was much more real, much more ‘intense’ – as they say in newspapers – than the life lived by his shadow in Berlin. It was a marvelous romance that developed with genuine, tender care”; Nabokov 1990a, 1: 73; Nabokov 1971: 86). Bunin frequently judged literature solely on the basis of verbal style, which he considered the test of a writer’s mastery of his craft. The negative comment was probably caused by Nabokov’s use of the adjectives “intensivnee” (“more intense”) and “udivitel’nyj” (“marvelous”). While both adjectives are employed ironically in the passage, they could have struck Bunin as stylistically unfortunate choices. *Mary* had not alarmed him as much as did *The Defense, Podvig (Glory)* and Nabokov’s short stories published in Paris in the 1930s. Throughout the initial, “enchanted” phase of the Nabokov-Bunin relationship, Bunin’s interest in Nabokov increased proportionate to Nabokov’s growing presence in émigré letters.³²
Nabokov's letters to Bunin of 1929-1931 are gentle and caring. In 1931, Nabokov thanks Bunin for sending two new books (Bož'e drevo [God's Tree] and Ten' pticy [The Bird's Shadow], both 1931): "I read the first with that pleasure - unique and eluding definition - which you alone know how to give the reader with such generosity [...]. Let me only complain that neither one had an inscription, the living trace of your hand." Bunin invited the Nabokovs to visit him in Grasse. In 1930 Nabokov and Bunin exchanged photographs. The same year, Bunin sent Nabokov the first four parts of his novel, published as Žizn' Arsen'eva. Istoki dnej (The Life of Arsen'ev. The Well of Days) with an inscribed recognition of Nabokov's talent:

Дорогой Владимир Владимирович,
от всей души и с большой любовью к Вашему прекрасному
таланту желаю Вам долгого, счастливого и славного пути.

Ив. Бунин.
6. II. 1930 Париж.

("Dear Vladimir Vladimirovič, from the bottom of my heart and with much love for your wonderful talent I wish you a long, happy, and glorious career. Iv. Bunin. 6. II. 1930. Paris.")

Bunin showed more and more signs of interest to Nabokov in the early 1930s. Vera Muromceva-Bunina's diaries help reconstruct Bunin's evolving attitudes to the younger master. In January 1930 she recorded a conversation about her husband's prospects of winning a Nobel Prize, which tormented him at the time. "One can nominate Sirin, but how can one nominate Me-režkovskij," was Bunin's remark. The littérature and Maecenas I. I. Fondaminskij, who had recently returned from Berlin, shared with Bunin his impressions of Nabokov whom he had just met: "He wants to move to Paris. [...] He adores you, Ivan Alekseevič." Bunin's questions to Fondaminskij were: "And what does he look like? What did he say about literature?"

Bunin and Nabokov planned to meet for the first time in Paris. In a letter sent to Bunin on October 20, 1931, Nabokov wrote that it would be "terrifying and marvelous" ("strašno i veselo") to meet him. Nabokov's trip was delayed until the fall of 1932, and the two writers did not get a chance to see each other in Paris. News of Nabokov's triumph, of the great impression his reading in November 1932 in Paris produced upon both his fans and the numerous nay-sayers reached Bunin in Grasse before long - in letters and newspapers. Three years had elapsed since the fall of 1929 when Bunin's intimate friend, the writer Galina Kuznecova, recorded in her diary that after reading Nabokov Bunin told her that the critics and public had "overlooked a writer": "He has been writing for ten years, and neither [Parisian] critics, nor readers know him" (Kuznecova 1967: 124; 184). Now, in the fall of 1932,
the émigré public was intrigued, enchanted, and mesmerized by Nabokov. In the words of the Paris daily *Poslednie novosti* (*The Latest News*), "Rarely a literary evening is as successful as the past reading of V. Sirin. Russian Paris showed exceptional attention to a young writer who has made a big name in a short time" ('Večer V. V. Sirina' 1932). Indeed, between 1929 and 1932, Nabokov became the new star of the Paris-based leading émigré literary review *Contemporary Annals*. As a prose writer, he debuted there with a short story, 'Užas' (‘Terror’) in 1927. Then followed *The Defense* (1929), another short story, 'The Aurelian' (1930), the short novel *Sogljadataj* (*The Eye*, 1930), then *Glory* (1931-1932), and, finally, *Kamera obskura* (1932-1933). Nabokov also debuted as a short story writer in the most influential émigré newspaper, *The Latest News*. His literary legend was being shaped in all centers of Russia Abroad: Paris, Prague, Shanghai, Warsaw, Riga, Belgrade. He was at the center of critical attention.

A close examination of the diaries, letters, and memoirs of those close to Bunin reveals that following Nabokov’s rapid success, the first notes of resentment against Nabokov were heard in the Bunin household around 1931-1932. Some anti-Nabokovian notes were sounded by Bunin’s close friends, who were negatively predisposed towards Nabokov. Thus, in November 1932, Bunin’s wife records a letter from “the other Vera”, the wife of the writer Boris Zajcev: “[Vera Zajceva] gave a very talented account of Sirin. I also perceive him this way, but, of course, never say everything. Everyone is now a diplomat. She [Zajceva – M.D.S.] writes that he is ‘Novyj grad’ without religion. [...] Looking at him one would not say: ‘Fellow writers, there is something doomed in your fate’ [Brat’ja pisateli, v vašej sud’be čto-to ležit rokovoe]”. Zajceva is referring to the religious-philosophical journal *Novyj grad* (*The New City*), published in Paris by Il’ja Fondaminskij, Fedor Stepun, and Georgij Fedotov in 1931-1936. Translated from private into accessible terms, Zajceva’s letter levels the charges which are familiar and equally ludicrous to students of Nabokov: the seeming absence in his work of faith and humanism, which are supposedly inherent in great Russian writers, and therefore, Nabokov’s presumed “non-Russian-ness”. Bunin’s wife grows apprehensive of Nabokov’s “Westerness”. On October 10, 1931, she records in her diary: “I read Sirin. What lightness and how modern he is. He is more modern than many foreign authors. Here is somebody with an ‘ironic attitude to life’. Soon he will be a candidate for the Nobel Prize” (Grin 1977-1982, 2: 253). What had seemed like a pleasantry back in 1930 was suddenly being regarded as a real possibility, especially in light of Bunin’s own failed nominations. Finally, one member of Bunin’s household, his “disciple” Leonid Zurov, was openly hostile to Nabokov and envious of his success. Nabokov’s coeval, Zurov originally fashioned himself as a fiction writer in Bunin’s vein but then began to react to what he saw as Bunin’s stylistic exuberance by writing in a different literary mode, pur-
posedly impoverished metaphorically and rarely successful stylistically. Bunin's wife records several lengthy conversations with Zurov—whose opinions she tended to privilege with maternal zeal—about the Nabokov phenomenon. On December 30, 1932, she wrote in her diary:

[Zurov] told me: "I do not want to go around flashing and shining [razblestivats'ja], like Sirin, I even cross out very successful similes; just as I keep my room free of decorations, I want to write simply. In this I also differ from [Bunin]. Although this glamour ["etot blesk"—here used pejoratively—M.D.S.] only happens occasionally in [Bunin's] works, and there is always something serious behind it. And Sirin only has glamour. He took this feature from Bunin and went around shining. Now they even compare Sirin with [Bunin]. This might be unpleasant to [Bunin]. In the past, he was the only one who could do it, and now Sirin also does it, and even more frequently."44

Such comments, which surely surfaced more and more in Bunin's household, prepared the way for Bunin's disenchantment with Nabokov in the late 1930s. In 1932-1933, Bunin was still fond of Nabokov. After all, there were Nabokov's friendly and loyal letters. There was also his highly favorable review of Bunin's poetry, toward which younger émigré poets displayed little interest.45 In fact, on two other occasions Nabokov polemicized with the critics of Bunin's poetry on the pages of The Rudder, fiercely defending Bunin from the attacks of the younger dismissive radicals.46 And of course there were Nabokov's short stories, now appearing in Paris and displaying certain features of style and composition that distinguished them from virtually everything else in émigré fiction. Of all Nabokov's readers, Bunin certainly knew that Nabokov was pursuing in short fiction the tradition which Čechov had established and he, Bunin, enriched and perfected in the 1910s-1920s. But Bunin also discerned the innovations, both in structure and in metaphysical thematics, that put Nabokov much ahead of his contemporaries in Russia Abroad. As Bunin followed the qualitative growth of Nabokov's short fiction from the early stories, some of them collected in The Return of Chorb (a copy of which Bunin owned),47 to the stories of the early 1930s, he reflected upon the formative role his own short stories might have played in Nabokov's artistic career.

In July 1931, Nabokov's short story 'Obida' ('A Bad Day'; lit. 'The Offense') appeared in the Paris daily The Latest News, now the sole leading émigré newspaper (with the decline of The Rudder in Nabokov's Berlin). The story bore a dedication to Ivan Bunin: "Ivanu Alekseeviču Buninu". 'A Bad Day', Nabokov's first story to be published in The Latest News where Bunin was a regular contributor, would be followed by fourteen more during Nabokov's Middle Period (1930-1935) alone.
A question immediately comes to mind: what were the reasons behind Nabokov's dedication? Clearly, Nabokov had had numerous prior opportunities to acknowledge his gratitude to one of the greatest masters of short fiction. By 1931, Nabokov had published a collection of fifteen short stories with visible Bunin traces. Some of them had previously appeared in various émigré periodicals, including the Parisian review *Contemporary Annals* which had featured Bunin's finest works of the 1920s ('Mitja's Love'; 'The Sunstroke'). In fact, why did Nabokov not dedicate to Bunin his first appearance in *Contemporary Annals*, the story 'Terror'? And what about 'The Aurelian' whose protagonist echoes the hero of Bunin's 'The Gentleman from San Francisco'? I think that Nabokov was deeply concerned with Bunin's stylistic trace and that his dedication constituted a carefully weighed and precise recognition of what Nabokov perceived as Buninesque features in his own early short stories.

Thematically, 'A Bad Day' shows connections with a series of Bunin's stories, mostly dating back to the 1890s-1900s, which depict the anxieties of a young adolescent against the background of the Russian countryside in summer. 'A Bad Day', along with another story from the Middle Period, 'Lebeda' ('Orache', 1932), might have been two installments of Nabokov's unrealized *Bildungsroman*. In 'A Bad Day', the protagonist, Putja Šiškov, a painfully self-conscious teenager with an acute awareness of falseness, has to attend a children's party at the neighboring country estate. Alienated from his older pedantic sister, and possibly tormented by his budding sexuality (to which Nabokov points only very covertly), Putja perceives the world in private terms which he alone can understand. He is uncomfortable around his peers, which they notice right away and use to boycott his presence. Putja is also fascinated by Tanja, a "pretty girl of eleven or twelve with an ivory pale skin, bluish shadows under the eyes, and a black braid caught by a white bow above her delicate neck" (Nabokov 1995: 266). He tries to win over her attention, but, alas, another teenager, the robust and insolent Vasja Tučkov is more successful. The story ends anticlimactically after Putja's rival pronounces what amounts to the boy's verdict in the eyes of his peers: "And here comes the poseur" ("A vov idet lomaka"; Nabokov 1995: 272; Nabokov 1938: 103).

At least five short stories and a novella by Bunin constitute a thematic and stylistic background for 'A Bad Day'. In 'Pervaja ljubov' ('First Love', 1890), chronologically the earliest, we find three teenage boys in the country who also represent, much like Putja, Vasja and Volodja in 'A Bad Day', their author's "remembered self which is really split here among three lads" (Nabokov 1995: 647). Mitja, the protagonist, is in love with his friend's cousin Saša, and terribly ashamed to admit it to the other boys. Like Nabokov's Putja, he is dreamy and torn by complexes, at times offended by his friends' ruthless teenage bravado. At the end of 'A Bad Day', one senses
echoes of Mitja’s despair in the culminating scene of ‘First Love’, where the boy’s uncle embarrasses him in front of Saša and her girlfriends. ‘First Love’ points to a later short text, ‘Kukuška’ (‘Cuckoo’, 1898) where we also encounter three teenagers in the country; one of them is named Mitja. Much like Putja Šiškov may be seen as the teenage predecessor of one of Nabokov’s most memorable protagonists, Vasilij Šiškov of the eponymous story, Mitja of ‘First Love’ and ‘Cuckoo’ exhibits some nascent traits of the protagonist of ‘Mitja’s Love’ (1924). ‘Mitja’s Love’, one of Bunin’s finest novellas of the émigré period, which attracted a great deal of critical attention because of the novelty of its treatment of a young man’s sexuality, is also partly set in a Russian country estate. Linda Saputelli Zimmermann has drawn several parallels between ‘A Bad Day’ and Bunin’s masterpiece. She compared the composition of desire in the two stories: Putja’s attraction to Tanja in ‘A Bad Day’ and Mitja’s to Katja in ‘Mitja’s Love’. She has also suggested curious reflections of Bunin’s color palette in Putja’s avidly colorful vision of the world (Zimmermann 1978: 67-68). One can also notice some traces of Bunin’s ‘Na dačě’ (‘In the Country’, 1895) – a dačňjrasskaz (Russian countryside short story) with a Chekhovian narrative flow – in the setting of ‘A Bad Day’. Finally, a little story by Bunin, written in 1930 and also entitled ‘First Love’, might have left an imprint in Nabokov’s creative practice and informed ‘A Bad Day’. In it, Bunin draws a sketch of a young adolescent’s love for a proud and fastidious teenage girl. Like Putja, Bunin’s protagonist plays with his peers while actually being on the verge of desperate tears. The parallels between Nabokov’s ‘A Bad Day’ and Bunin’s ‘In the Country’, ‘First Love’ (1890), ‘Cuckoo’, ‘Mitja’s Love’ and ‘First Love’ (1930) may be due not so much to the younger writer’s conscious effort to dialogize with the older master but to the shared setting of the Russian gentry countryside topos. However, there is a marvelous short fiction from Bunin’s early period which lends Nabokov’s story some of its concrete verbal motifs.

I am speaking about ‘Dalekoe’ (‘Distant Memories’, 1903) which Bunin reworked twice and published at least three times during the émigré years. In its 1937 version, it reads like a draft for The Life of Arsen’ev. ‘Distant Memories’ depicts one day in the life of a nine-year-old protagonist, Il’ja. Unlike Putja, Il’ja is having a wonderful day as his father takes him hunting. The first half of the story describes a ride to the swamp, while the second climaxes in the hunting scene and Ilja’s excitement over it. The verbal echoes of Bunin’s story in ‘A Bad Day’ center on the description of the carriage, the horse, the hunting dog, as well as certain elements of nature. Both stories abound with references to summer flowers and insects, grasshoppers in particular, with images of summer sky and clouds, or with instances of effective chiaroscuro interplay of sun and shade (“Shine and shade speckled the depths of the forest: one could not separate the pattern of tree
trunks from that of their interspaces”; Nabokov 1995: 265). Given what Nabokov said in the letter to Malozemoff, one also finds Bunin’s signature color, purple (“lilovyi”), resurfacing in Nabokov’s story. Bunin’s young protagonist sees “blue cornflowers, purple cockles [“lilovye kukoli”] and yellow charlock flowers” (Bunin 1965-1967, 2: 286). Nabokov’s Putja picks bilberries, “big, with a bloom dimming their blue, which revealed a bright [purple] luster” (“lilovym bleskom”; Nabokov 1995: 267). Such parallels, as well as Nabokov’s dressing the coachman in the same item of clothing, a “sleeveless vest” (“bezrukavka”) as Bunin’s coachman in ‘Distant Dreams’, create a sense of recognition for a Bunin reader encountering Nabokov’s story. Nabokov’s evocation of Bunin’s image of a dog chasing after a moving carriage, or the tarry smell wafting from the carriage, also work in a similar fashion. Such evocations might be partially coincidental and are not necessarily subtextual. However, when Nabokov transfers Bunin’s image of a hunting dog’s “sleek coat” (“atlasnaja šerst’”) onto a horse’s coat (“atlasnaja šerst’”; Nabokov 1938: 88) without any alterations, this comes close to being a direct link with its textual antecedent.

Graceful and rhythmically elegant, stylistically near-perfect, ‘A Bad Day’ is nevertheless one of the least Nabokovian of Nabokov’s stories. In some respects, Nabokov’s project of reproducing some of Bunin’s emblematic achievements was successful. ‘A Bad Day’ proved Nabokov capable of writing with brilliance in Bunin’s celebrated medium: a psychological short story in which sections of distanced narrative in medias res alternate with instances of free indirect discourse. Like Bunin in the majority of his short stories, Nabokov in ‘A Bad Day’ also paid special attention to the status of nature descriptions, at places excessively exuberant but always authentic-sounding.

And yet there is something about ‘A Bad Day’ that strikes a student of Nabokov as alien to the very spirit of his art. First, we find virtually nothing of the kind of two-dimensionality, of the opposition between the mundane and the otherworldly, that had evolved in Nabokov’s stories by the early 1930s (Shrayer 1994; 1996). Second, despite the perceived drama of a boy’s loneliness, the story is too serene and devoid of tension in comparison to most of Nabokov’s other short fictions, or Bunin’s stories for that matter. Even as compared to its immediate sequel, ‘Orache’, ‘A Bad Day’ exhibits fewer moments of absolute despair in which wordplay (pun, anagram, homonym, etc.) and human tragedy are inseparable, as inseparable as are the metaliterary and metaphysical categories in Nabokov’s fiction. Only a few instances of a characteristically Nabokovian way of doing things with words, to borrow J.L. Austin’s expression, figure in the story. In the episode where Putja encounters an old French governess, a literary cousin of Mademoiselle O from the eponymous story/memoir, Nabokov creates an estranged perspective by rendering the old French lady’s heavily accented Russian via hybrid
Russian-French words written in the Latin alphabet: "Priate-qui? Priate-qui? [from the Russian "prjatki", "hide-and-seek" - M.D.S.] [...] Sichasse pocajou caroche messt [from "sejčas pokažu choroše mesto", "now I'll show you a good place" - M.D.S.]") (Nabokov 1995: 271). Such wordplay hardly ever occurs in Bunin’s stories. The funny speech of the old governess, recorded with an absurd logic, shows Putja’s despair and alienation during the name-day party. (Incidentally, this kind of Russian-French wordplay goes back to Tolstoj’s Vojna i mir [War and Peace] where Nikolaj Rostov – in a moment of acute emotional exaltation – reads the French spelling of his sister’s name, “Natache”, as encoding the French word une tache [“spot”], which is semantically charged in the episode.)

Thus, in the end, Nabokov’s ‘A Bad Day’ – dedicated to Bunin and evoking several of his stories – sent a professional message to the old master. On a symbolic plane, Nabokov honored Bunin’s contribution to the genre of the Russian short story which Čechov revolutionized and Bunin brought to perfection. Also, ‘A Bad Day’ summed up a number of features which Nabokov was willing to admit having learned from Bunin during the 1920s.

A number of works by Nabokov from the 1920s-early 1930s – both short stories and novels – reveal a continuous dialogue with Bunin occurring simultaneously on several levels of the text, from plot composition to minuscule if always fortuitous details. I will offer a few examples.

The first comes from Nabokov’s ‘In Memory of L.I. Šigaev’, written in Berlin in 1934 and published in Paris the same year. The story is structured as an obituary for the narrator’s deceased friend, a Russian intelligent. As an account of the narrator’s friendship with this gentle and pure soul, the story recalls and/or anticipates several of the real obituaries Nabokov wrote and published in the 1920s-1930s, especially those for the critic Julij Ajchenval’d, the poet Saša Černyj, and the wife of Il’ja Fondaminskij, Amalija Fondaminskaja. There is a plausible antecedent for Nabokov’s fictional obituary among Bunin’s works of the émigré period, the short story ‘Aleksej Alekseevič’, originally published in Paris in 1927. Both open point-blank, by stating the irreversible facts, Nabokov’s: “Umer Leonid Ivanovič Šigaev...” (“Leonid Ivanovič Šigaev is dead...”); Nabokov 1956: 87; Nabokov 1995: 364) and Bunin’s: “Nelepaja, nepravdopodobnaja vest’: Aleksej Alekseevič umer!” (“The senseless, unbelievable news: Aleksej Alekseevič is dead!”; Bunin 1965-1967, 5: 367). This opening statement is followed in both short texts by a series of recollections – some of them anecdotal – which are very loosely connected with one another. Bunin’s Aleksej Alekseevič and Nabokov’s Leonid Ivanovič are very different people, the former a jovial theater buff, the latter a shy academic. The narrators’ attitudes to their deceased friends also differ drastically: Nabokov’s narrator expresses love for his older fatherly friend while Bunin’s memoirist treats the deceased with slightly cynical condescension. However, in both stories, the dead subjects come out
remarkably alive because their invented histories are presented as live re-
collections.

‘Рождество’ (‘Christmas’, 1924), one of Nabokov’s finest stories of the
Early Period, points to Bunin’s ‘Снеговик’ (‘Snow Bull’, 1911). Set in a
country estate in winter, Bunin’s short story is outstanding in its compas-
sionate depiction of a father’s love for a young son. The boy in ‘Snow Bull’
is not dead, as in Nabokov’s ‘Christmas’, but he is terrified. The boy cries in
his sleep for several nights in a row. His father, a landlord by the name of
Чру́шев — a marked name also given to the family of Substeppe landowners
in Bunin’s ‘Суходоль’ (‘Dry Valley’, 1911) — gets up to comfort him. I know
very few texts in all of Russian literature which create such a moving and
believable sense of a father’s pain and fear for his son’s young life, of a
father’s pure tenderness and care, as in Bunin’s ‘Snow Bull’ and Nabokov’s
‘Christmas’. Despite the affinities between the setting of the two stories and
their focus on fatherly love, one also notices intrinsic differences between the
nature of Bunin’s and Nabokov’s artistic worlds. Чру́шев goes out into the
winter night to eliminate what he thinks is the cause of his son’s pain: an
ugly snow sculpture of a bull casting macabre shadows into the boy’s room.
Having destroyed the cause of pain, both his son’s and his own, he walks
about his yard marveling at the pacifying earthly harmony of the winter
surroundings. Nabokov offers his privileged character, Слепцов, a different
means of dealing with his pain: an otherworldly metaphor, a giant Indian
moth, transcends Слепцов’s pain of loss and helps him to preserve idealized
memories of his dead teenage son.

Another example of Nabokov’s dialogue with his older contemporary,
this time on the level of characterization, occurs in ‘The Aurelian’, the finest
story of the Middle Period. Пилгрим, the protagonist, an obese philistine on
the surface, and an otherworldly dreamer on the inside, lives his entire life in
preparation for a journey he hopes to undertake one day. From behind the
counter of his dismal shop, Pilgram undertakes regular journeys in his mind,
and his destinations include the Islands of the Blessed, Corsica, Andalusia,
Dalmatia and other exotic regions. Pilgram resembles the hero of Bunin’s
‘The Gentleman from San Francisco’ (1915) — one of the highest points of
Bunin’s pre-1917 creativity. Like Pilgram, the gentleman from San Francisco
has never lived to his heart’s content despite being in his late fifties (Пилgrim
is almost fifty). He works hard making money, and hopes to take a trip to
“Europe, India, Egypt” where “people of his sort were accustomed to begin
enjoying life” (Bunin 1965-1967, 4: 308). As it turns out, Bunin’s protago-
nist dies on the paradisal island of Capri at the height of his earthly and
sensuous dream, while Nabokov’s Pilgram suffers a fatal stroke right on the
 verge of his otherworldly obsession becoming a reality.

Nabokov, who is known to have devised dazzling traps for many of his
literary colleagues, conjured up a parodic evocation of Bunin’s melodramatic
novella ‘Syn’ (‘The Son’, 1916). In ‘The Son’, which Nabokov was not very likely to have valued as highly as Bunin’s other works, a woman falls in love with a young man half her age. For a while, she tries to block the growing attraction, or, rather, to channel it into maternal feelings for a young man (her own children are female). At one point in the story, her young lover kneels before her in the garden and presses himself against her lap: “And looking at his hair, his white thin neck, she thought with pain and delight: ‘Oh, yes, yes, I could have had a son just like that!’” (Bunin 1965-1967, 4: 333). In Nabokov’s ‘Kartofel’nyj El’f’ (‘The Potato Elf’, 1924), one of the longest stories of the Early Period, we find a mise-en-scène whose structure parodies the one in Bunin’s ‘The Son’. Fred Dobson, a circus dwarf, sits at the feet of Nora Shock, the wife of his colleague, and narrates his life. As Nora beholds this little boy-man, his “black jacket, inclined face, fleshy little nose, tawny hair, and that middle parting reaching the back of his head vaguely moved Nora’s heart”: “As she looked at him through her lashes she tried to imagine that it was not an adult dwarf sitting there, but her non-existing little son in the act of telling her how his schoolmates bullied him [in ‘The Son’, the young man also appears miserable and lonely – M.D.S.]” (Nabokov 1930: 174; Nabokov 1995: 234).

While the list of various evocations of Bunin’s stories could go on and on, I will stop here to offer a more generalized view of what Nabokov learned from Bunin during the Early and Middle Periods.

First of all, I think that Nabokov learned from Bunin – arguably the foremost stylist of Russian prose in the twentieth century – the art of intonation and rhythm. Every major writer is recognizable by the intonation of his prose, a function of both syntax and semantics of a given textual unit. Bunin’s intonations, prominent in Nabokov’s works of the 1920s and early 1930s and later giving way to the masterly Nabokovian prose of the late 1930s, elucidate Nabokov’s status as a Russian writer deeply rooted in the classical tradition of short stories that goes back to Bunin, Čechov, and farther back to Turgenev and Tolstoj.

The rhythm of Bunin’s prose has been the subject of previous critical inquiry. Both Emma Polockaja and Elizabeth Malozemoff indicate the role of Bunin’s poetry in the formation of the intonational contours of his prose. Nabokov’s simultaneous preoccupation with both poetry and prose is analogous to that of Bunin. To illustrate what I mean by Bunin’s intonations in Nabokov’s short stories, I will compare two passages, one from ‘The Gentleman from San Francisco’, the other from ‘The Aurelian’, both dealing with the protagonists’ projected journeys leading to death. Bunin writes of the trip the American hopes to undertake:

В декабре и январе он надеялся наслаждаться солнцем Южной Италии, памятниками древности, таарантеллой, серенада-
Vladimir Nabokov and Ivan Bunin: A Reconstruction

In December and January he hoped to enjoy the sun of Southern Italy, the monuments of antiquity, the tarantella, the serenades of strolling singers, and that which men of his age relish with the utmost finesse: the love of little, youthful Neapolitaines, even though it be given not entirely without ulterior motives; he contemplated spending the Carnival in Nice, in Monte Carlo, whither the very pick of society gravitates at that time, — Monte Carlo, where some give themselves up with passion to automobile and sail races; others to roulette; a third group to that which it is the custom to call flirting; a fourth, to trap-shooting, in which the pigeons, released from their cotes, soar up most gracefully above emerald-green swards, against the background of a sea that is the color of forget-me-nots, — only, in some minute, to strike against the ground as little, crumpled clods of white; the beginning of March he wanted to devote to Florence; about the time of the Passion of Our Lord to arrive at Rome [...]”; Bunin 1941: 281-282

In Nabokov’s story, one of Pilgram’s dream-trips is described as follows:

Он посещал Тенериффу, окрестности Оротавы, где в жарких, цветущих овражках, которыми изрезаны нижние склоны гор, поросших каштаном и лавром, летает диковинная разновидность капустницы, и тот, другой остров — давнюю любовь охотников, — где на железнодорожном скате, около Вища-вони, и повыше, в сосновых лесах, водится смуглый, коренастый корсиканский махаон. Он посещал и север — болота Лапландии, где мох, гонобобель и карликовая ива, богатый мохнатыми бобочками полярный край, — и высокие альпийские пастбища, с плоскими камнями, лежащими там и сям среди старой, скользкой, колтунной травы, — и, кажется, нет большего наслаждения, чем приподнять такой камень, под которым и муравьи, и синий скарабей, и толстенькая сонная ночница, еще, быть может, никем не названная; и там же, в горах, он видел полупрозрачных, красноглазых аполлонов,
In these impossible dreams of his he had visited the Islands of the Blessed, where in the hot ravines that cut the lower slopes of the chestnut-and laurel-clad mountains there occurs a weird local race of the cabbage white; and also that other island, those railway banks near Vizzavona and the pine woods farther up, which are the haunts of the squat and dusky Corsican swallow-tail. He visited the far North, the Arctic bogs that produced such delicate downy butterflies. He knew the high Alpine pastures, with those flat stones lying here and there among the slippery matted grass; for there is no greater delight than to lift such a stone and find beneath it a plump sleepy moth of a still undescribed species. He saw glazed Apollo butterflies, ocellated with red, float in the mountain draught across the mule track that ran between a steep cliff and an abyss of wild waters; Nabokov 1995: 250; the English differs from the Russian significantly.)

In both cases, we have extremely long passages consisting of long sentence units, separated by semicolons and held together semantically, rather than syntactically. In each of these sentence units within the long passages, the intonation is cemented by a series of subordinate or participial clauses, some short, some much longer, woven together with or without conjunctions (cf. Bunin’s “Monte-Karlo, kuda... obščestvo, gde... golubej, kotorye...” and Nabokov’s “apollonov, kotorye... trakt, iduščij... propast, gde...”). The long syntactic contours in both passages entail several long independent clauses, each of which is a complex-complex or complex-compound sentence. Malozemoff has pointed to the prominence of “Biblical syntax” in Bunin’s prose (Malozemoff 1938: 266). Bunin’s Biblical syntax amounts to his use of the Russian conjunctions equivalent to the English “and” (“i”, “a”, “da”) in order to open a sentence as well as connect a series of sentences within a passage or a sequence of independent clauses within a single long sentence. Such a syntactic structure creates a flow of prose with a prosodic organization, i.e. a succession of speech units of relatively similar length each of which, in this case, starts with an “and” conjunction. Examples of such a syntactic structure are omnipresent in Bunin’s prose. For instance, the very end of “The Gentleman from San Francisco” consists of three very long sentences each starting with “and”. In Nabokov’s case, one example strikes me as a particularly extreme demonstration of Bunin’s intonational forte. I am speaking of the magnificent last sentence from ‘Soveršenstvo’ (‘Perfection’), one of the longest in Russian short fiction, which comprises a sequence of eleven (!!!) independent clauses, all beginning with the Russian conjunction “i” (“and”). In ‘Perfection’, such a long series of units of similar
length, all opening with the same conjunction, creates an incantational intonation which here enhances the sense of an otherworldly opening in the text of the story.53

As for the narrative structure of Nabokov’s short stories from the Early and Middle Periods, at least one significant feature may be attributed to Bunin’s influence. This is Nabokov’s use of death as a means of creating narrative closure. Seven of Nabokov’s stories from the Early Period (‘Mest’ ['The Revenge']; ‘The Potato Elf’; ‘Slučajnost’ ['A Matter of Chance']; ‘Katastrofa’ ['Details of a Sunset']; ‘Bachman’; ‘Drakon’ ['The Dragon']; ‘Užas’ ['Terror']), and five from the Middle Period (‘The Aurelian’; ‘Terra Incognita’; ‘Perfection’; ‘Korolek’ ['The Leonardo’]; ‘Krasavica’ ['A Russian Beauty']) follow Bunin’s favorite narrative recipe of placing the death of the main character at the closure (cf. ‘The Gentleman from San Francisco’; ‘Kazimir Stanislavovič’; ‘Petlistye uši’ ['Loopy Ears’]; ‘Mitja’s Love’; ‘The Affair of Cornet Elagin’). Among Nabokov’s early stories, two employ death in the most Buninesque fashion, a mixture of tragic and melodramatic. In ‘Revenge’, an English professor’s young and chaste wife finds a skeleton in her bed and suffers a massive scare-induced heart attack. In ‘The Potato Elf’, Nora reveals the fact of her son’s death right after Dobson’s heart attack at the train station.

During the Middle Period, Nabokov continues to employ death as a means of ending a narrative, although in stories like ‘The Aurelian’ and ‘Perfection’ one can already distinguish the shape of Nabokov’s argument with Bunin that reaches a crescendo in the mid-late 1930s. The argument concerns the artists’ understanding of the phenomenon of death. During the Middle Period, rapid changes in Nabokov’s aesthetics, ethics and metaphysics are especially manifest. In ‘The Leonardo’, the proto-Nazi thugs murder their Russian neighbor only because he is beyond their understanding. Death there is an instrument of human conflict, a reflection of the historical condition, the artist’s way of bridging his aesthetics and his view of society’s eroded ethics. In ‘The Leonardo’, Nabokov shares Bunin’s overwhelming concern with violence in society and death as its ultimate consequence. Nabokov’s narrative structure mirrors German society on the verge of Nazism. He follows Bunin’s view that artistic form reflects the shape of modernity. To recall a tirade by Sokolovič in ‘Loopy Ears’, Bunin’s serial killer with “ideas”, “Every boy is crazy about [James Fenimore] Cooper where all they do is scalp people, [...] every pastor knows that in the Bible the word ‘kill’ is used more than a thousand times and in most cases with incredible praise of and gratitude for these acts of divine will. [...] Soon Europe will become nothing but a kingdom of killers” (Bunin 1965-1967, 4: 390-391). Conversely, in ‘A Russian Beauty’, and especially in ‘The Aurelian’ and ‘Perfection’, the shift away from Bunin’s view of death is evident. Some twenty years later, in a 1963 Introduction to Bend Sinister, Nabokov would write: “there is nothing
to fear, death is but a question of style, a mere literary device, a musical resolution" (Nabokov 1964: xviii). The focus of the endings in "The Aurelian" or "Perfection" is not on the protagonist's death as we are accustomed to seeing it in our mundane lives, but on entering the otherworld. The protagonist's otherworldly experience reverberates in the reader's memory even after "the clouded glasses" (Nabokov 1995: 343) have been removed and the character is pronounced dead by his creator.

During the first phase of the Nabokov-Bunin dialogue, ending in their 1933 meeting, Čechov remained for Nabokov a stable point of reference while Bunin served as a live representative of the great Russian tradition, both a classic and a contemporary who continued to evolve and thereby challenge Nabokov to new achievements.

On November 10, 1933, soon after the announcement of Bunin's Nobel Prize, Nabokov sent a letter of congratulations. He described the jubilant state of their fellow exiles, "everybody greeting each other as during a holiday". And after several failed attempts, the two men finally met. The Russian community in Berlin organized a gala to honor Bunin. It was scheduled for December 30 – chaired by Iosif Gessen, with speeches and readings from Bunin's works. Although Bunin was not expected to attend, he arrived unexpectedly at the last moment: Nabokov gave a lyrical speech about Bunin's poetry in which he reiterated some of the main points made earlier in his 1929 review of Bunin's Selected Poems. He also recited his favorite poems by Bunin. Bunin and Nabokov were photographed standing together on the stage. Emigré papers furnished the photographs with characteristic captions:

The Russian colony in Berlin celebrated the arrival of the Nobel laureate in literature, I.A. Bunin, with a gala-event. On stage the famous Russian writer was greeted by I.V. Gessen, the former leader of the Constitutional-Democratic Party [...]. Applauding, from the right, the poet Sergej Krečetov [well-known Silver Age publisher and a poet - M.D.S.], from the left, the most talented of the young Russian writers, V.V. Sirin.

Bunin and Nabokov, who had never met personally before, stood next to each other as the two stars of Russian literature. A correspondence spanning more than twelve years preceded this meeting. The correspondence began in 1921 when Nabokov was a virtually unknown poet and Bunin the literary king of the emigration, the last classic, who did not have to write anything
more to maintain his literary reputation. By the end of 1933, Nabokov’s fame and legend had spread all around Russia Abroad. He was no longer in the position to treat Bunin as a literary mentor. Little is known of the content of Nabokov’s conversation with Bunin early in January 1934, when they met again, for lunch (some recollections of this lunch made their way into Nabokov’s autobiography, *Speak, Memory*, into the episode describing a Parisian meeting between the two writers; I will discuss it later in the essay). Their relationship entered its second phase, from 1933 until 1939, a literary race in which Nabokov would be several steps ahead of Bunin.

The middle-to-late 1930s were an extremely difficult time for the aging Ivan Bunin. As early as November 9, 1934, Vera Muromceva-Bunina wrote down in her diary:

> Exactly a year ago they telephoned from Stockholm and everything went topsy-turvy. The mess started and we still have not found any quiet. Fame, money, congratulations, raptures, envy, demands, offenses, joy at being able to help, disappointment, powerlessness, flattery — those are the feelings which both we or those surrounding us experienced. And that was all mixed, mingled, intertwined, and we are still as if in a dream. It made it impossible to concentrate, to work; and also this unending misery. (Grin 1977-1982, 3: 12)

“Misery” ("gore") most likely refers to Bunin’s involvement with the writer Galina Kuznecova, who had been his beloved from 1926 and a member of the Bunin household for many years. The Nobel Prize, after which, in the words of Bunin’s wife, “something dear for me was lost in [Bunin]” (Grin 1977-1982, 2: 299) and in Kuznecova’s own words, “[Bunin] somehow separated himself internally from everyone in the nick of time” (Kuznecova 1967: 314) expedited Kuznecova’s break-up with the great writer. Bunin was devastated by the break-up, by its details, incomprehensible to him (Kuznecova became a companion of the singer Marga Stepun). Kuznecova, joined by Marga Stepun, continued to be a member of the Bunin household until 1942, and already in 1936 we find a series of entries in Bunin’s diary which testify to his massive crisis: “The worst thing is the terrible feeling of hurt, of being insulted in a lowly way, and of my own shameful behavior. Actually, I have had a psychic illness for two years now, have been beside myself” (7 June 1936; Grin 1977-1982, 3: 19). Bunin wrote of the years 1934-1936 as some sort of madness, which resulted in a series of mistakes, financial recklessness and giving up royalties from his 11-volume *Works*, of sinking to a profound low, of his complete lack of willpower, of a senseless existence.

Such was the background against which Nabokov’s meetings with Bunin took place in France in 1936-1939. After 1933-1934, the two writers saw
each other only once more in Berlin, in October 1936, but not much is known about their meeting.\(^6\) By the time Nabokov arrived in Paris for a series of readings in January 1936, his fame had grown exponentially in Russian literary circles, and he was also gaining an international reputation. The man who had been called “Bunin’s heir”\(^6\) was beginning to eclipse the old master. Critics spoke of Bunin’s influence on Nabokov’s language, but emphasized how different Nabokov’s “art of composition” was.\(^6\) To illustrate the reception of Nabokov’s works in the mid-1930s, I will quote an article from a Russian-language newspaper in San Francisco with a characteristic title, ‘V.V. Sirin – the New Star in Literature’:

Over the past years we have witnessed the rapid ascent of a new star in literature, Vladimir Vladimirovič Sirin-Nabokov. [...] Sirin is one of those happy exceptions when one can set aside cautious reservations, since, despite his youth, this Russian émigré is no longer an apprentice, but a perfectly mature writer. There is no doubt that he is a star of great magnitude, the most distinguished of the new writers to come out of Russia (both Soviet and émigré) over the past 6-7 years. (Nazarov 1934)

Bunin began to be haunted by Nabokov’s presence in Russian letters. Their stories in English translation appeared in the same magazine, Lovat Dickson’s in London. Their books came out in the same publishing houses as the Russian book market steadily shrunk. The leading émigré critics, including Adamovič, Bicilli, Chodasevič, Struve and Vejdle, now discussed Nabokov’s works regularly in Paris periodicals. Petr Bicilli, a professor of Russian literature at the University of Sofia, wrote in a provocative 1936 essay that Nabokov’s “gift is so mighty and his formal perfection so high” that he would “remain part of [Russian literature] so long as it still exists” (Bicilli 1936b: 132). The same year, Bicilli opened his long essay, ‘Vozroždenie allegori’ (‘The Rebirth of Allegory’), with a reference to Bunin’s remark on Tolstoj (Bicilli 1936a: 191). Bunin was becoming a historical point of departure in critical discussions of Nabokov’s thriving art.

Separate mention should be made of Nabokov’s place in the Russian periodicals of the 1930s. I have already discussed Nabokov’s regular appearances in the leading émigré newspaper, The Latest News. Consider now Nabokov’s contributions to the foremost émigré quarterly, Contemporary Annals. Between 1930 and 1940 (when the review ended its existence with its seventieth issue), works by Nabokov and about Nabokov appeared in twenty eight out of thirty issues (including six novels, one short novel and four short stories), while works by Bunin and about Bunin in only ten issues. In contrast, from 1920 to 1930 (forty issues), seven works by and about Nabokov were featured in contrast to twenty by and about Bunin. Students of
Bunin know that after 1930, his output of fiction and poetry went down drastically, not to recover until 1937 when Bunin began working on his last testament, the book of love stories entitled Dark Avenues. Bunin’s sense of his own creative crisis in the mid-1930s (the bulk of the stories in Dark Avenues was not written until 1940-1944; the only other book Bunin did write and publish before the war was the 1937 Osvoboždenie Tolstogo [Tolstoy’s Liberation] about half of which consisted of quotations), might explain the change in his attitude to Nabokov from interest and cautious appreciation in the late 1920s-early 1930s to growing animosity in the late 1930s. The surviving accounts of their meetings between 1936 and 1939 help to explain some of the reasons behind Bunin’s decision to prove his worth in Russian letters by creating his masterpiece, one of the finest works in Russian and world literature, Dark Avenues.

In a postcard of 6 January 1936, sent to Paris and addressed to Bunin’s wife, Nabokov informed the Bunins of his forthcoming visit. He also asked Vera Bunina, known to take an active part in organizing literary events, to assist him as she had done during his 1932 visit. Nabokov arrived in Paris on January 28, 1936 and went to the Fondaminskij’s where he was staying. As Nabokov described his day in a letter, two hours later he was already sitting in a café with a “tipsy Bunin” (“s podvypivšim Buninym”). In a letter to his wife, sent on January 30, Nabokov gave a journalistic account of the meeting with his literary colleague:

At first our conversation flagged, mainly I think because of me. I was tired and cross. Everything irritated me: his manner of ordering hazel grouse, and every intonation, and his bawdy little jokes, and the deliberate servility of the waiter, so that he later complained to Aldanov I was thinking about something else all the time. I haven’t been so angry in a long time as over going to dine with him. But toward the end and later, when we went out in the street, sparks of mutuality began to flash here and there, and when we went into the Café de la Paix, where plump Aldanov was waiting for us, it was quite cheery.

In Speak, Memory, written some fifteen years after their meeting in Paris and revised thereafter, Nabokov dedicated a long passage to Bunin in Chapter Fourteen. Before quoting a large portion of it, I would like to suggest that while reminiscing about his meetings with Bunin, Nabokov seemed to have conflated two separate occasions, their lunch in Berlin in January 1934, and the time in January 1936, when Bunin called on Fondaminskij and invited Nabokov out. When Nabokov and Bunin met in Paris in 1936, Bunin was far from “basking in the Nobel prize he had just received” (SM 285) but rather profoundly unhappy, a fact for which his diaries provide explicit evidence. Nabokov’s account stems from his discussion of Russian émigré literature in the 1930s. Nabokov adumbrates his mention of Bunin before speaking di-
rectly of him: "And there was the old cher maître dropping pearl by pearl an admirable tale he had read innumerable times, and always in the same manner, wearing the expression of fastidious distaste that his nobly furrowed face had in the frontispiece of his collected works" (Nabokov 1966: 282). The actual account of their meetings follows a few pages later:

Another independent writer was Ivan Bunin. [...] At the time I found him tremendously perturbed by the personal problem of aging. The first thing he said to me was to remark with satisfaction that his posture was better than mine, despite his being some thirty years older than I [Bunin was born in 1870, Nabokov in 1899 – M.D.S.]. He was basking in the Nobel prize he had just received and invited me to some kind of expensive and fashionable eating place in Paris for a heart-to-heart talk. Unfortunately, I happen to have a morbid dislike for restaurants and cafés, especially Parisian ones – I detest crowds, harried waiters, Bohemians, vermouth concoctions, coffee, zakuski [Russian hors d'oeuvres – M.D.S.], floor shows and so forth. [...] Heart-to-heart talks, confessions in the Dostoevskian manner [actually Bunin detested Dostoevskij no less strongly than did Nabokov – M.D.S.], are also not in my line. Bunin, a spry old gentleman, with a rich and unchaste vocabulary, was puzzled by my irresponsiveness to the hazel grouse of which I had had enough in my childhood and exasperated by my refusal to discuss eschatological matters. Toward the end of the meal we were utterly bored with each other. "You will die in dreadful pain and complete isolation," remarked Bunin bitterly as we went toward the cloak-room. [...] I wanted to help Bunin into his raglan but he stopped me with a proud gesture of his open hand. Still struggling perfunctorily – he was now trying to help me – we emerged into the pallid bleakness of a Paris winter day. My companion was about to button his collar when a look of surprise and distress twisted his handsome features. Gingerly opening his overcoat, he began tugging at something under his armpit. I came to his assistance and together we finally dragged out my long woolen scarf [...] stuffed into the wrong coat. The thing came out inch by inch; it was like unwrapping a mummy and we kept slowly revolving around each other, to the ribald amusement of three sidewalk whores. Then, when the operation was over, we walked on without a word to a street corner where we shook hands and separated. (Nabokov 1966: 285-286)

Aldanov, who witnessed part of the meeting, said that "when Bunin and [Nabokov] talked to each other and looked at each other it felt all the time as if two movie cameras were rolling". The 1936 Paris meeting finally made it clear to both Nabokov and Bunin that as human beings they had nothing to say to each other. As artists, they had already grown too far apart. On an
allegorical level, “unwrapping a mummy” during a ritual dance the two writers performed on a Parisian street before “amused” prostitutes signified Nabokov’s imminent “separation” not only from Bunin as the best living Russian prose writer of the older generation, but also from the boundaries of Russian culture which Bunin could never conceive of traversing. Priglašenie na kazn’ (Invitation to a Beheading) was being serialized in Contemporary Annals as the two writers faced each other in a Parisian street, and Dar (The Gift, 1937-1938) was on its way. Nabokov was still to write some of his very best short stories, including ‘Vesna v Fial’te’ (‘Spring in Fialta’) and ‘Obla-ko, ozero, bašnja’ (‘Cloud, Castle, Lake’). But in January 1936 such a remarkably perceptive person as Bunin sensed that the constraints of Russian culture were becoming too narrow for Nabokov. As we know from Bunin’s letters of the late 1930s-1950s, he never fully came to terms with the Nabokov phenomenon: here was a writer whose art exhibited much stylistic kinship with Bunin’s own fiction and yet shared very little with his underlying philosophy of life.

Nina Berberova wrote about Bunin in Kursiv moj (The Italics Are Mine) that he was “an absolute and inveterate atheist” (“[byl] absoljutnym i zakorenelym ateistom”) and admitted of that on numerous occasions. She also said that Bunin never concerned himself with religious issues and had no capacity for abstract thinking. Berberova called Bunin a “completely earthly person” (“zemnoj čelovek”), a “concrete wholesome animal” with a talent to “create the beautiful in primitive forms, ready and preexisting him”. She contended that Bunin was “equipped with a remarkable sense of language and a limited imagination” and was completely “devoid of pošlost”. Finally, drawing on Bunin’s own bitter words in his 1950 memoirs (“I was born too late. Had I been born earlier, my memoirs would have been of a different kind”), Berberova suggested that she envisioned Bunin’s birthdate somewhere between Turgenev’s and Čechov’s, around 1840 (Berberova 1983: 292). To see Bunin as did Berberova is to miss the point. I will not pursue here the biographical details of Bunin’s upbringing and adult life and the role organized religion played there. I will say, however, that the worldview which Bunin’s fiction projects – let alone his travels to the Holy Land documented in ‘Ten’ pticy’ (‘Bird’s Shadow’) or his Biblical poetry – strikes me as remarkably Judaeo-Christian with an emphasis on the mythopoetics of the Old Testament. Indeed, Bunin’s mind was characteristically Cartesian in some respects. As for Descartes of the Third Meditation, the existence of God and divine order was for Bunin ultimately a notion that required no proof. He did not probe the cosmology of the universe in his writings. Bunin’s concerns as a philosopher of human existence were with the fundamental issues an average human mind can fathom, mainly with the limits and powers of desires. Bunin’s covert modernism – and his worldview as a modern subject – derives from his keen interest in the extremities and crises
of desire in the twentieth century. Bunin’s artistic preoccupation with death, manifest in the stories of the 1910s and culminating in *Dark Avenues*, reflected his awareness that death ends the joy of earthly living celebrated in his writings. Beyond Bunin’s meditations on the evanescence of life (‘Legkoe dychanie’ ['Light Breathing']), largely inherited from Ecclesiastes, his modern metaphysical concerns are few.

To return to my reconstruction of the 1936 meeting between the two writers, Nabokov was no longer inside the artistic territory that Bunin claimed as his own. Prior to that, while reading Nabokov’s short stories such as ‘The Aurelian’ or ‘Perfection’ and the novels *The Defense* or *Invitation to a Beheading*, and in fact as early as 1929, Bunin saw a writer who, as he put it, “opened a whole world” (“otkryl celyj mir”) of his own in Russian literature (Kuznecova 1967: 184). Perhaps Bunin now realized that he, the last representative of Russian literature which starts with “Zukovskij and Karamzin” and “ends with Ivan Bunin”, could not discern the nature of Nabokov’s metaphysical world.

The Nabokov that Bunin saw in January 1936 was no longer the exalted young author of confessional letters, nor the brilliant admirer of Bunin’s verse whom Bunin perceived in the reflected light of his Nobel fame, but Nabokov the mature writer who knew his worth full well and no longer needed to be part of a literary tradition or school besides “that of talent”. And Bunin’s reaction to Nabokov was a mixture of disappointment, bile, jealousy – and continuing admiration of his talent. These components would persist until Nabokov’s move to America in 1940. As for Nabokov, he described the character of his subsequent meetings with Bunin as “a bantering and rather depressing mode of conversation, a Russian variety of American ‘kidding’ and this precluded any real commerce between [them]” (Nabokov 1966: 287).

On the surface, Nabokov and Bunin continued to be friendly and saw each other in Paris. On February 8, 1936, Bunin attended the evening of readings by Nabokov and Chodasevič held under the aegis of *Contemporary Annals*. Nabokov read three short stories, ‘A Russian Beauty’, ‘Terra Incognita’, and ‘Breaking the News’. After the reading, a group of writers went out to Café La Fontaine. During the celebration, which several émigré memoirists recorded and mythologized, Nabokov supposedly astonished his fellow-writers, especially Aldanov and Bunin, with a confession that he had not read an important work by Tolstoj. The memoirists disagree on the work to which Nabokov referred. Berberova remembered that it was Tolstoj’s ‘Sevastopol’skie rasskazy’ cycle (‘The Sebastopol Stories’) that Nabokov spoke of: “In a fit of anger Bunin almost lost the gift of speech, tears of sadness rolled in Aldanov’s eyes” (Berberova 1958: 114-115). Aleksandr Bachrach, who was a member of Bunin’s household during World War Two, later recalled that it had been Tolstoj’s *War and Peace* that Nabokov admitted
finishing only recently and enjoying a few scenes like the amputation of Anatol' Kuragin's leg (Bachrach 1979: 78; Bachrach 1980: 101). Bachrach, who held a reserved opinion of Nabokov, wrote that Bunin liked to repeat the anecdote about Nabokov's "confession" (Bachrach 1980: 99-104).

On February 15, 1936, Bunin and Nabokov participated in a poets' evening along with Adamović, Berberova, Cvetaeva and others. At the end of February, Nabokov returned to Berlin, leaving Bunin with uneasy memories of their encounters. A delicate spring broke in the complex mechanism of their relationship. Witnesses of the émigré literary scene, some of whom knew both Bunin and Nabokov, reported Bunin's divided remarks at Nabokov's expense. For instance, Zinaida Šachovskaja began an article on Nabokov - printed in 1937 in La Cité Chrétienne - with a reference to a conversation she had had with Ivan Bunin about young émigré authors. She claimed that the conversation had taken place "exactly" a year prior to the publication of the article, i.e. in July 1936 and after Nabokov's January meeting with Bunin later described in Speak, Memory. To Bunin's remark that the young writers "do not know their craft" ("les jeunes ne connaissent pas leur métier"), she asked: "And what about Nabokov?". "Celui-là appartient déjà à l'histoire de la littérature russe. Un monstre, mais quel écrivain" ("He has already established himself a place in the history of Russian literature. A monster, but what a writer"; Schakhowskoj 1937). After Bunin's 1938 trip to the Baltic countries, his Estonian correspondent, V.V. Smidt, recorded that, to her surprise, Bunin spoke with complete indifference of Nabokov (Smidt 1973: 335). Berberova, who knew Bunin for over twenty years in France, recalled that "Nabokov's name made Bunin furious" ("privodo v jarost") in the late 1930s (Berberova 1983: 298). When Nabokov returned to Paris in 1937, his meetings with Bunin, if devoid of "chemistry", still continued to take place. Bunin attended Nabokov's reading on January 24, 1937 at rue Les Cases. They had tea afterwards at the Bunins' (Grin 1977-1982, 3: 23), and Bunin complimented 'Universtitetskaja poema' ('The University Poem'), which had been published in Contemporary Annals ten years earlier, as Nabokov's best work. How was Nabokov to interpret this remark? As caustic and offensive? Or, perhaps, as Bunin's attempt to redirect Nabokov towards the Russian literary tradition going back to Puškin and represented by Bunin at the time. Bunin had certainly noticed that 'The University Poem' dialogized with Puškin's Evgenij Onegin (Eugene Onegin) stanza: Nabokov reversed Puškin's AbAbCCddEff Egg rhyme scheme in a fourteen-verse stanza (capital letters refer to feminine clausulae) and rhymed his "novel in verse" as AAbCCbDDeeFgFg. Perhaps Bunin's remark was meant to suggest that Nabokov did not value the Russian roots of his art and was inconsistent in his choice of literary models? In this connection, Bunin's 1939 letter provides an insight into the Nabokov-Bunin relationship in the late 1930s. He wrote the following to M.V. Ka-
ramzina, a Russian writer living in Estonia: “Sirin vse-taki nesterpim — lichač vozle nočnogo kabaka, chotja i zamečatel’nyj” ("All in all, Sirin is insufferable: a driver of a smart cab waiting outside a night club, although he is remarkable"); “lichach” in Russian usage also has the connotation of “a frisky dare-devil”).

Despite the mutual differences, the two writers got together regularly in Paris, for instance at Nabokov’s reading at Salle Chopin on February 11, and at the Nadežda Teffi celebration on March 30, 1937. Later, during Nabokov’s long stay on the French Riviera, Bunin visited him twice. The first visit was in Cannes, where the Nabokovs lived in July-October 1937. In a letter to Šachovskaja, his regular correspondent in the 1930s, Nabokov described confronting Bunin with a quote from her then recent Belgian article: “Did I write to you that when Bunin was my guest in Cannes, I embarrassed him somewhat: ‘so, you call me a monster’ [nazyvaet vyrodkom]”. Nabokov and Bunin planned to see each other in Menton. Nabokov sent the Bunins his holiday greetings in December 1937, a cordial and friendly card. Bunin wrote back from Paris in February 1938. His postcard is one of the few surviving pieces of correspondence addressed to Nabokov:

Дорогой Писатель [in his correspondence with certain writers, Bunin liked to capitalize the word pisatel’ “writer” which is not a standard practice in Russian-language correspondence but rather a measure of recognition – M.D.S.], я собираюсь в ваши места (и м. б. надолго). Говорят, что по всей Ривьере все полно, трудно найти даже комнатку. А у вас, в Ментоне? Напишите словечко, буду благодарен. Приветствую вас с суворукою, мысленно секу вашего наследника. Ваш Ив. Бунин. (“Dear Writer, I am planning to join you (and, possibly, for a long time). They say that the Riviera is all full up, that even finding a little room is a problem. And what about Menton where you are staying? Please drop a line, I will be much obliged. I send greetings to you and your wife, and in my mind I give your heir a whipping. Yours, Iv. Bunin.”)

Nabokov offered to help Bunin with finding a room and even quoted the price at the Imperial, Menton’s best hotel of the time. However, Bunin did not end up staying in Menton. Later, in 1938, when Bunin was living in Beausoleil, he went up to the mountains to visit Nabokov in the Alpine village of Moulinet, Nabokov’s last abode in the Alpes Maritimes. In Moulinet, a village some ten miles north of Sospel, with a spectacular view of the wooded Alps and nothing much else besides a bakery, a post-office and two country hotels, Bunin arrived one afternoon. To quote Nabokov’s letter to Šachovskaja, “Nakanune našego ot’ezda, sredi eralaša ukladki javilsja k nam Lekseič, novelevskaž” (“On the eve of your departure, amid the confusion of packing, Lekseič the Nobel man [“Lekseič” from Bunin’s pa-
Vladimir Nabokov and Ivan Bunin: A Reconstruction

tronymic, Alekseevič – M.D.S.] showed up”). As Brian Boyd put it, “their meetings seemed destined for disjunction” (Boyd 1990: 487). A note of condescending irony, heretofore undetectable on Nabokov’s side of the relationship, suddenly voiced itself in a postcard written after Bunin’s visit. Nabokov had gone a long way from confessing love to Bunin as his aesthetic ideal circa 1921 to treating him as some sort of a comical figure in 1938 (even if Bunin with his delusion of grandeur did appear grotesque to Nabokov at the height of the latter’s Russian career). In November 1938, Nabokov presented Bunin with a copy of *Invitation to a Beheading* with a sober inscription compared to the one he had made in a copy of *Mary* in 1926: “To Dear Ivan Alekseevič Bunin with the very best regards from the author. XII. 1938”. Bunin did not leave a single mark in the text of his copy.

Bunin and Nabokov exchanged several letters in the spring-summer of 1939, Nabokov settled in Paris with his family, Bunin remained on the Riviera. At the time, Nabokov was actively looking for a teaching position in England and America. Bunin agreed to write him a letter of recommendation. As a sample, Nabokov sent what the Russian-American historian Michail Rostovcev had written for him. Apparently, Bunin suggested that Nabokov write the recommendation himself and offered to sign it. Nabokov had no choice but to do it: “As unpleasant as it is to write myself a recommendation, to make things easier, I have put it together, based on Rostovcev’s.” Bunin signed the recommendation (“Ivan Bunin, Prix Nobel 1933”), dated, ironically, April 1, 1939. Nabokov thanked him in a postcard from England which contains remarkable examples of Nabokov’s metaphorical epistolary style. This appears to be the last time Nabokov ever wrote to Bunin.

In Paris in the fall of 1939, Nabokov and Bunin saw each other again. Bunin’s wife noted in her diary: “We see [vidaemsja] the Višnjaks, Zenzinov, Fondaminskij, Sirin, the Zajcevs” (Grin 1977-1982, 3: 34). Their last meeting occurred at the apartment of the politician and historian Aleksandr Kerenskij on May 15, 1940, the day before the Nabokovs’ departure for the United States (Boyd 1990: 522). In the small world of the Parisian Russian intelligentsia, a curious *mise-en-scène* transpired: Nabokov, who stopped by to see Kerenskij, now faced a double encounter not only with Bunin but also the Merežkovskij who also happened to be there.

As Nabokov sailed for the New World after having literally crossed the boundaries of Russian émigré literature – like his dear protagonist Vasilij Šiškov had in the eponymous story – Bunin stayed behind in France with vexing memories of this “greenhorn who pulled out a pistol and killed all the older writers with one shot”. To quote Nabokov, “across the dark sky of exile, Sirin passed [...] like a meteor, and disappeared, leaving nothing much else behind him than a vague sense of uneasiness” (Nabokov 1966: 288). Bunin’s anxiety over Nabokov’s dazzling achievement gave him the creative impetus to work again. In the wake of their friendship turned rivalry, and
likely under the impact of having witnessed Nabokov’s triumph in Paris, Bunin conceived of a book which would settle the score between them. When the first Russian edition of *Dark Avenues* had come out in New York in 1943, Nabokov was teaching Russian at Wellesley, Bunin had ten more years left to live, and Russian prose gained a unique masterpiece.

5.

Bunin wrote these jealous words to an American Slavicist before World War Two: “I think that I influenced many. But how can that be established, how determined? I think that probably had I not existed, there would have been no Sirin (even though, at first glance, he seems so original).” In preparation for her excellent 1938 study, Elizabeth Malozemoff had also asked Nabokov to comment on Bunin’s role in his development. Nabokov, writing back in January 1938, said that he did not consider himself a follower of Bunin (Malozemoff 1938: 236). Judging solely on the basis of Bunin’s and Nabokov’s works which had been published by 1938, as well as the letters which both writers had sent her, Malozemoff concluded that “Sirin’s tricky stylistic novelties, his bold experiments [...] will probably soon begin to appal Bunin. Sirin audaciously approaches the mysteries of life, dualities of conscience, the depths of a criminal’s soul. He is as far from Bunin as Dostoevsky is from Tolstoy” (Malozemoff 1938: 236). Forty years later, curiously echoing both Bunin’s own words and Malozemoff’s remarks, a Third Wave émigré critic suggested that Bunin’s style had paved the way to Nabokov’s anti-Bunin poetics (“Buninskaja stilistika poslužila anti-buninskoj poētike”; Kaganaskaia 1978: 74).

Memories of Nabokov’s literary stardom tormented and infuriated the seventy-year old Bunin after Nabokov’s departure in 1940. During and after the war, Bunin reread Nabokov’s works in his personal library. Traces of Bunin’s reactions have survived in his letters of the time. On September 3, 1945, Bunin wrote to Aldanov that he had gone through some old issues of *Contemporary Annals*: “How many interesting works! How much horrible stuff! [skol’ko ėudoviščnogo!]. For instance, Sirin’s *The Gift*. At times this is like Ippolit from *War and Peace*. It goes without saying that a parallel between the character of Tolstoj’s Ippolit – gibbering and devoid of any real substance – and Nabokov’s beautifully controlled and intellectually saturated writing in *The Gift* is simply the product of the bilious old man that Bunin frequently appeared in his letters of the 1940s-1950s. In another letter, Bunin described rereading Nabokov’s “atrocious, perverted” *The Gift* (“dikij, razvratnyj roman”) and swearing dirty words (“rugajas’ materno”). One needs, however, to go beyond Bunin’s intemperate responses to Nabokov and to recognize in them the late repercussions of that enormous shock which Na-
Bokov's works of the 1930s produced on Bunin, thereby compelling him to accept the challenge of his younger rival.

In *Dark Avenues*, one of the most polemical masterpieces ever written, Bunin was settling three scores. First, he wanted to bring to an end his lifelong argument with modernism and modernists. From the earliest steps of his career, he had never considered himself a modernist. The reasons for that are many, and have to do with Bunin's origins and youth, his first encounters with the Symbolists in Moscow and Petersburg at the turn of the century, as well as his close ties with the Sreda (Wednesday) group of writers (Leonid Andreev, Maksim Gor'kij, Skitaščok, Nikolaj Telešov, Evgenij Čirikov) who appropriated the realistic traditions of Russian nineteenth-century prose. Additionally, Bunin inherited his disdain toward the Russian modernists, the "other camp" ("drugoj lager'"; Bunin 1965-1967, 9: 296) as he labeled it, from Čechov with whom he was close and who resented decadence in art and in life ("What sort of decadents are they," Bunin reported Čechov saying, "they are burly peasants [zdorovenjejšie mužiki]"; Bunin 1955: 220). Finally, Bunin's disregard of and later open belligerence toward Russian modernist writing, especially its Symbolist trajectory, had been a reaction to his own very hostile reception by the Symbolist circles. To quote Chodasevič, "The Symbolists encountered Bunin with open animosity. I heard many times the most contemptuous remarks about him from Brjusov, Bal'mont, Andrej Belyj, B. Sadovskoj, S. Solov'ev, Ėlis. In general, the Symbolists were not interested in his prose, and of his poems they had a very poor opinion." From the outset of his artistic career, Bunin associated modernism(s) not with a quest for new form but with a new decadent style of behavior, with the Stray Dog (Brođačaja sobaka) Cabaret, with the theosophical movement, with Vjačeslav Ivanov's Tower (Bašnja), with ethical and aesthetic "perversions" of various kinds. Bunin detested such major modernists as Belyj or Sologub on personal and on literary grounds. This is evident not only from his letters and diaries, but also from his memoirs where the fallacies of the Russian modernists, especially the Symbolists, are a leitmotif. In view of what Bunin perceived as a growing threat, first from Blok and Belyj, later from Majakovskij and Babel', he also came to regard himself as the bearer of the torch of the great Russian nineteenth-century tradition of Puškin, Tolstoj, Turgenev and Čechov. As a result of Bunin's militant anti-modernism and self-awareness as a keeper of traditions, he remained blind to the covert modernism of his own art (the term was coined by John Burt Foster and originally applied to Nabokov). Overt Russian modernists such as Belyj or Remizov sought to create their own innovative stylistic methods in order to keep up with the cataclysmic changes of their time (e.g. Belyj) or to preserve Russia's disappearing cultural past (e.g. Remizov). As a covert modernist, Bunin brought the stylistic conventions of Russian classical prose to the point of absolute (and at times obsessive) linguistic perfection, while
also contesting such nineteenth-century Russian thematic taboos as sex and the depiction of the female body.

However, Bunin was not blind to Nabokov’s covert modernism which was especially manifest in the short stories of the High Period and *The Gift* where Nabokov negotiates between his nineteenth-century narrative leanings and his *sui generis* metaphysics. In fact, I would argue that Bunin perceived Nabokov’s works of the middle-to-late 1930s, which included *Invitation to a Beheading*, *The Gift*, ‘Spring in Fialta’, ‘Poseščenie muzeja’ (‘The Visit to the Museum’) and ‘Cloud, Castle, Lake’, as a betrayal of the Russian classical tradition which Bunin served to preserve in exile. Bunin initially viewed Nabokov as a poet working in the classical vein and a fiction writer with marked leanings toward Čechov’s stories and Bunin’s own prose of the 1910s. To an extent, in the 1920s Nabokov did fashion himself as a follower, defending Bunin from attacks by the younger Parisian poets. Nabokov’s stories of the Early and Middle Periods exhibit numerous traces of a stylistic apprenticeship with Bunin, especially in language, and rhythm and intonation. Nabokov’s late Russian novels and stories of the High Period emblematize a fusion of the Russian classical tradition with modernist trends, both Russian and European. When Vasilij Ivanovič of ‘Cloud, Castle, Lake’, a Chekhovian *intelligent*, encounters a window into eternity, an otherworldly domain with antecedents in the mythopoetics of Russian Symbolism, this fusion told Bunin that Nabokov was no longer on his side of the artistic barricade, in his “camp”. Bunin reacted to Nabokov’s writings as vehemently as he did because he saw in them a son who looks more like the neighbor across the hall than like his own father.

In *Dark Avenues* Bunin was also settling a score with his personal past, with his failed love for Galina Kuznecova. This prompted the subject matter of his book: love and its tragic consequences. A number of female protagonists in *Dark Avenues* including those of ‘Genrich’ and ‘Čistyj ponedel’nik’ (‘Ash Wednesday’), were modeled after Kuznecova. Bunin had to prove himself the best living Russian writer. This demanded a form which would typify and crown his entire career in fiction, as well as address the issues which are at the core of his world vision. Bunin found such a form: a book of short stories, unified by a focus on writing love, death, and the female body – all three inseparable in Bunin’s perception. In *Dark Avenues* Bunin actualized a notion which figures as early as his 1915 story ‘Grammatika ljubvi’ (‘Grammar of Love’). In his project of a grammar of the Russian love story – both a summation of the best thematic achievements of the century and a half of the Russian short story and a compendium of its narrative repertoire – Bunin anticipated the notion of narrative grammar which literary scholars began to explore in the 1960s. Bunin began his future collection in 1937 and even managed to publish five stories in *The Latest News* before the outbreak of World War Two. However, the majority of the stories were written
in Grasse during the war. The first edition of *Dark Avenues* appeared in New York in 1943 and consisted of eleven short stories. The second, authoritative edition came out in Paris in 1946 with thirty-eight stories. In his literary will, Bunin requested that two more post-war stories be added to the 1946 edition. In its final form, *Dark Avenues* is a text of forty short stories, divided into three uneven parts. Most important for Bunin’s duel with Nabokov and the modernists is its second part, fourteen stories of which thirteen were composed between September and November 1940, in a titanic creative effort which may be likened to Puškin’s Boldino autumn of 1830.

In the middle section of *Dark Avenues* we find some of Bunin’s best-known stories: ‘Rusja’, ‘Vizitnye kartochki’ (‘Calling Cards’), ‘V Pariž’e’ (‘In Paris’), ‘Genrich’, ‘Natali’. This is Bunin at his absolute best. The stories are perfect stylistically. They display a superb economy of means and a judicious balance of description and dialogue. Additionally, almost every story points to earlier texts by Bunin and earlier classics of Russian literature. For instance, ‘Muza’ (‘Muse’) revisits several motifs from Tolstoj’s ‘The Kreutzer Sonata’; ‘Calling Cards’ goes back to Bunin’s earlier ‘The Sunstroke’ and sharpens its argument with Čechov’s ‘Lady with a Lap Dog’; ‘Natali’ polemicizes with Nabokov’s ‘A Russian Beauty’. Bunin considered *Dark Avenues* his best work, in terms of style and subject matter. He was convinced that he had said a “new word” in art, created a “new approach” to life.99

One could easily devote an entire study to a comparison of *Dark Avenues* (their middle part in particular) and Nabokov’s stories of the High Period.100 Here I would like to concentrate on one story, to my mind the best in Bunin’s collection, as the centerpiece of his answer to Nabokov’s artistic challenge. I have chosen to focus on ‘Genrich’ (a male name, the Russian equivalent of the German “Heinrich” and the English “Henry”) for two reasons. First, ‘Genrich’ polemicizes with the structure and subject matter of Nabokov’s best short story of the 1930s, ‘Spring in Fialta’. Second, it emblematizes Bunin’s argument with the modernists, especially with Russian Symbolists.

Set in the atmosphere of the Russian Silver Age, ‘Genrich’ tells the story of the Russian poet Glebov (an invented writer) and his lover, the Russian journalist Elena Genrichovna, who published her work under a male pen-name, Genrich, derived from her patronymic. Glebov, a successful writer and a very handsome man, is simultaneously involved in three affairs. One is with a sixteen-year-old, Nadja, his poetic disciple, another with an exotic fin-de-siècle woman by the name of Li (from the English “Lee” or the Chinese “Li”). The third affair is with Genrich. In the middle of a Russian winter, Glebov and Genrich take a train to Vienna together, after which Glebov goes to Nice, intending to meet up with Genrich on the French Riviera. Genrich has important business to take care of in Vienna. She intends to break off her
long-term sexual relations with an Austrian author and publisher, Arthur Spiegler (Spigler), while hoping to continue their professional relationship. Genrich translates Spiegler’s works into Russian and supplies his magazine with news of Russia’s bohemian circles. On the train, Glebov and Genrich experience an outburst of passion – genuine albeit stimulated by their secret escape. Genrich promises to have a brief explanation with her Austrian employer and join Glebov the following morning. Glebov spends several days alone waiting for Genrich, drinking and gambling to deaden his emotional pain. Finally, in Venice, Glebov learns from a newspaper that Genrich has been shot by Spiegler. Such is the summary of the narrative which does little justice to its artistic perfection. What are, then, the main issues of Russian cultural history that the story addresses?

I have already spoken of Bunin’s unceasing polemics with the Russian modernists. Aleksandr Blok, the foremost poet of the Russian Silver Age, remained, to use Nina Berberova’s expression, an “open wound” (“rana”) for Bunin throughout his life (Berberova 1983: 293). Bunin knew Blok in the 1900s, although not nearly as well as he did some other Symbolists (e.g. Valerij Brjusov). In 1922, Bunin recorded in his diary: “I read Blok – what tiresome, droning, monotonous nonsense, vapid in its pompousness and somehow blasphemous [koščunstvennyj]” (Grin 1977-1982, 2: 95). “Blasphemous” would become the key word in Bunin’s perception of the great poet. Bunin read closely Blok’s published diaries and took notes, preparing for his excruciatingly unfair and disgraceful attacks that culminated in the 1950 Memoirs (Grin 1977-1982, 2: 223). Bunin studied the details of Blok’s life, questioning those émigrés who had known him well (Grin 1977-1982, 2: 52-53). Bunin spoke of Blok in increasingly nasty terms in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. Everything about Blok infuriated Bunin. In a 1928 letter to Chodasevič, Bunin hypothesized that Puškin would have reacted to Blok’s verse with the dirtiest swear words (“očen’ materno”). In another letter, addressed to the Slavicist Petr Bicilli in 1936, Bunin wrote that he “would like [Bicilli] even more if [Bicilli] did not love Blok [...] and Remizov [...].” Perhaps most revealing of all was Bunin’s long 1950 letter to his former secretary, Andrej Sedych (Jakov Cvibak), where he tries to justify his own insulting remarks in the Memoirs which had caused indignation in émigré literary circles:

Вы не должны огорчаться за Блока. Это был первый актёр, патологически склонный к кошунству: только Демьян Бедный мог решиться на такую, например, гнусность, как рифмовка (в последнем куплете "Двенадцати") – мне даже трудно это писать! – рифмовка "пес" – "Христос". 
"You must not be upset about Blok. He was a perverted actor, pathologically inclined to blasphemy: only Dem'jan Bednyj [a Soviet proletarian poet – M.D.S.] could have brought himself to such vileness as, for instance, rhyming (in the last couplet of The Twelve [Blok's celebrated long poem – M.D.S.]) – it is even hard for me to write this! – rhyming 'dog' and 'Christ' ['pes' in the Russian rhymes with "Christos"]")

Émigré littérature, including Adamovič, Bachrach, Berberova and Odoevceva, discussed various sides of Bunin's animosity toward Blok. Adamovič is especially convincing when he speaks of Bunin's apparent blindness to Blok's prophetic role in twentieth-century Russian culture and of his having misunderstood Blok as a person. Many explanations for Bunin's hostility to Blok may be offered. For instance, Bunin read Blok's diaries and was certainly familiar with the entry for September 28, 1908 with references to Blok's reading list: "Small-time contemporary authors: Lazarevskij, Kuprin, Bunin, Kondruškin". He could never forgive Blok such an attitude. In spite of Blok's tragic self-mortification in 1921, Bunin perceived the poet's later years as ones of collaboration with the Bolsheviks. Finally, and in light of Bunin's anti-modernism, one should not overlook the fact that Bunin linked mysticism – an integral part of Blok's Symbolist mythopoetics – with moral corruption, madness and roguery. In his diary for 1922, Bunin noted after reading Blok: "Yes, mysteriousness, all sorts of 'secret hints to that which no one can get' ['nameki temnye na to, čego ne vedaet nikto'] – the mysteriousness of a rogue or madman" (Grin 1977-1982, 2: 95; Bunin slightly misquotes Michail Lermontov's poem 'Zurnalist, čitatel' i pisatel' ['The Journalist, the Reader, and the Writer', 1840]).

In her long vivid memoir of Bunin, Irina Odoevceva quotes a series of his contemptuous remarks about Blok. She reports that Bunin called Blok a "stage poseur" ("éstradnyj figljar"), a "circus clown" ("ryžij iz cirka"), a "country-fair fool" ("šut balagannyj") (Odoevceva 1983: 309-310). It is not hard to notice that Bunin's attitudes to Blok are quite similar to his attitudes to Nabokov during and after the period of working on Dark Avenues. Much like in Blok, Bunin resented in Nabokov what he perceived as literary games, tricks behind the back of the reader, creating a sense of mystery to cover up the emptiness of the soul. In 1939, as mentioned above, Bunin described Nabokov as a "driver of a smart cab waiting outside a night club [lichač vozle nočnogo kabaka]". Writing to Aldanov in 1951, Bunin referred to Nabokov as "šut gorochovyj" ("buffoon"; "clown").

In 'Genrich', Bunin's negative attitudes, both literary and personal, both rational and irrational, toward Blok, Nabokov, and modernism, form a dense text of polemics. By creating a protagonist who embodies what Bunin saw around 1940 as the quintessence of a modernist artist, a Blok and a Nabokov together, one might say, Bunin sought to resolve, once and for all, his life-long conflict with modernism as both art and vision. By writing a
story which polemicizes with Nabokov’s best Russian short story, ‘Spring in Fialta’, Bunin was determined to demonstrate his artistic superiority over the younger master. Also, by choosing ‘Spring in Fialta’ as the main aim of his polemics with Nabokov, Bunin also directed this polemic at the question of Čechov’s legacy. Bunin was sure to sense Čechov’s artistic presence in Nabokov’s story. In fact, Bunin alludes to ‘Lady with a Lap Dog’ as Glebov imitates the mannered speech of a Russian provincial describing Italian attractions: ‘“In Florence I like only Trecento...’ And he was actually born in Belev and only spent one week in Florence in all his life” (Bunin 1965-1967, 7: 136). In Čechov’s story, Gurov amuses Anna during their first encounter by imitating a philistine also from Belev, a provincial Russian town, complaining of boredom in Yalta. ‘Genrich’ finalizes a three-corner dialogue involving Nabokov, Čechov, and Bunin himself. In ‘Spring in Fialta’, as I argued elsewhere, Nabokov offers a powerful alternative to Čechov’s view of the nature of love, that informs the open-ended structure of his short fiction exemplified by ‘Lady with a Lap Dog’ (Shrayer 1995). Bunin’s ‘Genrich’ also concerns itself with creating the kind of narrative closure that produces the strongest effect upon the reader. To the otherworldly opening which transcends death at the end of Nabokov’s ‘Spring in Fialta’, Bunin offers an ending in which death is introduced to resolve a crisis of desire.

We find a number of parallels between the themes, characters and plot structures in ‘Genrich’ and ‘Spring in Fialta’. Both stories are about desire and deceit. Glebov in Bunin’s story is deceiving two lovers (Nadja, Li) by claiming that he is going to Nice “alone”. Vasen’ka in ‘Spring in Fialta’ also takes a trip to a Riviera town to get away from his wife and family routine. During the course of their last meetings with Nina and Genrich, Vasen’ka and Glebov experience surges of love and attempt to make their relationships with the women permanent. In both stories, the triangles consist of a Russian man in Europe, a Russian woman in Europe, and a European man. Finally, what makes the two stories alike is that both Russian female protagonists die at the hands of foreign modernist authors. In ‘Spring in Fialta’, Nina is killed in a car crash while riding in the car with the protean Ferdinand and his androgynous friend Segur. In ‘Genrich’, Spiegler shoots the female protagonist dead with a pistol. Both stories open with cityscapes presented through the eyes of the male protagonists (Glebov’s winter Moscow, Vasen’ka’s springtime Fialta), and end with news of the death of Nina and Genrich. In both cases, the male protagonists learn the news of their lovers’ deaths from newspapers, Glebov in Venice, Vasen’ka at the train station in Milan. These are some generally similar contours to both plots, although one finds the center of Bunin’s dialogue with Nabokov’s ‘Spring in Fialta’ in the character of Genrich’s employer and lover, the Austrian modernist Arthur Spiegler.

One needs to recall that in ‘Spring in Fialta’ Nina is married to a very successful Hungarian-French author, Ferdinand. She does not love him, but
feels connected to him and, in part, has surrendered to his powers. Genrich’s affiliation with the Austrian writer Spiegler is different. On the train, Genrich tells Glebov how much she detests Spiegler. She promises to end her liaison with Spiegler during the forthcoming meeting in Vienna. Genrich is frightened of having to go through the break-up with Spiegler, a manipulative and possessive person. During their previous meeting, she had attempted to talk to him. “You cannot imagine,” she tells Glebov on the train, “the hatred that was written across his face!” (Bunin 1965-1967, 7: 137). Miserable at the prospect of the meeting in Vienna, Genrich complains to Glebov:

“В нескольких часах ты уедешь, а я останусь одна, пойду в кафе ждать своего австрийца... А вечером опять кафе и венгерский оркестр, эти резущие душу скрипки...” (Бунин 1965-1967, 7: 137)

(“In a few hours you are going to leave, and I will stay there alone, go to the café to wait for my Austrian... And in the evening the café again and a Hungarian orchestra, those violins that cut one’s soul.”)

The “Hungarian orchestra” (a Russian literary cliché) in the Viennese café may point to Ferdinand’s national origins (born a subject of the Austro-Hungarian Empire) and his bohemian fondness for cafés. Genrich’s description also recalls the scene in ‘Spring in Fialta’ where Vasen’ka and Nina join Ferdinand and his cohorts in a “perfectly bourgeois” café with an “orchestra [...] of half a dozen weary-looking self-conscious ladies” (Nabokov 1995: 417). Like Genrich, Nabokov’s protagonist recoils at the vapid atmosphere of the café.

Another dimension which links Spiegler to Ferdinand, and Bunin’s story to ‘Spring in Fialta’, is Glebov’s and Vasen’ka’s perception of the literary merits of their rivals. The reader learns a great deal from Vasen’ka about Ferdinand’s writings. His main accusation is that Ferdinand tricks the reader by covering the missing “truth” with layers of dazzling but empty ornamentation. Vasen’ka writes of Ferdinand:

“Having mastered the art of verbal invention to perfection, he particularly prided himself on being a weaver of words, a title he valued higher than that of a writer; personally, I never could understand what was the good of thinking up books, of penning things that had not really happened in some way or other; and I remember once saying to him [...] that, were I a writer, I should allow only my heart to have imagination, and for the rest rely upon memory [...].” (Nabokov 1995: 416)

Vasen’ka’s accusations against Ferdinand – who is at the height of his popularity right before Nina’s death – come very close to Bunin’s own view
of modernist writing as mysteriousness of rogues and literary games and tricks behind the reader's back. In 'Genrich', Glebov associates his rival Spiegler with the kind of belles-lettres that were fashionable in Europe in the 1900s. He likens the Austrian writer to Stanislaw Przybyszewski (1868-1927), a Polish modernist whose writings enjoyed an enormous but short-lived success in Europe, including Russia, in the 1900s. Przybyszewski's works captured the minds of readers with their depiction of mysticism and ambivalent sexuality. In 'Spring in Fialta', the first-person narrator tells the reader that Ferdinand had enjoyed a rapid success and then went quickly out of fashion. In addition, it is not difficult to notice that Arthur Spiegler suggests the name of a real Austrian modernist, Arthur Schnitzler (1882-1931), a playwright and novelist who made a big name for himself with fictions and dramas portraying the atmosphere of fin-de-siècle Vienna. The names of Przybyszewski and Schnitzler also figure in other stories of Dark Avenues, including 'Ash Wednesday', set in Silver Age Moscow, where the protagonist brings her beloved new books to read, including those of "Hofmannsthal, Schnitzler, [...], Przybyszewski" (Bunin 1965-1967, 7: 239).

To understand the depth of Bunin's polemics with the modernist ethos, one needs to examine the connections between the character of the poet Glebov and the cultural mythology of the Russian Silver Age. It is my hypothesis that in Glebov's character Bunin captured some features of Aleksandr Blok. Glebov, like Blok of the 1900s, is a young poet approaching fame. We see a number of biographical echoes, such as strong interest in Gypsy songs and trips to Italy.112 Glebov's last name might be a palindromic anagram of Blok: bleg-blok; in the final position the voiced "g" and the devoiced "k" are the same phoneme. Taken out of the context of Bunin's cultural polemics in 'Genrich', such echoes seem coincidental. However, in their correlation with other traces of Silver Age, and specifically Blokian mythology, such details add up to a dense text of dialogue. Nadja, Glebov's sixteen-year old lover, may point to the popular myth of Blok's involvement with very young female admirers of whom Bunin knew first-hand but also heard in emigration. For instance, Bunin certainly knew of the remarkable 1936 memoir by Mother Maria (Elizaveta Kuz'mina-Karavaeva, née Pilenko, 1891-1945), describing her visit to Blok in 1906 when she was only fourteen.113 Additionally, another real actor on the Silver Age scene, the poet Nadežda L'vova (1891-1913), might have stood behind Bunin’s Nadja (a diminutive of Nadežda). Bachrach reported that while working on 'Genrich' in 1940, Bunin could not fall asleep for thinking of the kind of verse Nadja would compose in the story.114 In 1913, L'vova shot herself with a revolver given to her by the Symbolist poet Valerij Brjusov with whom she had been involved and who influenced her life and writing (cf. Nadja and Glebov; Genrich and Spiegler; see Kreyd 1994).115
Finally, another biographical subtext elucidates Bunin’s attack on modernism in ‘Genrich’. In 1959, writing to a Soviet critic, Vera Muromceva-Bunina suggested that in Genrich, Bunin portrayed a real person, the journalist, translator and fiction writer Ol’ga Nesterovna Koval’skaja (1879-1933), who published for a while under a male pseudonym, Maks Li (Max Lee). With her husband, Kazimir Koval’skij, a Russian writer of Polish stock (cf. references to Przybyszewski in the story), Ol’ga Koval’skaja wrote a number of novels which were quite popular in the 1910s. One of them, Dvulikij bog (The Two-Faced God, 1916) created a panorama of St. Petersburg theater circles with their twisted intrigues, questionable mores, and a genuine quest for new form reminiscent of Nikolaj Evreinov and Vsevolod Mejerchol’d. Coincidence or not, Koval’skij’s The Double-Faced God also featured a bohemian character by the name of Glebov. The Koval’skij’s emigrated to the United States in the 1920s but resurfaced in Europe again in 1932. News of their death in Turin in 1933, printed in émigré newspapers including The Latest News, could not have passed unnoticed by Bunin. Now that she was dead and a libel suit was out of the question, Bunin seems to have taken Koval’skaja’s pseudonym, Maks Li, split it into two, and by analogy gave the female journalist in the story a male pen-name, ‘Genrich’, while calling Glebov’s permanent Moscow mistress by the second half, “Li”.

As we have seen, all the characters in ‘Genrich’ personify various traits of the modernist ethos as Bunin understood it. Why is it then that Bunin, who resented modernism, made the protagonists, Glebov and especially Genrich, so appealing to readers and so easy to identify with? In fact, the entire scene in the train compartment, where Glebov and Genrich realize that they are in love and cannot live without each other, belongs to the most moving and psychologically powerful scenes in Russian literature. It combines Chekhovian detail and Turgenev’s perfectly intoned dialogue. Moreover, the description of Genrich presents Bunin’s classical ideal of female beauty: “ample breasts [...] thin waist, full hips, narrow, light, chiseled ankles” (Bunin 1965-1967, 7: 134-135). In contrast to Li’s small breasts, skinny willowy figure, dark eyes, beret of black velvet, Genrich in her plain gray dress and with a “Greek hairdo of lemony-red hair” is made to look like a heroine of Russian classical prose, an Anna Odincova from Turgenev’s Fathers and Sons (1861). Dressed like a femme fatale, the dark and excessively sensuous Li embodies a decadent woman full of extremities, a “modernist” female character as Bunin perceived one.

Bunin’s art in ‘Genrich’, as well as in the other stories in Dark Avenues again bears witness to his subterranean modernism. This is the paradoxical duality of Dark Avenues and the source of its artistic triumph. On the one hand, Bunin’s couples of protagonists who live in the modern age, be they Glebov and Genrich, or a Russian General and his younger beloved in the story ‘In Paris’, attempt to revitalize codes of love typical of Russian clas-
sical literature. Glebov, who seems to have forgotten that only the day before he had been leading a bohemian and promiscuous existence in Moscow, suddenly demands that Genrich give up the Austrian completely and go with him to Nice or somewhere in Italy. He does not want to let Genrich go, and rightly so: the modernist Spiegler kills Genrich when she tries to break away from him. Bunin wanted to show that modernist ethos kills love, distorts human fates, perverts human relations.

On the other hand, as we know from Bunin’s diaries, Bunin also wanted Dark Avenues to be a hymn to the female body and to human sexuality. I will quote Bunin’s diary entry of February 3, 1941, which reveals his artistic self-awareness and self-doubt in the process of writing Dark Avenues:

(“That miraculous, something beautiful beyond words, entirely matchless in all of earthly experience, which is the female body, has never been written by anyone. And not only the body. I must try it, I must. I have tried – it comes out vulgar. I need to find some other words.”)

Bunin’s diaries from the 1940s testify to his anxiety as he faced a simultaneous need to parse the narrative grammar of love in classical prose, and to create a new language – previously unknown in Russian literature – to express the sexuality of a modern subject. The desire to write about the female body clashed with Bunin’s insistence on adhering to the laws of “chaste” Russian classical literature. Bunin’s masters and senior contemporaries, Turgenev, Tolstoj, and Čechov, skipped scenes where characters have sex (Tolstoj’s late work ‘Father Sergius’ is one notable exception; overall, dealing with sexual problems, as Tolstoj does in ‘The Kreutzer Sonata’, and writing sex are two entirely different matters). In Čechov’s ‘Lady with a Lap Dog’, the act of sexual intercourse is omitted from the scene where Gurov and Anna become lovers in Anna’s hotel room. While such Western authors as Flaubert and later Maupassant, both of whom Bunin valued a great deal and reread frequently, had revolutionized the literary treatment of the human body and sex, Bunin’s Russian predecessors had refused to write sex.

In ‘Genrich’, Bunin goes much further than the Russian classics by describing a naked female body, as well as the lovers’ passionate foreplay. And yet, fearful of vulgarizing perfection and experiencing the mighty pressure of his nineteenth-century Russian predecessors, he cuts his des-
cription short as Glebov and Genrich start making love in their train compartment. The last sentence of the following passage relies on the mere suggestion of sexual intercourse:

Она прижала его к себе и стала целовать так крепко, что у него перехватывало дыхание.
– Генрих, я не узнаю тебя.
– И я себя. Но иди, иди ко мне.
– Погоди...
– Нет, нет, сию минуту!
– Только одно слово: скажи точно, когда ты выйдешь из Вены?
– Нынче вечером, нынче же вечером!
Поеzd уже двигался, мимо двери мягко шли и звенели по ковру шпоры пограничников. (Bunin 1965-1967, 7: 137-138)

(“She pulled him close and began to kiss so strongly, that he was short of breath. ‘Genrich, I do not recognize you.’ – ‘And I don’t either. But come here, come to me.’ – ‘Wait....’ ‘No, no, right now!’ – ‘Just one word: tell me definitely, when will you leave Vienna?’ – ‘Tonight, this very evening!’ The train was already moving: the spurs of the border guards walked gently past the door and along the carpet, clinking.”)

In his development as the last representative of the Russian classical tradition, Bunin was conditioned by narratives in which “triangular desire” operates in the plot while the underlying sexuality of such desire is suppressed. The principle of triangular desire – culminating in nineteenth-century fiction – demanded that Spiegler, the third party in ‘Genrich’ (cf. Rogożin in Dostoevskij’s *Idiot* [*The Idiot*] or Laevskij in Čechov’s ‘Duel’ [*The Duel*]), attempt to reclaim his lost or threatened status. To take the example of Tolstoj’s ‘The Kreutzer Sonata’, the enraged cuckold Pozdnyšev commits murder to punish his wife and her lover for their adultery. Tolstoj brings the reader to Pozdnyšev’s house where the lovers die under his dagger. Death as the result of the triangular desire is the focus of the narrative, while the deeply sexual behavior of the characters is virtually left out of the picture. In fact, the bedroom figures not as a place where the lovers consummate their affair, but as one where Pozdnyšev’s wife dies of an open wound on their marital bed.

Bunin, I hold, faced a double challenge in writing *Dark Avenues*. He rejected modernist experimentation, both with narrative structure and with language, and resented it in Nabokov’s late Russian prose. He wanted to remain with the classics. However, from the vantage point of the late 1930s-1940s, he also saw that an artistic solution was needed to make his collection absolutely peerless in Russian letters and to meet the challenge of his modernist rivals.
Bunin’s linguistic solution was to steer clear of sexual expressions, which are either vulgar or strictly scientific in Russian, while bringing the language of classical literature to its farthest limits in writing sex, as in the train scene in ‘Genrich’. Bunin’s narrative solution was to treat sex as somehow inseparable from death. In stories like ‘Genrich’, ‘Natali’ or ‘In Paris’, death as a means of narrative closure was Bunin’s way of keeping a balance between his covert modernism and his overt classical leanings. The death of Genrich, as it was enacted and timed in the narrative, reflected both Bunin’s split aesthetics and his integral world vision. In fact, the view of sexual love and death as organically connected goes back to Bunin’s earlier works, and especially to Bunin’s refashioning of Biblical narratives. Equating woman with death is certainly a theme of modernist literature and art as, for instance, in the works of August Strindberg and Edvard Munch. In ‘Sny Čanga’ (‘Chang’s Dreams’, 1916), the dog’s master, a former sea captain, philosophizes about the way women are somehow linked to death. The captain’s words echo the wisdom of Solomon: “Oh, woman! ‘Her house leads to death and her ways to the dead’” (Bunin 1965-1967, 4: 383). In stories like ‘Mitja’s Love’ or ‘The Son’, the internal causality of the narrative is that of love inevitably bringing about a fatal resolution. Odoevceva, who knew Bunin well, especially in the 1940s, recorded his statement on the subject: “Haven’t you figured out that love and death are linked inseparably? Each time, when I was going through a catastrophe of love [...] I was close to suicide” (Odoevceva 1983: 295).

The linkage of death and sexual desire in structuring a fictional narrative was at the heart of Bunin’s argument with Nabokov. While in ‘Spring in Fialta’ Nabokov may polemicize with Čechov about many things, including the structure of an ending and the nature of love, he is distinctly Chekhovian in the treatment of sex. Like Čechov in ‘Lady with a Lap Dog’, Nabokov suppresses the bedroom scene: “and only when the door had been locked did [the two halves of the French window] let go that curtain with something like a blissful sigh [a slight erotic sign – M.D.S.]; and a little later I stepped out on the diminutive cast-iron balcony [...]” (Nabokov 1995: 415). In fact, Nabokov’s focus in ‘Spring in Fialta’ is not on the sexual dimensions of love, but rather on its otherworldly nature which cannot be expressed in any conventional terms, whether erotic or psychological. Nabokov’s Russian works, with the possible exceptions of Kamera obskura and ‘The Enchanter’, are chaste in the spirit of Russian classical prose.

For Nabokov, as for both of his Russian masters, Čechov and Bunin, treatment of sexual love was simultaneously a narrative and a linguistic problem. According to the worldview expressed in his Russian fictions and culminating in ‘Spring in Fialta’, love as the experience beyond any words was incommensurate with human linguistic powers. Nabokov had to invent a language which would adequately convey his view of love as an otherworld-
ly state of being, a view which is prominent throughout the history of human thought. To quote the Babylonian Talmud, "three things afford a foretaste in miniature of the bliss of the World to Come: the sabbath, sexual intercourse and a sunny day". Nabokov's linguistic decision in 'Spring in Fialta', as well as elsewhere in his Russian short stories, was to allude to the sexual dimension of love without actually describing it. In fact, it was not until much later, in the 1950s-1960s, in Lolita and Ada, that Nabokov was able to create a harmonious language of sexuality. This invention was in part possible because of his switch to a new linguistic medium not only with a very different history and sensibility behind it, but also with the previous experiences of such modernist innovators in the English language as D.H. Lawrence and James Joyce. Nabokov's narrative choice in 'Spring in Fialta' was to create a textual opening - a textual zone in which the protagonist realizes that he and his beloved exist as lovers in an entirely different unearthly dimension, and that human language is not fit to describe it. In the final passage of the story, Vasen'ka is awarded a foretaste of the otherworld. The otherworld is signified by sunlight over Fialta, blinding and transcendent: "white sky above Fialta had got saturated with sunshine, and now it was sun-pervaded throughout, and this brimming radiance grew broader and broader, all dissolved in it, all vanished, all passed" (Nabokov 1995: 425).

In 'Spring in Fialta' the conflict is not between two male rivals, Vasen'ka and Ferdinand, competing over Nina, but between two worlds, each claiming Nina as its own. We can only speculate about Bunin's intuition of the otherworldly nature of love in 'Spring in Fialta'. Most likely, he apprehended something mysterious in the causality of the story, a causality that lay beyond the limits of his own Cartesian worldview. The parallels between the typological narrative schemes of Nabokov's and Bunin's stories augmented the striking differences in the way the two writers viewed the role which death and sex play in fiction.

In 'Spring in Fialta', where Nina and Vasen'ka are caught in a clash between the mundane world and the otherworld, death is assigned a role quite similar to that Nabokov described in his 1950 English poem 'The Room'. The penultimate stanza in this versified account of a poet's death in a hotel room reads as follows:

Perhaps my text is incomplete.
A poet's death is, after all,
a question of technique, a neat
enjambment, a melodic fall.
(Nabokov 1970: 165)

In 'Spring in Fialta' Nabokov employs death as a technique of creating narrative closure. However, despite the death of the female protagonist, the reader
leaves the text not with a sense of despair over Nina’s death, but with a sense of cathartic lightness, of sadness and joy both recorded in the reader’s memory under the impact of the ending which is both a closure onto life and an opening onto art. The ending presents Nina’s narrative “death” as thinkable only in contrast to her husband’s fictional “immortality”. Growing “broader and broader” over the sky of Fialta, the “brimming white radiance” symbolizes the reader’s expanding consciousness as she or he ponders the aesthetic, ethical, and metaphysical dilemma conjured up by Nabokov. Conversely, as Bunin’s readers leave his story, they feel devastated by the draining sense of textual closure, a brick wall of death, an end of impossible love.

On сел на скамью и при гаснущем свете зари стал рассеянно развертывать и просматривать еще свежие страницы газеты. И вдруг вскочил, оглушенный и ослепленный как бы взрывом магния: “Вена. 17 декабря. Сегодня, в ресторане ‘Franzensring’ известный австрийский писатель Артур Шпиглер убил выстрелом из револьвера русскую журналистку и переводчицу многих современных австрийских и немецких новеллистов, работавшую под псевдонимом ‘Генрих’.”

(Бунин 1965-1967, 7: 142)

(“He sat down on a bench, and in sunset’s dimming light unfolded and glanced absently through the newspaper’s fresh pages. And suddenly he jumped up, deafened and blinded as though by an explosion of magnesium: ‘Vienna. 17 December. Today in the restaurant Franzensring, the well-known Austrian author, Arthur Spiegler, shot with a revolver a Russian journalist and translator of many contemporary Austrian and German novelists who worked under the pseudonym “Genrich”.’"

6.

Bunin’s stories from Dark Avenues reached Nabokov in America during World War Two. Both Bunin and Nabokov contributed to the first issues of Novyj žurnal (The New Review), the American heir of the Parisian Contemporary Annals, started in 1942 in New York by their mutual friends, Michail Cetlin and Mark Aldanov. The first issue of The New Review included Bunin’s short story ‘Rusja’, one of the finest in Dark Avenues, as well as Nabokov’s last publication of original Russian fiction, a chapter from an abandoned novel, Solus Rex. Bunin’s ‘Natali’ appeared in the second issue of The New Review, to which Nabokov contributed a conclusion to Puškin’s unfinished drama Rusalka (The Mermaid, 1829-1832). ‘Genrich’ was featured in the third issue of The New Review along with Nabokov’s
Vladimir Nabokov and Ivan Bunin: A Reconstruction

seminal poem 'Fame' which contained one of the most explicit admissions of his metaphysical beliefs, his "main secret". The appearance - within the same issue of the journal in 1942 - of 'Fame' with its keys to Nabokov's otherworldly aesthetics and of 'Genrich' as a condensed statement of Bunin's artistic credo can be seen as the finale of the literary duel between the two great masters.

In sum, the literary rivalry between Bunin and Nabokov moved around four principal issues. The first concerned the role of death in the narrative. For Bunin, death as a means of closure was an embodiment of his philosophy of life according to which love and death are organically inseparable, and the stronger the passions, the more likely they are to result in the death of the character(s). To take the example of 'Natali', Bunin closed the story - as well as the entire middle part of Dark Avenues - with one short sentence: "V dekabre ona uмерla na Ženevskom ozere v пре́дветренних родач" ("In December she died on Lake Geneva during premature childbirth"; Bunin 1965-1967, 7: 172). Bunin's closure works in the exact opposite fashion to that of 'A Russian Beauty' by Nabokov, with which it plots a dialogue. In the latter, written some ten years earlier than 'Natali', the female protagonist, Ol'ga Alekseevna, finally meets a future husband at the end of the story. The impassioned and even gently ironic narrator makes but one comment about what awaits his heroine: "[...] i Ol'ga Alekseevna laskovo protjanula: 'Voт чемы', - a следуя́шим летом ona umerla ot родов" ("[...] and Olga drawled out in an affectionate voice 'What boors!' and next summer she died in childbirth"; Nabokov 1938: 242/Nabokov 1995: 385). And then follows the closing passage in which nothing happens in terms of the plot although something crucial does take place in terms of closure: "That's all. Of course, there may be some sort of sequel, but it is not known to me. In such cases, instead of getting bogged down in guesswork, I repeat the words of the merry king in my favorite fairy tale: Which arrow flies for ever? The arrow that has hit its mark" (Nabokov 1995: 385). Writing to Aldanov on 6 May 1942, Nabokov criticized Bunin's ending: "Cannot you agree with me, that 'Natali' [...] is a completely helpless thing in terms of composition? [...] It is characteristic that they [i.e. Bunin's protagonists - M.D.S.] all die, for it does not matter [to Bunin - M.D.S.] how to end the story, but one must end it anyhow" (Černỳšev 1996: 132). For Bunin, "hitting the mark" meant closing the story with death at the peak of the protagonists' happiness. "Forever" was hardly an option in Bunin's universe. For Nabokov, whose ending creates its own fairy-tale mythology, death amounted to hanging "The End" on the story. To quote the poem which closes, or, rather, opens the ending of The Gift, "and no obstruction for the sage exists where I have put The End: the shadows of my world extend beyond the skyline of the page, blue as tomorrow's morning haze - nor does this terminate the phrase" (Nabokov 1981:...
The reader has already parted with characters, while the story’s music still sounds in her or his ears.

The second issue concerns the metaphysics of Nabokov’s and Bunin’s fictions. Bunin’s fiction absorbed much of Judaeo-Christian mythopoetics. Endowed with a Cartesian mind and a richly sensual imagination, Bunin was not interested in creating alternative models of the universe in his fiction, in challenging traditional Judaeo-Christian metaphysics. His concern was with documenting with utmost precision and power the progress of a human life in this world, which is the only world, he believed, a writer and his characters are capable of capturing. Nabokov, on the other hand, created both a “new world” – which Bunin apprehended but could not respond to in his late fiction – and a corresponding unique mythopoetics. Nabokov’s stories set up different models of what the otherworld might be like: an idyllic landscape in ‘Cloud, Castle, Lake’, the “brimming white radiance” over the Fialta sky, the overturned and sinking beach front in ‘Perfection’. In Dark Avenues, which was written in response to Nabokov’s short stories of the 1930s, Bunin focused just on one model, that of desire bringing about tragedy. To Bunin, this model described the core of earthly existence.

This brings us to the third major point of difference. In Bunin’s world, fate is incomprehensible to a human mind. Much like love, fate in Bunin’s works is irrational and it overturns our habitual and instinctive striving for an open-ended future. There, in the incomprehensible and devastating intrusion of fate, Bunin insists – in Dark Avenues and elsewhere – lies the source of short fiction. In Bunin’s short stories, tragedy follows a time of perfect happiness and harmony. It is a tragedy of freedom undercut by senseless death which is unfathomable to a human mind. Genrich is shot by her Austrian lover, Natali dies in childbirth, Galja Ganskaja of the eponymous story commits suicide. Instead of fatidic patterns, which may exist beyond human reach, a human mind faces but the chaos of chance. For Nabokov, as he states in his Russian memoir, Drugie berega (Other Shores), a human life is the “recurrence of secret themes in wide awake fate” (Nabokov 1990a, 4: 133). Nabokov’s privileged characters, like Slepcov in ‘Christmas’ or Vassen’ka in ‘Spring in Fialta’, can and do apprehend the schemes and themes of their own existence. Their creator, Nabokov, allows them to fathom the designs of their fictional existence. In a world where otherworldly patterns show through the “chinks” of a mundane reality (“jav’”), fate, like death, becomes a question of literary technique, a “melodic fall”. As Vladimir E. Alexandrov pointed out, “[Nabokov] is remarkably successful in demonstrating how both he and his characters are trapped in fatidic webs that abut a transcendent realm”.

And, finally, there is the status of memory in Bunin’s and Nabokov’s works. Critics have indicated parallels between the functioning of memory in the works of Marcel Proust, as a paradigmatic European artist of memory,
and, respectively, Bunin and Nabokov.\textsuperscript{125} Be that as it may, there is at least one principal difference in the way memory works in Nabokov’s and in Bunin’s poetics. In Bunin’s fiction, including The Life of Arsen’ev and Dark Avenues, memory is unstructured, and the shape of recollections is often determined by a chance concurrence of narrative circumstances as well as by the idiosyncrasies of the one who is doing the recollecting. Memory in Bunin’s poetics is firmly linked to orality with its sources in Russian folk mythology. In ‘Rusja’, the train carrying the protagonist/narrator and his wife makes an unscheduled stop at a small station. The protagonist mentions that he once spent a summer in the area and recalls a summer romance. Having completed the oral narrative cycle triggered by a chance association, the narrator returns to his daily routine. The shape of the recollected narrative in the short story mirrors the shape of unstructured memory. The artist records and frames a recollection in all its raw authenticity. Conversely, in Nabokov’s works, memory is always controlled and structured. At the end of ‘Spring in Fialta’, Vasen’ka becomes a writer because he learns how to channel his memories of Nina into the perfect shape of a short story. The shape of his short story is given to him in its entirety and complexity, when his memories of Nina, spanning more than fifteen years, are all interconnected and structured in a moment of cosmic synchronization.

Was the score settled with the publication of Dark Avenues in its complete form in 1946? Since Nabokov wrote no prose fiction in Russian after his arrival in the United States, and Bunin only wrote a few stories between 1946 and his death in 1953, the only other major instance of their dialogue was the publication, in 1953, of Bunin’s volume entitled Vesnoj v Iudee. Roza Jerichona (In Judea, in Spring. The Rose of Jericho) by Chekhov Publishing House in New York. This was the penultimate collection Bunin put together, and it included stories written before and after Dark Avenues.\textsuperscript{126} Bunin’s title, In Judea, in Spring, borrowed from an eponymous story in Dark Avenues, evoked the title of Nabokov’s short story ‘Spring in Fialta’. Three years later, the same émigré publishing house put out Nabokov’s third collection of Russian short stories, which should have appeared in Paris before the war but never did.\textsuperscript{127} Nabokov gave the 1956 collection the title Vesna v Fial’te (Spring in Fialta).\textsuperscript{128}

Both Nabokov and Bunin continued to wonder about each other for the rest of their lives. Odoevceva recorded a conversation with Bunin in October 1947, in which Bunin complained of the poor quality of writing by younger authors. “Of course,” Bunin said, “not all the young authors write this way. There are remarkable young authors. Take Sirin, for instance. He also plays
tricks [Tože štukarit]. But how can you argue with it – it is good. They do not judge winners” (Odoevceva 1983: 290). Did Bunin truly consider Nabokov a winner of their literary duel? Four years later, writing to Aldanov with recommendations for a literary event being planned in his honor in New York, he asked that Nabokov recite his 1916 short story ‘Tret’i petuchi’ (‘The Third Cock-Crow’) at the evening and sent him his “cordial regards.” Bunin still remembered the 1933 Berlin evening in his honor where he first met Nabokov, and Nabokov recited Bunin’s poems. However, the past did not repeat itself. Nabokov did not recite Bunin’s works in 1951. He did honor Bunin in a different way, by devoting to him a long passage in Conclusive Evidence. In the first version of his autobiography, Nabokov ended the passage differently than in the later Speak, Memory. He said nothing about the absence of “real commerce” between them. Instead, he talked about the “bantering and rather depressing give-and-take sort of double talk, which [he regretted] now when there [was] so little chance of his ever visiting [Bunin] in remote France” (Nabokov 1951: 216). When Bunin read Conclusive Evidence, he rushed an angry letter to Aldanov:

"[...] разватрна[я] книжк[а] Набокова с царской короной на обложке над его фамилией, в которой есть дикая брехня про меня – будто я заташил его в какой-то ресторан, чтобы по-говорить с ним "по душам" – очень на меня это похоже! Шут гороховый, которым Вы меня когда-то пугали, что он забил меня и что я ему ужасно завидую."

("[...] the perverse book by Nabokov, with the Tsar’s crown above his name on the cover, with wild lying about me, how I dragged him into some restaurant for a “heart-to-heart” conversation – would I ever do that! An awful clown; you used to scare me by saying that he had beat me and that I envied him terribly.”)

In his American career as a teacher and critic of Russian literature, Nabokov did not devote much attention to Bunin’s literary contribution. In a lecture at Wellesley College in 1941, he spoke of Bunin and other émigré authors, contrasting them with Soviet Russian writers (Boyd 1991: 25). At Cornell, he taught Bunin’s poetry, but not his prose (Boyd 1991: 137). In 1951, he turned down a request by the New York Times to review Bunin’s Memoirs: “If I undertook to write an article on this book, I would certainly do so in a destructive vein. However, the author, whom I used to know well, is a very old man, and I do not feel that I should demolish his book. As I cannot praise it, I would rather not review it at all.”

There were two more instances when Bunin left an imprint in Nabokov’s text. In Other Shores, the Russian version of the autobiography, the passage describing Nabokov’s encounters with Bunin ends with an imitation
of Bunin’s prose. In the English text, it would follow the words “Bunin and I adopted a bantering and rather depressing mode of conversation” (Nabokov 1966: 287):

— и в общем до искусства мы с ним никогда и не договаривались, а теперь поздно, и герой выходит в очередной сад, и пьют зарницы, а потом он едет на станцию, и звезды грозно и дивно горят на гробовом бархате, и чем-то горьковатым пахнет с полей, и в бесконечно отъявленном отдалении нашей молодости опевают ночь петухи. (Nabokov 1990a, 4: 288)

(In a literal translation: “— in a word, he and I never got to the matter of art, and now it is late, and the hero comes out into the next garden, and summer lightning flashes, and then he rides to the train station, and the stars shine ominously and miraculously on casket velvet, and some bitter smell wafts from the fields, and in the endlessly responsive remoteness of our youth cocks crow the night away.”)

Nabokov’s imitation picks up several recurrent motifs of Bunin’s writing. The image of crowing cocks occurs in Bunin’s fiction and poetry several dozen times. The “hero” going out into the garden and riding to the station points, among other works, to the narrative rhythm of The Life of Arsen’ev where the young protagonist returns to his home estate several times only to leave it for a new chapter in his biography. Finally, the “cocks crowing the night away” is an inverted quote from Bunin’s vignette ‘Petuchi’, originally published in 1930 in The Latest News and later included in Bunin’s collection Bož’e drevo (God’s Tree, 1931) of which Nabokov owned a copy. In Bunin’s vignette, the last sentence ends with “petuchi opevajut noč’” instead of Nabokov’s “opevajut noč’ petuchi” (Bunin 1965-1967, 5: 426). 133

To conclude, I will point out that my findings and inferences based on the letters and texts of Nabokov and Bunin and centering on Dark Avenues, suggest an unusual wrinkle not only in the classical Formalist view, but also in more recent conceptions of literary dynamics. I am thinking of Harold Bloom’s captivating notion of “the anxiety of influence”. Both scenarios of literary history, the Formalist and the Bloomian, work well on Nabokov’s side of the Nabokov-Bunin relationship. As a young author, Nabokov adopted some of the stylistic devices which had been earlier perfected by his literary “uncle” Bunin (Nabokov’s literary “fathers” being the Russian Symbolists). Later, during the American Period, Nabokov made obfuscatory statements, about Bunin and the entire émigré culture. In Speak, Memory, he stated that he had “always preferred [Bunin’s] little known verse to his celebrated prose” (Nabokov 1966: 285); in the Russian version the adjective describing Bunin’s prose becomes “parčovyj”, from “parča” = “brocade” (“par-
čevaja proza”; Nabokov 1990a, 4: 288) which suggests ornamentalism and excessive exuberance. Elsewhere, Nabokov wrote about Bunin as follows: “A poetic genius, but a writer of prose almost as bad as Turgenev.”\footnote{Given the enormous significance of Bunin’s prose for Nabokov’s development, the comment can be seen as what Bloom calls “an act of creative correction that is actually and necessarily a misinterpretation.”\cite{bloom1990a}\footnote{However, the situation becomes problematic on Bunin’s side of the issue. In the course of his rivalry with Nabokov, Bunin agonized over the dazzling achievements of the younger master who defied artistic schools and literary “camps”. Driven by a desire to reclaim his status as the foremost Russian writer, Bunin created his finest work, Dark Avenues. Bunin’s last creative decade presents us with the case of a literary anxiety so complex and polyvalent that a term for it is yet to be invented. Bunin of the 1940s-1950s was not so much anxious that others might have influenced him, but rather that those he had influenced would not acknowledge it.}}

\begin{notes}
I wish to thank the Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies for awarding two Short-Term Grants (November 1993; May-June 1996) that allowed me to complete large parts of the research for this study. I gratefully acknowledge the assistance of the staff of the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress (Ms. Mary Wolfskill; Mr. Frederick W. Bauman, Jr.). Locating some materials for this article would have been impossible without the help of the brilliant staff of Slovanská knihovna (Prague, Czech Republic), especially Ms. Milena Klimovičová and Ms. Helena Musatová. All quotes from Vladimir Nabokov’s unpublished works are reproduced with the permission of Mr. Dmitri Nabokov (Montreux) and are copyright by The Estate of Vladimir Nabokov. I wish to thank Dr. Militsa Greene (Edinburgh) and Dr. Richard D. Davies, Curator, Leeds Russian Archive, for giving me access to the papers of Ivan and Vera Bunin. All unpublished materials by Ivan and Vera Bunin are quoted with the permission and are copyright by The Estate of Ivan Bunin. Dr. Davies read a draft of this essay and offered invaluable criticisms, only some of which I have been able to address here. Last but not least, I record my gratitude to Dr. Vincent Giroud, Curator, Modern European Literature, The Beinecke Rare Book Library, Yale University, for a permission to publish an inscription on Nabokov’s book and to quote from the papers of Andrej Šedych, Roman Gul’, and Nina Berberova.
\end{notes}
Parenthetical dates refer to dates of publication. "Sirin" was Nabokov's émigré pen name. If a source of an English translation is not shown, the translation is mine. The following abbreviations have been adopted hereafter: Bunin Leeds = The Papers of Ivan Bunin and Vera Muromceva-Bunina at Leeds Russian Archive, Brotherton Library, University of Leeds; VN LC = Vladimir Nabokov Collection at Division of Manuscripts and Archives, US Library of Congress; ZSh LC = Zinaida Shaikhovskoy Collection, Division of Manuscripts and Archives, Library of Congress.

1 Kirill Zajcev should not be confused with the well-known writer Boris Zajcev. After Bunin had been awarded the Nobel Prize in 1933, K. Zajcev published a book-length interpretation of Bunin's life and art, the only pre-World War Two Russian monograph about Bunin. Pekka Tammi labeled this opposition a "commonplace in Russian émigré criticism"; see Tammi (1985: 12, n. 34).

2 In Russian émigré criticism of the 1920s, a very similar position toward Bunin and the other writers of his generation was held by Mark Slonim who also openly favored the new writing in Soviet Russia. Slonim (1925a) spoke of the inertia and stasis among the writers of the older generation in Russia Abroad (176), about Bunin's repeating himself "a thousand times" in his poetry (177); he also punned that Bunin's title of the Russian Academician "fits his writing best" (179). In the sequel to his 1925 article (Slonim 1925b), he openly referred to Bunin, Merežkovskij, Čirikov - all three actively working in the 1920s - as history rather than contemporaneity, as the literary past (183). In a 1929 essay (Slonim 1929), he reiterated his earlier points about Bunin and the writers of the older generations (101); Slonim also awarded, if not without some reservations, several compliments to Nabokov as a fiction writer (115-116), the main praise going to Nabokov's handling of "non-Russian" themes.

3 For a very fine overview of the émigré cultural climate circa late 1920s, see Hagglund (1973).

4 Gleb Struve (1984) and Marc Raeff (1990) provide invaluable overviews of the ideological and cultural debates surrounding Russian émigré literature. See also Struve (1958).

5 Gleb Struve, one of the shapers of Nabokov's literary legend in the 1930s, spoke of Nabokov's stylistic apprenticeship with Bunin and yet suggested that one could not imagine two writers more dissimilar; see Struve (1936). On the other hand, Vladimir Zlobin, who was the secretary of Gippius and Merežkovskij, also juxtaposed Nabokov and Bunin in a mock-essay, 'On Our "Thick" Journal': "Do you know Sirin's hand? One of a master! Bunin has long been outdone. And again, as usual, 'I don't know why my hand wrote it'" (Zlobin 1934).

6 It gives me pleasure to record my gratitude to a handful of critics who touched upon the subject of the Nabokov-Bunin relationship in their works. Julian Connolly mentions affinities between the figurations of memory in Bunin, Nabokov, and Proust; see Connolly (1982: 31). Connolly (1982: 135) also speaks of Buninesque echoes in Nabokov's works although he does not specify them. David Bethea (1994: 221) and Alexander Zholkovsky (1993: 393) both
mention Bunin's influence. To the best of my knowledge, the only study of Bunin's trace in Nabokov is by Maja Kaganskaja, published in the Paris émigré review *Sintaksis* (*Syntax*) in 1978; see Kaganskaja (1978). In her somewhat tendentious essay which reflects a number of inherited Russian émigré biases towards Nabokov's English works, and especially *Lolita*, Kaganskaja considers Nabokov's career from *Mary* to *Lolita* as his disavowal of the Turgenev-Bunin tradition. Marina Turkевич Naumann lists Bunin among Nabokov's major Russian influences; see Naumann (1978: 7). Linda Saputelli Zimmermann discusses the connections between Nabokov's and Bunin's short stories; see Zimmermann (1978: 66-69: 193). Several émigré critics, including Gleb Struve, Jurij Ivask, Aleksandr Savel'ev, Michail Cetlin, Vladimir Vejdle pointed out affinities between the two writers. Their comments will be considered later in the chapter. Finally, Zinaida Šachovskaja included a brief chapter on Bunin and Nabokov: she denies Bunin's influence on Nabokov; see Šachovskaja (1979: 115-116).

7 The name of a man who sold his shadow to the devil (from Chamisso's tale), Peter Schlemihl has come to mean a person who makes a desperate bargain. In Michajlov's retrograde view, Nabokov's bargain was the identity of a Russian writer which he supposedly gave up after switching into English.

8 This idea is a leitmotif of several articles by Jurij Tynjanov, including ‘O literaturnoj évoljucii’ (‘On Literary Evolution’); ‘Oda kak oratorskij žanr’ (‘Ode as an Oratoric Genre’); ‘O parodii’ (‘On Parody’); ‘Dostoevskij i Gogol’ [k teorii parodii]’ (‘Dostoevskij and Gogol’ [Towards a Theory of Parody]’); all in Tynjanov (1977).


11 This can be deduced from V.D. Nabokov's letter of 19 February 1921.

12 The three poems were ‘Videnie Iosifa’ (‘The Apparition to Joseph’), ‘Krestnoscy’ (‘The Crusaders’), and ‘Pavliny’ (‘Peacocks’); see Rul’ 7 January 1921 (25 December 1920), p. 3.

13 “To Ivan Bunin”. 18 March 1921. Letter in Bunin Leeds. A total of 11 letters and 7 postcards from Nabokov to Bunin, plus a letter from Nabokov to Vera Muromceva-Bunina, have survived. They are deposited among Papers of Ivan and Vera Bunin at the Leeds Russian Archive, Brotherton Library, University of Leeds.


Nabokov (1922); see also Nabokov (1923a: 22) and Nabokov (1979: 38). In Nabokov (1979) the poem appears under the title 'I. A. Buninu' and is dated 1920, and not 1922 as in the manuscript.


See A. Dolinin's and R. Timenčik's commentary in Nabokov (1990b: 520). In a 1966 interview, Nabokov assessed Blok's role in his life: "Ever since [my boyhood] I remained passionately fond of Blok's lyrics. His long pieces are weak, and the famous The Twelve is dreadful, self-consciously couched in a phony 'primitive' tone, with a pink cardboard Jesus Christ glued on at the end" (Nabokov 1973: 97).

Large portions of Nabokov's unpublished letter to Elizabeth Malozemoff, dated 22 January 1938, are quoted in her excellent unpublished dissertation. The present location of Nabokov's letter to Malozemoff is unknown. See Malozemoff (1938: 67; 78-79).


The poem appears under the title 'Mat' ('Mother') in Bunin's collection which Nabokov reviewed in 1929; see Bunin (1929: 85). In the 9-volume Soviet edition of Bunin's works, the poem is printed under the title 'Na puti iz Nazareta' ('On the Way from Nazareth').

Malozemoff (1938: 271) quotes from Nabokov's unpublished letter to her dated 22 January 1938.

A number of Bunin's books of the émigré period combine poetry and prose under the same cover; see, for instance, Načal'naja ljubov' (1921); Roza Ierichona (1924); Mitina ljubov' (1925).

Brian Boyd is right in calling this decision "deliberate" on Nabokov's part; see Boyd (1990: 291).

Irina Odoevceva recalls that Georgij Ivanov did not consider Bunin a poet and said this to Bunin's face; she also reports that Gumilev and his poetic cohorts ("apollonovcy") were surprised and disappointed to see Bunin's Listopad (Foliage) published in 1901 by the Symbolist publishing house Skorpion; see Odoevceva (1983: 310). Bunin refused to consider himself a twentieth-century extension of the Tyutchevian-Fetian poetic line. In fact, as his diaries demonstrate, by the end of the 1930s he had grown utterly disappointed with Fet. Consider, for instance, the following entry of 29 July 1940: "Yesterday I reread Večernie ogni (Evening Lights) by Fet – how many times have I read it! (Now, probably, I read it for the last time.) Almost everything is worse than bad" (see Grin 1977-1982, 3: 56).

I borrow this useful term from John Burt Foster's Nabokov's Art of Memory and European Modernism where Nabokov's The Gift is discussed as a work of "covert modernism" (Foster 1994: 146).

Presentation copy, Vladimir Nabokov, Mašen'ka (Berlin 1926). The Beinecke Rare Book Library, Yale University.

Struve also speaks of Bunin's influence upon the descriptions in Mary (see Struve 1984: 284).
Presentation copy, Vladimir Nabokov, Mašen’ka (Berlin 1926, p. 86), Beinecke Rare Book Library, Yale University.

A number of times throughout the 1920s, works by Nabokov and Bunin appeared next to each other in various publications. See, for instance, Vestnik glavnogo pravlenija obsčestva gallipolijcev (Belgrad 1924), where Bunin contributed an essay (p. 6) and Nabokov a poem (p. 7). See also Rul’, 27 April 1924, pp. 6-7 (two poems by Bunin and Nabokov’s story); Sovremennye zapiski, XXXIII, 1927 (Bunin’s story and Nabokov’s narrative poem); Sovremennye zapiski, XL (installment of Bunin’s The Life of Arsen’ev and installment of Nabokov’s The Defense).


Presentation copy of Iv. Bunin, Žizn’ Arsen’eva. Istoki dnej (Sovremennye zapiski, Paris 1930). The Vladimir Poežčikin Collection (Orel, Russia). I am grateful to Dr. Richard Davies (Leeds Russian Archive) for providing me with a xerox of the presentation page.


On Nabokov’s 1932 trip to Paris, see Boyd (1990: 390-397).

Prior to the 1927 publication of ‘Terror’, Nabokov appeared in Contemporary Annals only twice as a poet, in nos. VII (1921) and XI (1922).

For a passionate account of Nabokov’s visit to Paris in 1932, see Berberova (1983: 367-374).


In 1931-1932 the general opinion was that Bunin’s chances for getting the Nobel Prize were nil. Such was also the sense in Bunin’s household; see Grin (1977-1982, 2: 252).

Terapiano recalls that the younger poets were cold to Bunin’s poetry; see Terapiano (1986: 278). Janovskij (1983: 248) suggests that the poets of the Parisian Note viewed Nabokov’s poetry negatively in the light of Bunin’s verse.

On January 29, 1930, Nabokov published an essay entitled ‘Na krasnych lapkach’ (‘On Little Red Feet’) in The Rudder next to A. Saverev’s very favorable analysis of Bunin’s love stories of the 1910s-1920s. Nabokov’s essay was aimed against a harshly negative and insolent review of Bunin’s Selected Poems by Aleksej Ejsner, published in the Prague journal Volja Rossii (Russia’s Will). On October 15, 1930, Nabokov returned to the polemics with Bunin’s critics in another essay, ‘O vosstavgich angelach’ (‘On the Rebellious Angels’), which was a caustic analysis of the aesthetics of the Prague journal and its radical authors. Nabokov was compelled to write the second polemical essay by the appearance of a defense of Ejsner, written by a fellow Prague poet, Vjačeslav Lebedev, and published in no. VII/VIII of Russia’s Will.


One should also consider the availability of certain texts by Bunin to Nabokov in the 1930s. It is possible to speculate with a fair amount of certainty what émigré collections by Bunin Nabokov owned or could have read. As to the pre-1917 editions of Bunin’s works, especially the separate collections, they must have been harder to come by due to emigration. Also, to the best of my knowledge, Bunin did not republish either ‘First Love’ (1890) or ‘Cuckoo’ during his émigré years.


I should also mention another of Bunin’s pre-émigré stories, ‘Otto Štejn’ (‘Otto Shtein’, 1916) which might have informed ‘The Aurelian’. In ‘Otto Shtein’, the protagonist, a young natural scientist who, like Pilgram, lives in Berlin, prepares and undertakes an expedition to tropical countries.

See Polockaja (1970); Malozemoff (1938: 266-269, 279-280).

I am using the most linguistically unloaded terms as they are applied to English-language syntax and sentence structure. Opdycke (1965: 227) defines a complex-complex sentence as a “complex sentence in which a dependent clause is subordinate to another dependent clause” and a complex-compound sentence as consisting “of two or more independent clauses and one or more subordinate or dependent clauses”.

In the text of the Bible, especially the Old Testament, the role of the “and” conjunctions in organizing the syntax can only be discovered by English speakers via reading the King James Bible rather than modern translations such
as the Oxford/Cambridge edition to which I generally refer throughout this study. A student of the Russian Orthodox Bible, which Bunin actually knew very well and drew upon on numerous occasions, will immediately recognize the “[...] i [...] i” structure.

A special case is Bunin’s and Nabokov’s use of actual units of ternary and binary meters as the one in ‘Cloud, Castle, Lake’; see Shrayer (1994).


Photo and caption from the Harbin newspaper Rubež (The Border) is reproduced in Boyd (1990).

In August 1935, Bunin’s wife noted in her diary: “Marga [Stepun] is staying until 10 Sept., and Galja [Kuznecova] is leaving for Göttingen early in October. I think, or, rather, am sure, that for good. They are joining their lives [oni slivajut svoi žizni]. [...] Galja’s staying in our house was uncanny [ot lukavogo]”; see Grin (1977-1982, 3: 15).


See “To Zinaida Šachovskaja”, 24 October 1936. Postcard in ZSh LC. The meeting occurred during Bunin’s journey through Germany after which he became a confirmed anti-Hitlerite. Bunin was humiliated by the German customs officers which made big news in the Russian émigré community; see Grin (1977-1982, 3: 21-22).

See Andreev (1932: 183).

See Struve (1934: 440). See also ‘O V. Sirine’ (Struve 1936) where Struve wrote, somewhat too categorically: “As a stylist, Nabokov learned something from Bunin, but it is difficult to imagine two writers more different in spirit and essence.” Earlier, in 1930, Struve spoke of parts of The Defense as being Buninesque, although he stressed that Nabokov’s concept of the novel had nothing to do with Bunin’s art; see Struve (1930). Also consider a German overview of Russian émigré letters by Arthur Luther (1934) who focuses on Bunin, Nabokov, and Sergej Gornyj.

See Malozemoff’s useful statistics and diagram (1938: 257a-c).


I am grateful to Professor Robert Bowie (Miami University, Ohio) for pointing out this detail.


By the way, in connection with Berberova’s reference to Bunin’s Memoirs, the expression “the italics are mine” which gave its title to Berberova’s own memoir, appears on the first page of Bunin’s text; see Bunin (1950: 7).
The quote is from Bunin's letter to Roman Gul' ; see "To Roman Gul'". 10 September 1952. Letter in Roman Gul' Papers, Beinecke Rare Book Library, box 2, folder 40.

The expression is Nabokov's and appears in his 1966 interview with Herbert Gold: "I note incidentally that professors of literature still assign [Blok and Mandel'stam] to different schools. There is only one school: that of talent" (Nabokov 1973: 97).

See also Boyd's colorful version of the scene (1990: 424-425).

Berberova (1983: 298). During a telephone interview on March 20, 1992, Berberova told me how much Bunin disliked Nabokov in the later years: "On ego terpet' ne mog, nazyval 'durakom'" ("He could not stand him, called him a 'fool'").

Vera Muromceva-Bunina also recorded having collected "370 + 400 francs" for Nabokov, probably referring to the donations collected for Nabokov's reading -- a common procedure for émigré cultural life; see Boyd (1990: 432-433).


"To Zinaida Šachovskaja". Letter of 12 November 1937. ZSh LC.


"To Vladimir Nabokov". 8 February 1938. Postcard in VN LC, container 8, folder 17.


See Boyd (1990: 486-488).

"To Zinaida Šachovskaja", n.d. (1938). Postcard in ZSh LC.

Presentation copy of Vladimir Nabokov, Priglašenie na kazn' (Paris 1938), Beinecke Rare Book Library, Yale University.

"To Ivan Bunin". 2 April 1939. Letter in Bunin Leeds.


"To Ivan Bunin". 8 April 1939. Postcard in Bunin Leeds.

These words of Bunin were reported by Lev Ljubimov, an émigré who returned to Russia after World War Two and wrote a tendentious and retrograde memoir, Na čužbince (In the Foreign Land, 1957). See Ljubimov (1957: 167).


"To Elizabeth Malozemoff". 18 January 1938. Unpublished letter quoted in Malozemoff (1938: 231). For fairness' sake, one needs to mention that Bunin's own verse, especially his poems of the 1900s-1910s, exhibit some stylistic and thematic parallels with Russian Symbolist, Acmeist, and, occasionally, even
Ego-Futurist poetry. For instance, to take the 1929 volume of Bunin’s *Selected Poems* which Nabokov reviewed, one finds notes typical of Symbolist poetics and specifically of Blok’s “second volume”:

Мы встретились случайно на углу.
Я быстро шел – и друг как свет зарницы
Вечернюю прорезал полумглу
Сквозь черные лучистые ресницы.
(“My vstretilis’ slučajno na uglu...”, 1905)

Cf. Gumilev:

В лесах кричат павлины, шумят и плещут ливни,
В болотных низах, в долинах рек – потоп.
Слоны залезли в грязь, стоят, поднявши бивни,
Серые хоботы закинувши на лоб.
(“Gora Alagalla”, 1915)

Cf. Severjanin:

В гелиотроповом свете молний летучих
На небесах раскрывались дымные тучи.
(“V geliotropovom svete...”, 1922)

These parallels have been ignored because of Bunin’s predominantly nineteenth-century metrical repertoire and a lack of Symbolist or Acmeist aesthetics and metaphysics.

94 A survey of Bunin’s anti-modernist statements would take too much space. Among Bunin’s representative attacks on Russian modernism, see the 1927 ‘Iz zapisej’ (‘From the Notes’, Bunin 1965-1967, 9: 279-298), Bunin (1950), as well as Bunin’s diaries collected in Grin (1977-1982).

95 For a discussion of Nabokov’s “covert modernism”, see John Burt Foster’s section ‘The Covert Modernism of The Gift’ in Chapter 7 of his *Nabokov’s Art of Memory and European Modernism*. Foster’s concerns are mainly with the relationship between the status of memory in Nabokov’s fiction vis-à-vis the writings of European modernists. Bunin was certainly aware that some critics regarded him as one of the major modernists of his time. For instance, one of the most learned émigré critics, Vladimir Vejdle, listed Bunin’s name along with those of Proust, Gide, Thomas Mann, Unamuno, Yeats, George, Rilke in a 1939 article; see Vejdle (1939).


97 I am thinking in particular about Tzvetan Todorov’s *Grammaire du ‘Décaméron’* (1969). A Russian émigré thinker, I.A. Il’in, discussed the “grammar” of
Bunin’s “love” in his 1959 book on Bunin, Remizov, and Šmelev. He emphasized the “mysterious” connections between love and death (suicide) in Bunin’s stories; see Il’in (1959: 75-76).

In his commentary, O. Michajlov discussed *Dark Avenues* as Bunin’s polemics with “the flagmen of Russian realism”; see Bunin (1965-1967, 7: 357-358).


No one thus far has attempted a comparative poetics of Nabokov’s short stories and Bunin’s *Dark Avenues*, which makes my task more difficult. Several works have dealt with the poetics of *Dark Avenues*; see Kryzytski (1971: 204-213); Adomavič (1955: 115-117); Ljudmila Foster (1978); Kreps (1979) (discusses love stories in general but also several stories from *Dark Avenues*); Baboreko (1982).

See, for instance, Vera Muromceva-Bunina’s diary entry for October 1907 in Grin (1977-1982, 1: 74-75).

Two most representative discursive attacks on Blok are found in Bunin’s 1927 ‘Iz zapisej’ (‘From Notes’) and in his ‘Avtobiografičeskie zametki’ (‘Autobiographical Notes’) which were included in the 1950 *Memoirs*, see especially Bunin (1950: 35-47).

“To Vladislav Chodasevič”. 3 December 1928. Letter in the Papers of Nina Berberova, Beinecke Rare Book Library, Yale University.


“To Andrej Sedych”. 1 February 1950. Letter in the Papers of Andrej Sedych, box 1, folder 14, Beinecke Rare Book Library, Yale University.


See Adomavič, ‘Bunin. Vospominanija’; Adomavič (1955: 107-125); Berberova (1983: 293); Odoevceva (1983: 259-383); Bachrach (1979). Also see Adomavič’s seminal remarks about the price Bunin payed for his mocking animosity. Adomavič claimed that in the long run, the victory was not Bunin’s and he was paying for it in emigration; see Adomavič (1933).


Blok (1965: 115). B. Lazarevskij and S. Kondruškin were indeed tertiary authors while Kuprin and Bunin were major figures of the 1910s. Bunin also knew that Blok was preparing reviews of his poetry and prose which never transpired; see Blok (1965: 56-57, 529).


On Blok’s 1909 trip to Italy, see Orlov (1980: 405-416).

See ‘Marija, mon[chinja]’ (‘Mother Marija’) 1936. The memoir was published in *Contemporary Annals* in 1936 and Bunin most likely knew it.

See Bachrach (1979: 96); Bunin did not end up quoting any of Nadja’s poems, but I find Bachrach’s suggestion of the allusion to Nadežda L’vova very helpful.

Bunin knew Brjusov best of all the Symbolists, and was certainly fully aware of the details surrounding L’vova’s death.
"To N.P. Smirnov". 20 January 1959. Letter in Smirnov (1969: 210). Without any explanations, Bunin’s wife denied Smirnov’s suggestion that Brjusov had been Glebov’s prototype. In general, after Bunin’s death, his widow loyal continued to insist upon the pure fictionality of Bunin’s stories in Dark Avenues. However, Bachrach recalled that Bunin told him that a real autobiographical subtext informed ‘Genrich’, a vertiginous affair he had had with one Ljuba (cf. Li) in Moscow in winter. Bunin and Ljuba quarreled, and Bunin took a train to Nice via Vienna; see Bachrach (1979: 79-80). For information on Ol’ga and Kazimir Koval’skij, see Pirogova (1992a and b). Information on Koval’skaja’s literary pseudonym was obtained from Masanov (1957, 2: 121). The pen-name Genrich was most likely Bunin’s invention; Masanov’s very reliable source does not list anything like Genrich. The last name Glebov possesses a mythological aura in the culture of the Russian Silver Age. Bunin was likely to have known of the actress and “fairy” of Silver Age St. Petersburg, Ol’ga Glebova-Sudejkina and her involvement in the literary and theatrical scandals of the time. See, for instance, Grin (1977-1982, 2: 66) where Bunin speaks of his quest to create “something new”, to “start a book of which Flaubert dreamed, A Book about Nothing”. See also Grin (1977-1982, 2: 185) for a reference to Bunin’s reading Maupassant in 1928. See also Grin (1977-1982, 3: 94, 97, 100): Bunin reread Madame Bovary in 1941. As for Russian writers like Michail Arcybašev or Fedor Sologub, who did dwell at length on erotic topics, Bunin saw them as artistically inferior and stylistically out of the classical mainstream. For Bunin’s negative remarks about Sologub’s Melkij bes (The Petty Demon), see Grin (1977-1982, 1: 157). I am referring to René Girard’s seminal theory of “triangular desire” in nineteenth-century literature, as outlined in Girard (1965). The scene in the train compartment alludes, very gently, to intimate encounters between Nina and Vasen’ka in ‘Spring in Fialta’. Standing in front of the mirror in a nightgown, Genrich is described as wearing “night slippers, trimmed with polar fox fur” (“v nočnych tufljach, otoročennych pescom”). In ‘Spring in Fialta’, Vasen’ka imagines Nina’s late night visit to his room, her “pink ankles above the swan’s-down trimming of high-heeled slippers” (“rozovych ščikolok nad lebjažej opuškoj tufelek”); see Nabokov (1995: 420/1956: 26). In her article, Kaganskaja insists that Nabokov’s English works exhibit a rapid shift from the “chaste” (“celomudrennyj”) to the sexually explicit; see Kaganskaja (1978). Unlike Kaganskaja, I do not see this transition as any sort of “betrayal” by Nabokov of his Russian past. Jacobs (1973: 309). Death in fictions by Beckett and Nabokov (his English novels) became the subject of the final chapter of Stewart (1984). I am not sure, however, why the author includes Nabokov in British fiction. Alexandrov (1994: 41).

See, for instance, Zweers’s very interesting article ‘Proustian Passages in Ivan Bunin’s The Life of Arsen’ev’ (Zweers 1988). Bunin himself admitted in a
1936 letter to Bicilli that upon reading Proust he was frightened ("ispugalsja") by the "Proustian passages" ("prustovskie mesta") in his own *The Life of Arsen'ev. The Well of Days*, which, he insisted, had been written before he finally got around to reading Proust; see Meščerskij (1961: 154). John Burt Foster investigates the comparative functions of memory in works by Proust and Nabokov in his *Nabokov's Art of Memory and European Modernism*. The poetics of memory in Bunin's and Nabokov's short stories has not been explored in separate studies. Nabokov's dialogue with Bunin's *The Life of Arsen'ev*, occurring in *The Gift* simultaneously on several thematic and structural levels, calls for a separate investigation. Of special interest would be a comparative analysis of the "father" themes, the childhood recollections and the "literary" theme in both autobiographical novels.

The last collection, for which Bunin himself made the selection, was the 1954 *Petlistye uši i drugie rasskazy* (*Loopy Ears and Other Stories*). The collection was supposed to have come out in Paris and Shanghai in the publishing house Russkie zapiski (Russian Annals). See Nabokov's correspondence with Russkie zapiski, VN LC, container 8, folder 16. It is also worth considering that the complete texts of *The Life of Arsen'ev* and *The Gift* both appeared in 1952 at Chekhov Publishing House.

Nabokov also mentioned Bunin in the Forewords to *Strong Opinions* (Nabokov 1973: xii) and *The Gift* ("gone are Bunin, Aldanov, Remizov"; Nabokov 1981: 8). In a 1971 interview with Stephen Jan Parker, he named 'Light Breathing' as his favorite short story by Bunin; see Parker (1991: 72).
Bloom (1973: 30). Nabokov's *Ada* may also encode a reference to Bunin. Considering that Van Veen's Russian name is Ivan, and that he, like Bunin, was born in 1870 (Ivan Veen – Ivan Bunin; anagrammatism), and also given the significance of Russian gentry culture, Bunin's native substratum, in the framework of the novel, Nabokov's protagonist, whom he both loved and "loathed" (Nabokov 1973: 120), could be the last tribute to Bunin's dual function in Nabokov's Russian career.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adamović, Georgij
1933 'Lica i knigi'. Sovremennye zapiski, LII, 324-334.

Alexandrov, Vladimir E.

Andreev, Nikolaj
1930 'Sirin'. Nov', October, 3.
1932 "'Sovremennye zapiski' (Kniga XLIX, 1932 g. – Čast' literaturnaja'). Volja Rossii, IX-VI, 183-186.

Baboreko, A. K.

Bachrach, Aleksandr

Berberova, Nina

Bethea, David M.

Bicilli, P[etr]
1936a 'Vozroždenie allegorii'. Sovremennye zapiski, LXI, 191-204.
1936b 'Neskol’ko zamečanij o sovremennoj zarubežnoj literature'. Novyj grad, 11, 131-135.

Blok, Aleksandr

Bloom, Harold

Boyd, Brian

Bunin, Ivan
1941 The Gentleman from San Francisco. New York.
1942 'Genrich'. Novyj žurnal, III, 5-19.
Černyšev, Andrej (Ed.) 1996 ‘Kak redko teper’ pišu po-russki... Iz perepiski V. V. Nabokova i M. A. Aldanova'. Oktjabr’, 1, 121-146.
Cetlin, Michail 1928 Rev. of Korol’, dama, valet by V. Sirin. Sovremennye zapisiki, XXXVII, 536-538.
Foster, Jr., John Burt 1993 Nabokov’s Art of Memory and European Modernism. Princeton.
Kryzytski, Serge  

Kuznecova, Galina  

‘Literaturnaja anketa’  
1930  *Čisla*, 23, 318-322.

*Literaturnoe nasledstvo. Ivan Bunin*  

‘Literaturnyj večer’  
1930  *Rul’,* 4 March, 6.

Ljubimov, Lev  

Luther, Arthur  

Malozemoff, Elizabeth  

Marija, mon[achinja]  
1936  ‘Vstreči s Blokom (k p'ятнадцатилетию с дня смерти)’. *Sovremen-nye zapiski*, LXII, 211-228.

Masanov, I. F.  
1957  *Slovar’ psevdonimov pisatelej, učených i obščestvennych dejatelej*, 4 t. Moskva.

Meščerskij, A.  

Michaljov, O. N.  

Nabokov, V[ladimir]  
1916  *Stichi*, n. p. [Sankt-Peterburg].


1923  *Gromd’. Berlin.


1930  *Vozvraščenie Čorba*. Berlin.


Nabokov, Vladimir  


1971  *Mary*. Greenwich, Conn.


1979  *Stichi*. Ann Arbor.

Naumann, Marina Turkevich

Nazarov, Al.

Odoevceva, Irina

Opdycke, John B.

Orlov, VI.

Parker, Stephen Jan

Parry, Albert

Pirogova, A. G.

Polockaja, Řemma

Raeff, Marc

Rodnjanskaja, Irina

Šachovskaja, Žinaida

‘Samoe lučšee proizvedenie russkoj literatury poslednego desjatiletija (anketa)’
1931 Novaja gazeta, 1 April, 1-2.

Schakhowskoj, Žinaida [Žinaida Šachovskaja]
1937 ‘Un maître de la jeune littérature russe Vladimir Nabokoff-Sirin’. La Cité Chrétienne, 20 July.

Shrayer, Maxim D.
1995  
*The Poetics of Vladimir Nabokov’s Short Stories with Reference to Anton Chekhov and Ivan Bunin* (Ph. D. Dissertation, Yale University).

1996  

**Slonim, Mark**

1925a  

1925b  

1929  

**Šmidt, V. V.**

1973  

**Smirnov, N. P.** (Ed.)

1969  

**Stewart, Garrett**

1984  

**Struve, Gleb**

1930  

1934  

1936  

1937  
‘Vladimir Sirin-Nabokov (K ego večeru v Londone 20-go fevralja)’. *Russkij v Anglii*, 16 February, 3.

1984  

**Tammi, Pekka**

1985  
*Problems of Nabokov’s Poetics: A Narratological Analysis*. Helsinki.

**Terapiano, Jurij**

1986  

**Tynjanov, Ju. N.**

1977  

‘Večer v čest’ Bunina v Berline’

1934  
*Vozroždenie*, 11 January, 4.

‘Večer V. V. Sirina’

1932  
*Poslednie novosti*, 17 November, 3.

**Vejdle, Vladimir** [Vladimir Weidle]

1939  

**Zajcev, Boris**

1992  

**Zajcev, K[iriU]**

1929  
‘“Buninskij” mir i “Sirinskij” mir’. *Rossija i slavjanstvo*, 9 November, 3.

**Zholkovsky, Alexander**

1993  
‘Philosophy of Composition (K nekotorym aspektam struktury odnogo literaturnogo teksta)’. *Readings in Russian Modernism*. To

Zimmermann, Linda Saputelli

Zlobin, Vladimir
1934 'О на́шем “то́лстом” жу́рнале'. Меч, 8, 13-14.

Zweers, A. F. (Ed.)
1983a 'Perepiska I. A. Bunina s M. A. Aldanovym'. Novyj žurnal, 150, 159-191.