**UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH**

**Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures**

**Russian 1310. Nabokov**

CL 444

Wed 2.30-5.25

Prof. Jonathan Platt

jbplatt@pitt.edu

Office: CL 1421A, phone: 412-624-5714

Hours: Tu 12.30-1.30, Th 11.00-12.00

**Credits, Prerequisites, and Format**

The course carries three credits and satisfies the Arts & Sciences General Education Requirement for a Second Course in Literature, the Arts, or Creative Expression. It also satisfies the capstone requirement for Russian majors (see supplementary requirements below). It is intended for upper-level undergraduates with basic writing abilities. The course meets once a week and combines lecture and discussion.

**Course Description and Goals**

In this course we will survey the major writings of Vladimir Nabokov, including novels and short stories from both the Russian and American periods. Discussion topics will include: the semiotics of life-creation, art as perversity, author-hero dynamics, exile and nostalgia, bilingualism and translation, the violence of linguistic play, the manipulation of narrative desire; modernism and postmodernism. Upon completion of this course you should be able to:

* analyze and critique canonical texts by Vladimir Nabokov, both contextualizing his works in the modern Russian, European, and American literary traditions and identifying the key techniques, devices, and compositional strategies he employs.
* formulate arguments about Nabokov’s most frequently recurring themes, motifs, and philosophical preoccupations, examining their relationship to broader cultural trends in twentieth-century art and thought.
* question and assess Nabokov’s peculiar position at the cusp of modernist and postmodernist aesthetics, exploring the problematic literary historical meaning of this transition.

**Required Readings**

University Bookstore

Vladimir Nabokov. *Despair.* Vintage, 1989.

--------. *The Gift*. Vintage, 1991.

--------. *Invitation to a Beheading.* Vintage, 1989.

--------. *The Annotated Lolita.* Vintage, 1991.

*--------. Pale Fire.* Vintage, 1988.

*--------. Pnin.* Vintage, 1989.

Course reader:

Nabokov, Vladimir. *Speak, Memory*. Vintage, 1989. Excerpts.

--------. *The Stories of Vladimir Nabokov.* Vintage, 1996. Selected stories.

--------. *Poems and Problems*. McGraw Hill, 1971. Excerpts.

--------. “Problems of Translation: *Onegin* in English,” *Theories of Translation: An Anthology of Essays from Dryden to Derrida*. Ed. Rainer Schulte and John Biguenet. University of Chicago, 1992.

--------. “Pushkin, or the Real and the Plausible.” Trans. Dmitri Nabokov. *New York Review of Books*, March 31, 1988.

**Recommended Readings**

Course reader:

Agamben, Giorgio. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford, 1998. Excerpts.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity.” *Art and Answerability.* Texas, 1990. Excerpts.

Bergson, Henri. *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics*. Wisdom Library, 1946. Excerpts.

Boym, Svetlana. *The Future of Nostalgia*. Basic Books, 2001. Excerpts.

Brooks, Peter. *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative.* Harvard, 1992. Excerpts.

Casanova, Pascale. *The World Republic of Letters*. Harvard, 2004. Excerpts.

Lacan, Jacques. *Seminar VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*. Norton, 1992. Excerpts

Rancière, Jacques. “The Aesthetic Revolution and its Outcomes.” *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*. Continuum, 2010.

**Supplementary Bibliography (on reserve in Hillman or available online)**

Alexandrov, Vladimir, ed. *The Garland Companion to Vladimir Nabokov.* Garland, 1995.

Аверин, Б., ред. *В. В. Набоков: Pro et contra.* 2тт. РХГИ, 2001.

Barabtarlo, Gennadi. *Phantom of Fact: A Guide to Nabokov's Pnin*. Ardis, 1989.

Bloom, Harold, ed*: Vladimir Nabokov: Modern Critical Views.* Chelsea House, 1987.

Boyd, Brian. *Vladimir Nabokov: The American Years.* Princeton, 1991.

--------. *Vladimir Nabokov: The Russian Years.* Princeton, 1990.

--------. *Nabokov's* Pale Fire: *The Magic of Artistic Discovery*. Princeton, 1999. (ebrary)

Connolly, Julian, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Nabokov*. Cambridge, 2005. (literature online)

--------. *Nabokov and His Fiction: New Perspectives.* Cambridge, 1999.

--------. *Nabokov's* Invitation to a Beheading: *A Critical Companion*. Northwestern, 1997.

Connolly, Julian. *Nabokov's Early Fiction: Patterns of Self and Other.* Cambridge, 1993.

Долинин, Александр. *Истинная жизнь писателя Сирина: Работы о Набокове*. Академический проект, 2004. (dropbox)

Grayson, Jane. *Nabokov Translated: A Comparison of Nabokov's Russian and English Prose.* Oxford, 1977.

Leving, Yuri. *Keys to* The Gift: *A Guide to Nabokov’s Novel*. Stanford, 2011. (ebrary, see also www.keystogift.com)

Мельников, Н. Г., ред. *Классик без ретуши: Литературный мир о творчестве Владимира Набокова*. НЛО, 2000.

Набоков, В. В. *Русский период: Собрание сочинений в 5 томах*. Симпозиум, 2002-09. (dropbox)

Page, Norman, ed. *Nabokov: The Critical Heritage.* Routledge, 1982.

Rivers, J. E., ed. *Nabokov's Fifth Arc: Nabokov and Others on His Life's Work.* Texas, 1982.

Shrayer, Maxim. *The World of Nabokov's Stories*. Texas, 1999.

Wood, Michael. *The Magician's Doubts: Nabokov and the Risks of Fiction.* Princeton, 1995.

**Requirements**

* **20%** *Participation* – The participation grade consists of three components, each of which is worth approximately 6⅔% of the final grade:

**Attendance:** Each absence after one sick day allowance will result in a loss of 2 points. More than three absences after the first week of classes is grounds for automatic failure. Serious illnesses or family emergencies must be documented. The professor may ask you to make up for excused absences with extra work.

**In-class participation:** Regular in-class participation involves making some substantial contribution to every class meeting. Students who find class participation difficult may compensate by posting more frequently on the discussion forum.

**Discussion forum:** Students must make at least 6 posts to the CourseWeb discussion forum. Every weekend I will post a new thread with discussion questions for the coming week’s reading. The thread will remain open until the following Saturday, and you may post either before or after Wednesday’s class. Do NOT feel compelled to address all discussion questions. They are only intended to help with the reading and give you something to start with on the forum. For every post, check to see if someone else in the class has already addressed the question to which you are responding. If they have, you should reply directly to their post and engage it in dialogue as much as possible.  If you are the first to address a given question, you should title your post accordingly. I do not grade individual posts. Rather, I will read the entire discussion each week and make comments, both addressing selected individual posts and summing up the entire discussion.

* **10**% *Quizzes* – Weekly five-minute quizzes checking how attentively you have done the reading. Two quizzes may be dropped. No make-up quizzes.
* **20%** *Midterm Essay –* 5-8 pages on a topic of your choice. **Due Feb 27.** The midterm essay should present a close reading of a single work (a novel or short story) from the first half of the class. Suggested approaches include: anaylsis of narrative technique or structural composition, interpretation of a recurring motif, examination of a central theme or question, contextualization of a character type. Students are required to communicate their paper topic to the professor in person or by email for approval by **Feb 20**.
* **50%** *Final Essay* – 12-15 pages on a topic of your choice. **Due Apr 24.** The final essay should examine an overarching theme or preoccupation in Nabokov’s work, discussing at least three texts, spanning both halves of the class. Students should consult secondary critical literature on the author (a bibliography will be provided). If the midterm essay is incorporated into your argument, there must be clear evidence of development. Students are required to submit an abstract or outline of the final essay with a bibliography by **Apr 10**. Failure to do so will result in deduction of points.

**Writing guidelines**

Students are urged to visit the professor’s office hours while planning their papers. Your paper should be appropriately formatted, and you are advised to consult a style manual such as the *MLA Handbook* or *The Chicago Manual of Style*. If the final submission is not “college level,” it will be returned and must be revised and resubmitted within a week. Resubmitted papers will be marked down (A to A-, A- to B+, etc). “College-level” writing means that all words in the paper are used and spelled correctly; there are no incomplete sentences; texts are properly referenced; the paper is coherent and comprehensible; and the paper corresponds to the assignment. If you find writing assignments challenging, you are urged to visit the writing center well in advance of the deadline. You may also submit a draft of your paper for consultation with the professor, but no later than two weeks in advance of the deadline.

**Capstone requirement**

Russian majors taking the course to fulfill their capstone requirement must complete the following in addition to the regular undergraduate requirements:

* Write a 2-3 pg. abstract for their final essay in Russian. **Due Apr 10.** The assignment will comprise **10%** of the final essay grade and will be graded for clarity of writing (including fluency, organization, style, and grammatical accuracy). A bibliography is also required.
* Make use of Russian language material in their midterm and/or final essay (only one is required). This should involve either quoting the original Russian of Nabokov’s early writing or citing Russian-language secondary sources.

##### **Academic Integrity:**

Students in this course will be expected to comply with the [University of Pittsburgh's Policy on Academic Integrity](http://www.pitt.edu/~provost/ai1.html) Any student suspected of violating this obligation for any reason during the semester will be required to participate in the procedural process, initiated at the instructor level, as outlined in the University Guidelines on Academic Integrity. This may include, but is not limited to, the confiscation of the examination of any individual suspected of violating University Policy. Furthermore, no student may bring any unauthorized materials to an exam, including dictionaries and programmable calculators.

##### **Disabilities:**

If you have a disability that requires special testing accommodations or other classroom modifications, you need to notify both the instructor and the [Disability Resources and Services](http://www.drs.pitt.edu/policies.html) no later than the 2nd week of the term. You may be asked to provide documentation of your disability to determine the appropriateness of accommodations. To notify Disability Resources and Services, call 648-7890 (Voice or TTD) to schedule an appointment. The Office is located in 140 William Pitt Union.

**G-Grade Policy:**

A G grade will be given only when a student who has been attending the course and has been making regular progress is prevented by a (documented) medical or family emergency from completing the requirements.  Students must sign a written agreement to complete all missing requirements (or supplementary work) within one term after receiving the G grade.

**Email Communication Policy:**

Each student is issued a University e-mail address (username@pitt.edu) upon admittance. This e-mail address may be used by the University for official communication with students. Students are expected to read e-mail sent to this account on a regular basis. Failure to read and react to University communications in a timely manner does not absolve the student from knowing and complying with the content of the communications. The University provides an e-mail forwarding service that allows students to read their e-mail via other service providers (e.g., Hotmail, AOL, Yahoo). Students that choose to forward their e-mail from their pitt.edu address to another address do so at their own risk. If e-mail is lost as a result of forwarding, it does not absolve the student from responding to official communications sent to their University e-mail address. To forward e-mail sent to your University account, go to[*http://accounts.pitt.edu*](http://accounts.pitt.edu/), log into your account, click on***Edit Forwarding Addresses***, and follow the instructions on the page. Be sure to log out of your account when you have finished. (For the full E-mail Communication Policy, go to ([*www.bc.pitt.edu/policies/policy/09/09-10-01.html*](http://www.bc.pitt.edu/policies/policy/09/09-10-01.html))

**SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **DATE** | **REQUIRED READING** | **RECOMMENDED READING** | **LECTURE TOPICS** | **ASSIGN-MENTS** |
| Jan 9 | Selected poems, interviews, theoretical questions  |  |  |  |
| Jan 16 | *Lolita*, Foreword and Part One [140] |  |  |  |
| Jan 23 | *Lolita*, Part Two, ch. 1-22 [102] | Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters* (excerpts) | The Dynamics of Literary Prestige |  |
| Jan 30 | *Lolita*, Part Two, ch. 23-36 and “On a Book Entitled *Lolita*”; “The Return of Chorb”; “Spring in Fialta”; “Signs and Symbols” [111] | Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* (excerpts) | The Suffering of the Real under the Symbolic |  |
| Feb 6 | *Despair*, ch. 1-8 [152] |  |  |  |
| Feb 13 | *Despair*, ch. 9-11; *Invitation to a Beheading*, ch. 1-8 [131] |  |  |  |
| Feb 20 | *Invitation to a Beheading*, ch. 9-20 [124] | Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer* (excerpts) | Totalitarianism: Law as Form without Significance | **\* Midterm essay topic due** |
| Feb 27 | *Pale Fire*, Foreword, “Pale Fire,” and Commentary for Canto 1 [106] |  |  | **\*Midterm Essay due** |
| Mar 6 | *Pale Fire*, Commentary for Cantos 2-4, Index[128] | Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot* (excerpts)  | Narrative Desire and Perversion |  |
| SPRING BREAK |
| Mar 20 | “Problems of Translation: *Onegin* in English”;“Pushkin, or the Real and the Plausible”; “An Evening of Russian Poetry”;*Speak, Memory* (excerpts);“A Letter that Never Reached Russia”;“A Guide to Berlin”;“The Admiralty Spire” [138] | Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (excerpts) | Exile, Nostalgia, and Bilingualism |  |
| Mar 27 | *The Gift*, ch. 1-2 [142] |  |  |  |
| Apr 3 | *The Gift*, ch. 3-4 [154] | Jacques Rancière, “The Aesthetic Revolution and its Outcomes” | Modernity as the Dialectic of Art and Life |  |
| Apr 10 | *The Gift*, ch. 5; *Pnin*, ch 1-3 [128] | Mikhail Bakhtin, “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity” (excerpts) | The Phenomenology of Author and Hero | **\*Abstract or outline of final essay with biblio-graphy due** |
| Apr 17 | *Pnin*, ch 4-7;“Terra Incognito”;“The Circle”“First Love”;“The Vane Sisters” [128] | Henri Bergson, “Introduction to Metaphysics” | Intuition, Duration, and Memory |  |
| Apr 24 | **\*Class does not meet** |  |  | \***Final essay due (submit by email)** |

##### **LECTURE TOPICS**

1. **(Jan 23)** **The Dynamics of Literary Prestige**

Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, trans. M.B. DeBevoise (Harvard, 2004) 82-100, 108-15, 133-142.

Casanova argues that world literature has its own specific political economy dictated by centers of literary value (the oldest and most powerful center being Paris). Peripheral communities must first “accumulate literary capital”—devising a literary language, translating canonical foreign texts, posing the questions of national culture—before their literary production can become recognized as truly “universal.” Writers Casanova characterizes as “second-generation revolutionaries” complete this process when they abandon national literary politics and seek creative freedom abroad, embracing modernist forms of stylistic experiment. What is Nabokov’s place in this process? How (and when) did he achieve his stature as a great writer? What role did translation play in his career? What about the critics? Does he remain a representative of Russian literature in his American works? Many of Nabokov’s works are considered pioneers of a postmodern aesthetic sensibility (something Casanova largely ignores in her study). Does this complicate his literary historical role? Is *Lolita* an elaboration of Pushkin’s *Onegin*, a modernist epic (like Joyce’s *Ulysses*), a “great American novel”, or the founding text of the genre of “highbrow pulp” that dominates literature today? Can it be all of the above?

1. **(Feb 6) The Suffering of the Real under the Symbolic**

Jacques Lacan, *Seminar VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Denis Porter (Norton, 1992) 101-27.

In his *Ethics*, Lacan describes a triangular relation between things, objects, and signifiers that corresponds to his three registers of the Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic. He approaches the question of the Thing (*das Ding*) primarily through the Freudian concept of art as a form of sublimation. An artwork is “an object raised to the dignity of the Thing.” This Thing, which Lacan also relates to the maternal body in Kleinian psychoanalysis, is a “hole in the Real” that “suffers from the signifier.” In other words, as the subject is separated from primordial unity (with the mother), entry into the symbolic order domesticates and veils the (incestual) Thing as a forbidden horizon. Nonetheless, the drives impulse toward the Thing is also what gives the symbolic register its potency. The signifying chain forever circulates around this ineffable kernel of being as non-being. Lacan sees traces of the Thing’s presence in the fabrication of signifiers out of objects that surround an emptiness (pottery), in the excessive object-love of perversion, in the “extremely agreeable” pleasures of collecting, and in the adoration of the Lady in courtly love. Lacan tends to dismiss the feminization of the Thing, but many feminist critics have pushed precisely this point. For example, the psychoanalytic perspectives of Kristeva and Irigaray are largely based on a narrative of sacrificed or repressed femininity, as are the readings in Elisabeth Bronfen’s great catalogue of fetishized female deaths in *Over her Dead Body*. Nabokov’s heavily textured prose suggests a similar vision of art as fetishistic sublimation, and his favorite death is always that of a beautiful woman. Where is the presence of an absent, suffering Real in Nabokov’s symbolic universe? What drives the play of his signifiers? In what way can his use of language be described as a kind of perverse collecting? Who are these women his heroes adore so vitally in death?

1. **(Feb 20)** **Totalitarianism: Law as Form without Significance**

Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, 1998) 49-67.

In *Homo Sacer*, Agamben argues that contemporary life is suspended between the old opposition of *polis* and *oikos* or *bios* and *zoe*—the “good” life of politics and society and the “natural” life of the domestic sphere and the reproductive body. What remains is the “bare life” of a subject abandoned by the law in a state of exception that dialectically reveals the absolute power of the law as such. Law and life seem to change places, as power claims all rights over a bare life that is at once sacred and subject to extermination. In the chapter “Form of Law,” Agamben parallels the idea of a state of exception becoming the rule with Kafka’s parable of the man from the country in *The Trial*, with the impossibility of reaching the ineffable (since ineffability is itself a presupposition of language), with the mystical idea of a revelation of “the Nothing” (when the meaning of scripture becomes indecipherable), and with the tradition of deconstructive criticism. At the core of Agamben’s work lies the thesis that the horrors of totalitarianism in the 20th century are in fact a universal condition of modern life, and only a “messianic” effort of exhausting this condition (“closing the door of the Law”) can release us from its grip. Nabokov wrote many of his works in the shadow of Nazism and the Bolshevik Revolution, both of which he vocally denounced, and several of his works may be classified as critiques of totalitarianism. At the same time, his works are charged with a fascinated horror at advanced capitalist commodity culture—what he calls *poshlust* (idiosyncratically transliterating *poshlost’*). Does Nabokov have his own theory of modernity and modern power? What is the position of life—the good life or the “sweet” life—in his works? Is art a possible antidote to the *poshlust* of a law that has force but no meaning?

1. **(Mar 6) Narrative Desire and Perversion**

Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (Harvard, 1992) 37-48, 90-112.

Brooks proposes a theory of narrative based on Freud’s *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and the tension between life instincts (Eros) and the death drive (Thanatos—the drive to return to an inorganic state). Narrative is propelled by engines of desire (epitomized by the ambitious young heroes of 19th-century novels). Narrative desire captivates the reader. He identifies with the hero, suffering all the deviations in the plot as erotically charged deferrals of closure. Such delays participate in what Freud defines as repetition compulsion—the impulse to repeat a trauma (ultimately the original trauma of separation from the mother) until it can be “mastered” through symbolic form (as in the *fort-da­* episode in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*). While Brooks’ theory has great heuristic power, it can be challenged by various counter-examples—such as Kristeva’s study of “melancholic” literature in *Black Sun*, the subversive reading practices of poststructuralist literary criticism, Eco’s theory of the open work, or Barthes’ *Pleasure of the Text*, which focuses on the enjoyment of the reader—comparing the mere “pleasure” of following a narrative towards closure with the “jouissance” of the reader who is unsettled by a text, or who “looks up” from his reading, disturbing its homogenous flow. Finally, one can ask how writers or readers pervert the erotics of literature. Nabokov is deeply interested in the perversity of art. Why does he so often encourage reading strategies that require a deviation from narrative linearity? Do his works ever have genuinely satisfying ends? What provokes his interest in perversion?

1. **(Mar 27)** **Exile, Nostalgia, and Bilingualism**

Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (Basic Books, 2001) 251-83.

Boym proposes a distinction between “restorative” and “reflective” nostalgia, where the former is characterized by efforts to recover a lost homeland, filling in all gaps in memory, erecting monuments and staging commemorations. By contrast, reflective nostalgia (most characteristic of modernist exiles) lingers on gaps, ruins, and ironic temporal displacements, embracing an “uncanny” (*unheimlich*—literaly “unhomely”) condition in which presence and absence mingle in the mnemonic medium of art. In the chapter “On Diasporic Intimacy” which precedes her discussion of Nabokov, Boym considers a certain utopian potential in exilic communities’ rootlessness, bilingualism, and territorial “polygamy.” A useful counterpoint for Boym is the work of Edward Said. Said pays somewhat greater attention to the political context of exile, but he still deploys it as a metaphor for intellectual and artistic freedom in the modern age. How does Nabokov use his own exile as an aesthetic principle? What is the nature of his nostalgia for pre-revolutionary Russia? What is the place of bilingualism in his writing? Does the theme of exile diminish the political in his works? Does his exilic posture suggest the possibility for a new kind of imagined community?

1. **(Apr 3) Modernity as the Dialectic of Art and Life**

Jacques Rancière, “The Aesthetic Revolution and its Outcomes,” *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, trans. Steven Corcoran (Continuum, 2010) 115-33.

Rancière’s aesthetic theory revolves around the dialectic of art and life. According to Rancière, modern art (or in his terms, art of the “aesthetic regime”) must forever safeguard a paradoxical tension between autonomy from life and heteronomous dependence upon it. Modern art is suspended between two “vanishing points”—one where art becomes mere life, and the other where it becomes mere art. The history of modern art is thus the effort to maintain this tension, shuttling back and forth between different scenarios and emplotments to avoid collapsing into homogeneity. Rancière lists a wide array of such scenarios, charting both their ambition and the “entropy” that forces artists periodically to look elsewhere for answers. Perhaps the most relevant scenario for Nabokov is that of aestheticism or art for art’s sake, which, since Flaubert, has struggled to guard against the aestheticization of life in order to protect art’s autonomy. What is the place and goal of Nabokov’s aestheticism in the history of world literature in general and the Russian tradition specifically? How is it related to the symbolist concept of “life-creation” (*zhiznetvorchestvo*)? Is aestheticism the only scenario he employs in his works? Do his works deviate at all from his own pronouncements about art and life? Does his writing suffer from a kind of entropy like that which Rancière describes in connection with Flaubert and Adorno?

1. **(Apr 10) The Phenomenology of Author and Hero**

Mikhail Bakhtin, “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity,” *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays*, trans. Vadim Liapunov (Texas, 1990) 22-36, 112-132.

In his early philosophical texts, Bakhtin develops a phenomenology of self and other, which he relates specifically to the relationship between the authors and heroes of literary texts. Of fundamental importance is the question of the author’s “surplus of vision” or “excess of seeing” vis-à-vis the hero. This perspective allows the author to perceive the hero as a totality in space and time—a perspective that is denied to the hero, who is caught up in the risks and as yet undetermined meaning of his or her life. For the hero all memory is in the future (“I will have been”), while only an author can linger on a true (loving) memory of the hero’s past. This is what allows the author to bestow the gift of form—“consummation”—on the hero in an artistic text. Much of Nabokov’s writing is concerned with the interaction of self and other and, in particular, the relationship between an author and his characters. How does Nabokov manipulate the contours of this relationship? Does he share the early Bakhtin’s valorization of the gift of form? How does Nabokov use other positions in the textual dynamic—particularly different types of narrators and assumed readers—to complicate things?

1. **(Apr 17) Intuition, Duration, and Memory**

Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Mabelle L. Andison (Wisdom Library, 1946) 159-88.

Bergson’s theory of time is based on a critique of the influence of language, symbols, socialization, and instrumental reason on consciousness. Time is invariably “spatialized” by thought and action, as we reduce things to static objects that remain the same from one moment to the next. Time is metaphorically treated as another dimension of space (think of the way we talk about time— “a long time”, “plan ahead”, etc—and how we measure it like a homogeneous, extended medium with clocks and calendars). This is an essential strategy for the manipulation of the object world, granting a kind of freedom (in the sense of power). However, for Bergson, true freedom is possible only through actions that grow and become within a different kind of time termed *durée* (duration). Durative time is effectively a time that remembers—whether as the infinitesimal memory of vibrating matter, the universal memory of life as it moves through the transformations of creative evolution, or the memory of an individual subject, who senses his entire past contracted into an act of free will. For Bergson, it is also possible to intuitively grasp the durative rhythms of other beings and things, since all individuated rhythms are but sub-rhythms of the universe as a whole. Bergson’s philosophy continues to play an important role in contemporary theory, primarily in the theory of affects and assemblages (via Deleuze and Guattari), which critiques the division of the world into “molar” objects and concepts (“territorialized wholes”), preferring “molecular” interactions (“deterritorialized flows”). Nabokov was a great admirer of Bergson, and his own philosophy of time shares much with the French philosopher. How is time depicted in Nabokov’s works? How does art serve as an antipode to goal-oriented time-consciousness? What kinds of memory does Nabokov value? Here it may also be useful to consider Bergson’s theory of a ghostly time-consciousness of “dream,” in which memory is divorced from all purposiveness in the field of action.