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INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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