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## Guide to the Vladimir Nabokov Collection, ca. 1966-1987

### Collection number: Mss 86

Department of Special Collections

Davidson Library  
University of California, Santa Barbara

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#### Descriptive Summary

**Title:** Vladimir Nabokov Collection,

**Date (inclusive):** ca. 1966-1987

**Collection number:** Mss 86

**Collectors:** Anonymous; Johnson, Donald Barton, 1933-

**Extent:** 2.4 linear feet (6 boxes)

**Repository:** University of California, Santa Barbara. Library. Dept. of Special Collections  
Santa Barbara, CA 93106

**Shelf location:** Del Sur

**Language:** English

#### Provenance

Anonymous donation, 1987; additional donation by D. Barton Johnson, 1991.

#### Restrictions

None.

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### Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Vladimir Nabokov Collection, Mss 86, Department of Special Collections, University Libraries, University of California, Santa Barbara.

### Access Points

Nabokov, Vladimir Vladimirovich, 1899-1977.

### Biography

#### VLADIMIR VLADIMIROVICH NABOKOV (1899-1977)

Vladimir Nabokov, Russian and American novelist, short-story writer, poet, memoirist, scholar, translator, lepidopterist, and chess problemist, was born into a wealthy, multilingual St. Petersburg family on April 22, 1899. From his idolized father, legal scholar, journalist, and founder of the liberal Constitutional Democratic Party, Nabokov inherited his Anglophile inclinations; from his mother-his sensitivity to color, light, and visual detail. Nabokov's first love was poetry and he published two slim volumes of verse before the family emigrated in 1919. Taking a Cambridge degree in Slavic and Romance literatures in 1922, he rejoined his family in Berlin where his father, who had continued his newspaper and political activities, was killed protecting a colleague at a public political meeting. Nabokov supported himself by giving lessons, chiefly language and tennis, doing translations, devising chess problems and the first Russian crossword puzzles, and writing reviews for émigré publications. Two additional poetry volumes of appeared, but he was gradually turning to prose, first, stories, and then -- plays and novels. Nabokov's career as a novelist was launched with the appearance of *Mary* soon after his 1925 marriage to Vera Slonim. Their only child, Dmitri, was born in 1934.

By 1930 Nabokov had written three novels and had established himself as the leading new writer of the emigration. The thirties, the high point of Nabokov's career as a Russian writer, culminated in his best Russian novels: *Invitation to a Beheading* (1938) and *The Gift* (1937-38). Remaining in Berlin until 1937, the Nabokovs emigrated to France before once again fleeing the Nazis, arriving in New York in May 1940. Nabokov had begun a new career as an English language novelist with *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* (1941) while still in Paris. He had continued, however, to write in Russian and French. Once in America he was never again to write Russian prose.

In his early American years Nabokov taught at Wellesley College while also pursuing his professional interest in lepidoptery at the Harvard Museum of Comparative Zoology. From 1948 through 1959 he was Professor of Slavic Literature at Cornell. Summers were devoted to travelling, writing, and butterfly collecting in the Far West. Only three novels were written during the American years: *Bend Sinister* (1947), *Lolita* (1955), and *Pnin* (1957). The 1951 memoir *Conclusive Evidence* (originally published mostly in *The New Yorker*), later revised and expanded as *Speak, Memory* (1966), was also a product of this period, as was its Russian version *Drugie berega* (1954). Much time was also devoted to translations of Russian classics and, particularly, to his four volume translation of and commentary on Alexander Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* (1964).

The American success of *Lolita* (1958) restored to Nabokov the fortune that the Russian Revolution had deprived him of some forty years earlier. Now, at sixty, Nabokov once again emigrated, settling permanently in Switzerland, but retaining his American citizenship. The Swiss years saw the creation of *Pale Fire* (1962), *Ada* (1969), *Transparent Things* (1972) and *Look at the Harlequins* (1974). Although Nabokov's final term of European residence was of great importance to his career as an American writer, it was also saw the resurrection of his reputation as a Russian writer. All eight of his Russian novels were reissued in the U.S. by Ardis Publishers and, in turn, translated into English where they found a new, much larger international audience, thus belatedly making Nabokov one of the most widely read contemporary Russian authors.

Nabokov died in Montreux, Switzerland in July 1977.

D. Barton Johnson, October 28, 1997

### Scope and Content

The first three series in the collection were donated anonymously in 1987. They are:

Writings -Monographs. Arranged alphabetically, by title. Includes corrected typescript drafts, galley and page proofs, along with some related correspondence, for *Pale Fire* (Russian translation), *Perepiska s sestroi* (a collection of correspondence, 1945-1974, between Nabokov and Helene Sikorski), and *Pnin* (Russian translation).

Correspondence, 1966-1986. Incoming/Outgoing, arranged chronologically. Mainly with Carl R. and Ellendea Proffer (Ardis). A few typescript signed letters by Vladimir, but most by Vera and, later, also by their son Dmitri. Some later letters also with Ronald Meyer (Ardis).

Nabokoviana, ca. 1966-1980. Mostly relating to Carl Proffer's work with Nabokov, including correspondence, articles, consultant's report, blank memoranda of agreement between Ardis and Nabokov, and b/w photo of Nabokov.

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The fourth series, donated by D Barton Johnson in 1991, contains:

Additions. Issues of magazines, journals, and newspapers, containing articles by Nabokov, ca. 1978-1987.

#### **Related Material**

The Department of Special Collections also has a number of Nabokov first and fine press editions, as well as Ardis publications, all of which are cataloged separately. Titles can be searched on Pegasus (the UCSB online catalog), Melvyl (the University of California online catalog), as well as OCLC and RLIN.

Related websites include:

Zembla, the official site of the International Vladimir Nabokov Society, at: <http://www.libraries.psu.edu/nabokov/nabsoc.htm>

ARDIS, publishers of Russian literature, at: <http://www.ardisbooks.com>

The zemblarchive section of the Zembla site notes collections of Nabokov material at other institutions, including:

Amherst Center for Russian Culture.

Columbia University, Bakhmeteff Archive.

Library of Congress, Vladimir Nabokov Papers.

New York Public Library, Vladimir Nabokov Archive, Berg Collection.

Pennsylvania State University, Pattee Library, Rare Books Room.

Washington University, St. Louis, Vladimir Nabokov Papers.

Yale University, Beinecke Library, Manuscript Collection, Edmund Wilson - Vladimir Nabokov Correspondence.

Writings - Monographs

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*Pale Fire* [Russian translation]

- Box 1, Folder 1      Original Aleksei Tsvetkov typescript translation, with Vera Nabokov's corrections (includes related correspondence from V. Nabokov to Tsvetkov, and editor Igor Markovich Yefimov, 1979-1980)
- Box 1, Folder 2-4    Typescripts of translation into Russian, by Aleksei Tsvetkov and Vera Nabokov, with corrections (includes related correspondence from V. Nabokov to Ellendea and Carl Proffer, Ardis Publishers, 15 Nov. 1982)
- Box 2, Folder 1-2    Page proofs, with Vera Nabokov's corrections (includes related correspondence from V. Nabokov to Yefimov, 1 Apr. 1981)
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*Perepiska s sestroi* [published by Ardis, 1985; a collection of correspondence, 1945- 1974, between Nabokov and Helene Sikorski]

- Box 2, Folder 3-4    Typescript manuscript, with corrections
- Box 2, Folder 5      Galley proofs, with corrections
- Box 2, Folder 6      Galley proofs, with corrections (includes note that they were sent to H. Sikorski)
- Box 2, Folder 7      Page proofs, with corrections
- Box 2, Folder 8      Page proofs, with corrections (includes note that they were sent to H. Sikorski)
- Box 2, Folder 9      Page proofs, with corrections (includes note that they were sent to Sarra [Babyonysheva])
- Box 2, Folder 10    Page proofs - with corrections (includes correspondence from H. Sikorski to Carl Proffer, 21 Feb. 1984, and other related correspondence and notes)
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*Pnin* [Russian translation by Gennadii Barabtarlo, published by Ardis, 1983]

- Box 3, Folder 1      Typescript manuscript, with corrections
- Box 3, Folder 2      Page proofs, with corrections

**Correspondence**

**Note**

Incoming/Outgoing, mainly with Carl R. and Ellendea Proffer [Ardis], including a few typescript signed letters by Vladimir Nabokov, but most by Vera and, later, also by their son Dmitri; some later letters also with Ronald Meyer [Ardis]. Early correspondence relates mainly to Proffer's *Keys to Lolita* (published 1968). Later correspondence discusses a variety of literary, publishing, and personal matters.

Box 4, Folder 1	<b>1966 (7 items)</b>
Box 4, Folder 2	<b>1967 (4 items)</b>
Box 4, Folder 3	<b>1968 (4 items)</b>
Box 4, Folder 4	<b>1969 (7 items)</b>
Box 4, Folder 5	<b>1970 (4 items)</b>
Box 4, Folder 6	<b>1971 (2 items)</b>
Box 4, Folder 7	<b>1972 (3 items)</b>
Box 4, Folder 8	<b>1973 (8 items)</b>
Box 4, Folder 9	<b>1974 (31 items)</b>
Box 4, Folder 10	<b>1975 (22 items)</b>
Box 4, Folder 11	<b>1976 (17 items)</b>
Box 4, Folder 12	<b>1977 (15 items)</b>
Box 4, Folder 13	<b>1978 (22 items)</b>
Box 4, Folder 14	<b>1979 (26 items)</b>
Box 4, Folder 15	<b>1980 (47 items)</b>
Box 4, Folder 16	<b>1981 (21 items)</b>
Box 4, Folder 17	<b>1982 (26 items)</b>
Box 4, Folder 18	<b>1983 (21 items)</b>
Box 4, Folder 19	<b>1984 (22 items)</b>
Box 4, Folder 20	<b>1985 (14 items)</b>
Box 4, Folder 21	<b>1986 (12 items)</b>

**Nabokoviana**

Box 4, Folder 22    **Mostly relating to Carl Proffer's work with Nabokov, including correspondence, articles, consultant's report blank memoranda of agreement between Ardis and Nabokov, and b/w photo of Nabokov, ca. 1966-1980.**

**Additions**

**Note**

Early Polish appearances of Nabokov's works, at a time when they still were forbidden in Russia. Donated by D. Barton Johnson, 1991.

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**Journals (issues containing Nabokov articles)**

Box 5, Folder 1	<i>Akcent</i> , 1986
Box 5, Folder 2	<i>Dialog</i> , 1980
Box 5, Folder 3	<i>Odra</i> , 1986
Box 5, Folder 4	<i>Studio</i> , ca. 1984
Box 5, Folder 5-6	<i>Tworczosc</i> , 1978, 1986

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**Oversize (newspapers and magazines containing Nabokov articles)**

Box 6, Folder 1	<i>Literatura</i> , 1984
Box 6, Folder 2	<i>NURT</i> , 1986
Box 6, Folder 3	<i>Tak I Nie</i> , 1983, 1986
Box 6, Folder 4	<i>Tygodnik kulturalny</i> , 1987