

## Despair Vladimir Nabokov

“Wonderful, compulsively readable, delicious” personal correspondences, spanning decades in the life and literary career of the author of *Lolita* (The Washington Post Book World). An icon of twentieth-century literature, Vladimir Nabokov was a novelist, poet, and playwright, whose personal life was a fascinating story in itself. This collection of more than four hundred letters chronicles the author’s career, recording his struggles in the publishing world, the battles over *Lolita*, and his relationship with his wife, among other subjects, and gives a surprising look at the personality behind the creator of such classics as *Pale Fire* and *Invitation to a Beheading*. “Dip in anywhere, and delight follows.” —John Updike  
"A collection of letters between Vladimir Nabokov and his wife Vera."--

The illegible signature of teetering disaster' Three great stories - *The Aurelian*, *Signs and Symbols* and *Lance* - the last both a derisive attack on science-fiction and an attempt to imagine the real pain and horror that would accompany space travel.

Like Kafka's *The Castle*, *Invitation to a Beheading* embodies a vision of a bizarre and irrational world. In an unnamed dream country, the young man Cincinnatus C. is condemned to death by beheading for "gnostical turpitude," an imaginary

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crime that defies definition. Cincinnatus spends his last days in an absurd jail, where he is visited by chimerical jailers, an executioner who masquerades as a fellow prisoner, and by his in-laws, who lug their furniture with them into his cell. When Cincinnatus is led out to be executed, he simply wills his executioners out of existence: they disappear, along with the whole world they inhabit.

Smurov, a fussily self-conscious Russian tutor, shoots himself after a humiliating beating by his mistress' husband. Unsure whether his suicide has been successful or not, Smurov drifts around Berlin, observing his acquaintances, but finds he can discover very little about his own life from the opinions of his distracted, confused fellow-émigrés. Nabokov's shortest novel, *The Eye* is both a satirical detective story and a wonderfully layered exploration of identity, appearance and the loss of self in a world of word-play and confusion.

Awe and exhilaration--along with heartbreak and mordant wit--abound in *Lolita*, Nabokov's most famous and controversial novel, which tells the story of the aging Humbert Humbert's obsessive, devouring, and doomed passion for the nymphet Dolores Haze. *Lolita* is also the story of a hypercivilized European colliding with the cheerful barbarism of postwar America. Most of all, it is a meditation on love--love as outrage and hallucination, madness and transformation.

Extensively revised by Nabokov in 1965--thirty years after its original

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publication--Despair is the wickedly inventive and richly derisive story of Hermann, a man who undertakes the perfect crime--his own murder.

When Vladimir Nabokov died in 1977, he left instructions for his heirs to burn the 138 handwritten index cards that made up the rough draft of his final and unfinished novel, *The Original of Laura*. But Nabokov's wife, Vera, could not bear to destroy her husband's last work, and when she died, the fate of the manuscript fell to her son. Dmitri Nabokov, now seventy-five—the Russian novelist's only surviving heir, and translator of many of his books—has wrestled for three decades with the decision of whether to honor his father's wish or preserve for posterity the last piece of writing of one of the greatest writers of the twentieth century. His decision finally to allow publication of the fragmented narrative—dark yet playful, preoccupied with mortality—affords us one last experience of Nabokov's magnificent creativity, the quintessence of his unparalleled body of work. Photos of the handwritten index cards accompany the text. They are perforated and can be removed and rearranged, as the author likely did when he was writing the novel.

Glynn provides a new reading of Vladimir Nabokov's work by seeking to challenge the notion that he was a Symbolist writer concerned with a transcendent reality. Glynn argues that Nabokov's epistemology was in fact anti-Symbolist and that this aligned him with both Bergsonism and Russian Formalism, which intellectual systems were themselves hostile to a Symbolist epistemology. Symbolism may be seen to devalue material reality by presenting it as a mere adumbration of a higher realm. Nabokov, however, valued the immediate material world and was creatively engaged by the tendency of the deluded mind to efface that reality.

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A startling and revelatory examination of Nabokov's life and works—notably *Pale Fire* and *Lolita*—bringing new insight into one of the twentieth century's most enigmatic authors. Novelist Vladimir Nabokov witnessed the horrors of his century, escaping Revolutionary Russia then Germany under Hitler, and fleeing France with his Jewish wife and son just weeks before Paris fell to the Nazis. He repeatedly faced accusations of turning a blind eye to human suffering to write artful tales of depravity. But does one of the greatest writers in the English language really deserve the label of amoral aesthete bestowed on him by so many critics? Using information from newly-declassified intelligence files and recovered military history, journalist Andrea Pitzer argues that far from being a proponent of art for art's sake, Vladimir Nabokov managed to hide disturbing history in his fiction—history that has gone unnoticed for decades. Nabokov emerges as a kind of documentary conjurer, spending the most productive decades of his career recording a saga of forgotten concentration camps and searing bigotry, from World War I to the Gulag and the Holocaust. *Lolita* surrenders Humbert Humbert's secret identity, and reveals a Nabokov appalled by American anti-Semitism. The lunatic narrator of *Pale Fire* recalls Russian tragedies that once haunted the world. From Tsarist courts to Nazi film sets, from CIA front organizations to wartime Casablanca, the story of Nabokov's family is the story of his century—and both are woven inextricably into his fiction.

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*The Gift* is the phantasmal autobiography of Fyodor Godunov-Cherdyntsev, a writer living in the closed world of Russian intellectuals in Berlin shortly after the First World War. This gorgeous tapestry of literature and butterflies tells the story of Fyodor's pursuits as a writer. Its heroine is not Fyodor's elusive and beloved Zina, however, but Russian prose and poetry

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themselves.

Professor Adam Krug, the foremost philosopher of his country, is, along with his son, kidnapped by the government in hopes of making him support Paduk, dictator and leader of the Party of the Average Man

Tragedy of a rich and respectable Berlin art dealer and his passion for his young mistress.

Published anonymously in 1824, this gothic mystery novel was written by Scottish author James Hogg. *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* was published as if it were the presentation of a century-old document.

The unnamed editor offers the reader a long introduction before presenting the document written by the sinner himself.

These letters outline the mutual affection and closeness of the two writers, but also reveal the slow crescendo of mutual resentment, mistrust and rejection."--BOOK JACKET.

A novel constructed around the last great poem of a fictional American poet, John Shade, and an account of his death. The poem appears in full and the narrative develops through the lengthy, and increasingly eccentric, notes by his posthumous editor.

"As seductive and engaging a book as I have come across in a while . . . Would have brought a gleam of enjoyment even to Nabokov's gimlet eye." --Daphne

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Merkin, The New York Times Book Review

Nikolai Gogol was the most idiosyncratic of the great Russian novelists of the 19th century and lived a tragically short life which was as chaotic as the lives of the characters he created. This biography begins with Gogol's death and ends with his birth, an inverted structure typical of both Gogol and Nabokov. The biographer proceeds to establish the relationship between Gogol and his novels, especially with regard to "nose-consciousness", a peculiar feature of Russian life and letters, which finds its apotheosis in Gogol's own life and prose. There are more expressions and proverbs concerning the nose in Russian than in any other language in the world. Nabokov's style in this biography is comic, but as always leads to serious issues—in this case, an appreciation of the distinctive "sense of the physical" inherent in Gogol's work. Nabokov describes how Gogol's life and literature mingled, and explains the structure and style of Gogol's prose in terms of the novelist's life.

Paints a portrait of a seemingly respectable man whose desire for a twelve-year-old girl becomes an obsession that can only end in the splintering of his life.

Probes the mind of a man whose unconscious sexual and destructive obsessions drive him to strangle his wife and escape into the Europe of his past

This first major critical biography of Vladimir Nabokov, one of the greatest of

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twentieth-century writers, finally allows us full access to the dramatic details of his life and the depths of his art. An intensely private man, Nabokov was uprooted first by the Russian Revolution and then by World War II. Transformed into a permanent wanderer, he did not achieve fame until late in life, with the success of *Lolita*. In this first of two volumes, Brian Boyd vividly describes the liberal milieu of the aristocratic Nabokovs, their escape from Russia, Nabokov's education at Cambridge, and the murder of his father in Berlin. Boyd then turns to the years that Nabokov spent, impoverished, in Germany and France, until the coming of Hitler forced him to flee, with wife and son, to the United States. This volume stands on its own as a fascinating exploration of Nabokov's Russian years and Russian worlds, prerevolutionary and émigré. In the course of his ten years' work on the biography, Boyd traveled along Nabokov's trail everywhere from Yalta to Palo Alto. The only scholar to have had free access to the Nabokov archives in Montreux and the Library of Congress, he also interviewed at length Nabokov's family and scores of his friends and associates. For the general reader, Boyd offers an introduction to Nabokov the man, his works, and his world. For the specialist, he provides a basis for all future research on Nabokov's life and art, as he dates and describes the composition of all Nabokov's works, published and unpublished. Boyd investigates Nabokov's relation to and his independence from

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his time, examines the special structures of his mind and thought, and explains the relations between his philosophy and his innovations of literary strategy and style. At the same time he provides succinct introductions to all the fiction, dramas, memoirs, and major verse; presents detailed analyses of the major books that break new ground for the scholar, while providing easy paths into the works for other readers; and shows the relationship between Nabokov's life and the themes and subjects of his art.

A remarkable retelling of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's great mysteries starring the one man in England smarter than Sherlock Holmes: his older brother, Mycroft. In a quiet village far from the noise of Victorian London, Sydney Silchester lives the life of a recluse, venturing out only when his stores run low. But when his honey supplier is found stung to death by her hive, the search for a new beekeeper takes him to the most interesting man in England—a man whose brilliant mind will lure Sydney into a life-threatening adventure. When Mycroft Holmes learns of the tragic death of the village's other beekeeper, he senses the bloody hand of murder. But what villain would have the mad intelligence to train an army of killer bees? With Sydney at his side, Mycroft searches the village for a new kind of murderer: one who kills without motive. Author H. F. Heard, undoubtedly one of the great intellectuals of his day, brings an utterly unique detective to life in his



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Mycroft Holmes mystery series. But just who is Mr. Mycroft? Devotees of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle will find he's every inch a match for his legendary brother, Sherlock. *A Taste of Honey* is the 1st book in the Mycroft Holmes Mysteries, but you may enjoy reading the series in any order.

Interviews, articles, and editorials from the 1960s and 1970s reveal Nabokov's personal views on a range of subjects, including art, education, politics, literature, movies, and modern times

Professor Timofey Pnin, late of Tsarist Russia, is now precariously perched at the heart of an American campus. Battling with American life and language, Pnin must face great hazards in this new world: the ruination of his beautiful lumber-room-as-office; the removal of his teeth and the fitting of new ones; the search for a suitable boarding house; and the trials of taking the wrong train to deliver a lecture in a language he has yet to master. Wry, intelligent and moving, Pnin reveals the absurd and affecting story of one man in exile.

The textural discussion accompanying this novel examines the thematic and technical elements which make it a literary classic

Nabokov's first novel in English, one of his greatest and most overlooked, with a new Introduction by Michael Dirda.

Published two weeks after his seventieth birthday, *Ada, or Ardor* is one of

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Nabokov's greatest masterpieces, the glorious culmination of his career as a novelist. It tells a love story troubled by incest. But more: it is also at once a fairy tale, epic, philosophical treatise on the nature of time, parody of the history of the novel, and erotic catalogue. *Ada, or Ardor* is no less than the supreme work of an imagination at white heat. This is the first American edition to include the extensive and ingeniously sardonic appendix by the author, written under the anagrammatic pseudonym Vivian Darkbloom.

*Reader as Accomplice: Narrative Ethics in Dostoevsky and Nabokov* argues that Fyodor Dostoevsky and Vladimir Nabokov seek to affect the moral imagination of their readers by linking morally laden plots to the ethical questions raised by narrative fiction at the formal level. By doing so, these two authors ask us to consider and respond to the ethical demands that narrative acts of representation and interpretation place on authors and readers. Using the lens of narrative ethics, Alexander Spektor brings to light the important, previously unexplored correspondences between Dostoevsky and Nabokov. Ultimately, he argues for a productive comparison of how each writer investigates the ethical costs of narrating oneself and others. He also explores the power dynamics between author, character, narrator, and reader. In his readings of such texts as “The Meek One” and *The Idiot* by Dostoevsky and *Bend Sinister* and *Despair* by Nabokov, Spektor demonstrates that these authors incite the reader’s sense of ethics by exposing the risks but also the possibilities of narrative fiction.

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Ellen Pifer challenges the widely held assumption that Nabokov is a writer more interested in literary games than in living human beings. She demonstrates how Nabokov arranges the details of his fiction to explore human psychology and moral truth, and she argues her case with style. Focusing on the most highly wrought and aesthetically self-conscious of Nabokov's novels, Pifer shows how he deploys artifice to bring into bold relief what is real. In her chapter on King, Queen, Knave she reveals Nabokov's radical distinction between genuine and simulated human existence. She shows how, in *Invitation to a Beheading* and *Bend Sinister*, he contrasts "grotesque design" of collective existence with the individual's radiant internal life. In *Despair*, *Lolita*, and *Pale Fire* Nabokov's parody of the double illuminates the unique source of human consciousness. In *Ada*, as in the earlier *Laughter in the Dark*, the inhuman nature of aesthetic bliss qualifies its delights. Making clear the moral perception of reality that lies behind Nabokov's artistic strategies, Pifer offers a new assessment of Nabokov's fiction and of his contribution to the tradition of the novel.

From award-winning literary scholar Robert Alter, a masterful exploration of how Nabokov used artifice to evoke the dilemmas, pain, and exaltation of the human condition Admirers and detractors of Vladimir Nabokov have viewed him as an ingenious contriver of literary games, teasing and even outsmarting his readers through his self-reflexive artifice and the many codes and puzzles he devises in his fiction. Nabokov himself spoke a number of times about reality as a term that always has to be

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put in scare quotes. Consequently, many critics and readers have thought of him as a writer uninterested in the world outside literature. Robert Alter shows how Nabokov was passionately concerned with the real world and its complexities, from love and loss to exile, freedom, and the impact of contemporary politics on our lives. In these illuminating and exquisitely written essays, Alter spans the breadth of Nabokov's writings, from his memoir, lectures, and short stories to major novels such as *Lolita*. He demonstrates how the self-reflexivity of Nabokov's fiction becomes a vehicle for expressing very real concerns. What emerges is a portrait of a brilliant stylist who is at once serious and playful, who cared deeply about human relationships and the burden of loss, and who was acutely sensitive to the ways political ideologies can distort human values. Offering timeless insights into literature's most fabulous artificer, *Nabokov and the Real World* makes an elegant and compelling case for Nabokov's relevance today.

A rich compilation of the previously uncollected Russian and English prose and interviews of one of the twentieth century's greatest writers, edited by Nabokov experts Brian Boyd and Anastasia Tolstoy. "I think like a genius, I write like a distinguished author, and I speak like a child": so Vladimir Nabokov famously wrote in the introduction to his volume of selected prose, *Strong Opinions*. *Think, Write, Speak* follows up where that volume left off, with a rich compilation of his uncollected prose and interviews, from a 1921 essay about Cambridge to two final interviews in 1977. The chronological order

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allows us to watch the Cambridge student and the fledgling Berlin reviewer and poet turn into the acclaimed Paris émigré novelist whose stature brought him to teach in America, where his international success exploded with *Lolita* and propelled him back to Europe. Whether his subject is Proust or Pushkin, the sport of boxing or the privileges of democracy, Nabokov's supreme individuality, his keen wit, and his alertness to the details of life illuminate the page.

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