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NABOKOV'S THEATRICAL IMAGINATION

Drawing on a wealth of unpublished archival material, this study offers a comprehensive assessment of the importance of theatrical performance in Vladimir Nabokov's thinking and writing. Siggy Frank provides fresh insights into Nabokov's wider aesthetics and arrives at new readings of his narrative fiction. As well as emphasising the importance of theatrical performance to our understanding of Nabokov's texts, she demonstrates that the theme of theatricality runs through the central concerns of Nabokov's art and life: the nature of fiction, the relationship between the author and his fictional world, textual origin and derivation, authorial control and textual property, literary appropriations and adaptations, and finally the transformation of the writer himself from the Russian émigré writer Sirin to the American novelist Nabokov.

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Much of this book is about notions of authorial property, and in some ways this study is a vivid illustration of individual and shared authorship, as I have benefited from discussions with colleagues and friends, all of whom have made some direct or indirect contribution to this study. First, I owe a large debt to Jane Grayson who has been an exceptionally generous friend and colleague over many years. Her inspiration, ideas and insights have been invaluable for this study. I would also like to thank the following people: Andrei Babikov, David Bethea, Andy Byford, Neil Cornwell and Julie Curtis. I wish to thank the staff at the Taylor Institution Slavonic and Modern Greek Library, University of Oxford; The Berg Collection at

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Note on transliteration and translation

For transliteration of Russian texts, I adhere to the Library of Congress system without diacritical marks. For the sake of readability, however, I use common Anglicised spellings of Russian names of both historical and fictional persons: for instance, Cincinnatus (instead of Tsintsinnat), Dreyer (instead of Dreier), Franz (instead of Frants), Hermann (instead of German), Gogol (instead of Gogol'), Liubov (instead of Liubov'), Meyerhold (instead of Meierkhol'd), Stanislavsky (instead of Stanislavskii), Waltz (instead of Val's) and so on.

For English translations of Nabokov's work, I rely mostly on the standard English translations prepared or authorised by Nabokov himself. All other translations are mine, unless otherwise indicated.

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used throughout this book.

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| BAR | Bakhtmeteff Archive of Russian and East European Culture, Columbia University, New York. |
| BS | Vladimir Nabokov, <i>Bend Sinister</i> (London: Penguin, 1974). |
| <i>Despair</i> | Vladimir Nabokov, <i>Despair</i> (London: Penguin, 1981). |
| IB | Vladimir Nabokov, <i>Invitation to a Beheading</i> (London: Penguin, 1963). |
| KQK | Vladimir Nabokov, <i>King, Queen, Knave</i> (London: Penguin, 1993). |
| NWL | <i>Dear Bunny, Dear Volodya: The Nabokov–Wilson Letters, 1940–1971</i> , ed. Simon Karlinsky, revised edn (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001). |
| <i>Plays</i> | Vladimir Nabokov, <i>The Man from the USSR and Other Plays</i> , trans. Dmitri Nabokov (San Diego, New York and London: Brucoli Clark, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1984). |
| ‘Playwriting’ | Vladimir Nabokov, ‘Playwriting’, in <i>The Man from the USSR and Other Plays</i> (San Diego, New York and London: Brucoli Clark, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1984), 315–22. |
| <i>P’esy</i> | Vladimir Nabokov, <i>Tragediia Gospodina Morna: P’esy, lektsii o drame</i> , ed. Andrei Babikov (St Petersburg: Azbuka, 2008). |
| RLSK | Vladimir Nabokov, <i>The Real Life of Sebastian Knight</i> (London: Penguin, 1995). |
| <i>Sobr. soch.</i> | Vladimir Nabokov, <i>Sobranie sochinenii russkogo perioda v piati tomakh</i> , 5 vols. (St Petersburg: Simpozium, 1999–2000). |

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| x | <i>List of abbreviations</i> |
| SM | Vladimir Nabokov, <i>Speak, Memory: An Autobiography Revisited</i> (London: Penguin, 1969). |
| Stories | Vladimir Nabokov, <i>The Collected Stories</i> (London: Penguin, 1997). |
| SO | Vladimir Nabokov, <i>Strong Opinions</i> (New York: Vintage, 1990). |
| VN Berg | Vladimir Nabokov Papers, New York Public Library, Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection of English and American Literature, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations. |
| VNLOC | Vladimir Nabokov Papers, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Washington, DC. |
| 'Tragedy' | Vladimir Nabokov, 'The Tragedy of Tragedy', in <i>The Man from the USSR and Other Plays</i> (San Diego, New York, London: Brucoli Clark, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1984), 323–42. |
| WI | Vladimir Nabokov, <i>The Waltz Invention</i> , trans. Dmitri Nabokov (New York: Phaedra, 1966). |