

Vladimir Nabokov's Early Works and Chess

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Ранние произведения Владимира Набокова и шахматы

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Резюме статьи

Широко известно, что Владимир Набоков увлекался шахматами. Для Набокова шахматы — это не просто хобби, а серьезное занятие, глубоко связанное с его литературным творчеством. Легко перечислить его произведения, где найдутся персонажи, играющие в шахматы. «Король, дама, валет» (1928), «Дар» (1937), «Подлинная жизнь Себастьяна Найта» (1941), «Лолита» (1955)... и так далее. Вспомним роман раннего периода «Защита Лужина» (1930), главным героем которого является гроссмейстер Александр Лужин. Этот роман полностью посвящен шахматной тематике. В 1964 году роман вышел в английском переводе, снабженном предисловием, в котором Набоков упомянул о некоторых литературных приемах, связанных с шахматами: «Сочинять книгу было нелегко, но мне доставляло большое удовольствие пользоваться теми или другими образами и положениями, дабы вести роковое предначертание в жизнь Лужина и придать описанию сада, поездки, череды обиходных событий, подобие тонко-замысловатой игры». Здесь употребляются шахматные термины и такие литературные приемы, как аллегория, метафора, аналогия, биографические элементы, каламбур..., которые ассоциируются с шахматными техниками.

Набоков писал не только шахматные романы, но и такие стихотворения по шахматным мотивам, как «Три шахматных сонета» (1924), «Шахматный конь» (1927) и другие. Любопытно, что во втором стихотворении он сравнивает шахматиста с дирижером, управляющим «огромным оркестром незримых фигур на незримых досках». Можно часто встретить подобный прием, то есть сравнение шахматной игры с музыкой и в других

произведениях, в первую очередь в «Защите Лужина».

В 18 лет Набоков, видимо, начал заниматься шахматной композицией. В тетради, где записаны его ранние стихи, примерно к одному стихотворению приложен один рисунок с сочиненной им шахматной задачей. К сожалению, трудно сказать, что Набоков был очень способен к созданию шахматных композиций, в его задачах не видно особого блеска и большинство из них находятся на уровне 19-го века. Но с другой стороны можно утверждать, что интерес Набокова к шахматной композиции имеет большое значение для его литературного творчества. Без него ему не удалось бы создать уникальный своеобразный набоковский стиль. Его описания шахмат или шахматной композиции очень впечатляющие, волнующие и незабываемые. Например, маленький фрагмент из «Защиты Лужина»: «Теперь все на доске дышало жизнью, все сосредоточилось на одном, туже и туже сматывалось; на мгновение полегло от исчезновения двух фигур, и опять — фуриозо». В произведениях Набокова таких примеров очень много.

I

Vladimir Vladimirovich Nabokov was born in 1899 in St. Petersburg, which was then the capital city of Russia. His father, Vladimir Dmitrievich Nabokov (1870–1922), was a renowned legal scholar and later one of the founders of the Constitutionalist Democratic Party, which was based on liberal ideas. He even served as a cabinet minister in the Kerenski Cabinet. The senior Vladimir named his son after himself.

The junior Vladimir Nabokov developed a passion for writing poetry when he was a child, and he had already self-published two volumes of his own collection of poems while still a teenager. In 1919, after the Russian Revolution, the Nabokov family was exiled to Europe. Vladimir Nabokov attended Cambridge University, after which he lived in Berlin, and then Paris. It was around this time that he began to write novels in earnest.

The works of Nabokov can be broadly categorized according to those that he wrote in Russian while living in Berlin and Paris,

which were published under the pen name “V. Sirin”, and those that he wrote in English after moving to the United States of America in 1940, which were published under his real name Vladimir Nabokov. Nabokov chose to use a pen name for his earlier works primarily because he was concerned that his readers would mistake his writings for those of his father, who was then a famous politician whose name he shared. Although readers of works published under the pen name “V. Sirin” were narrowly and exclusively limited to the local community of Russian émigrés, Vladimir Nabokov became widely known around the world as the leading author of twentieth century modernism when *Lolita* became a bestseller in 1958 after he had settled in the United States. Even after immigrating to Switzerland in 1959, he continued to write actively and passed away in 1977 at the age of seventy-eight.

After residing in Russia for two decades, Nabokov became an émigré and spent twenty-one years in the United Kingdom, Germany and France, nineteen years in the United States and eighteen years in Switzerland. In contrast to painters and musicians, it was rare to see an émigré writer achieve success in a language other than his or her mother tongue, given the barrier imposed by the need to communicate in a different language. Fortunately, Nabokov had gained fluency in English and French as a child, and in particular, his advanced proficiency in English would in later years be highly instrumental in helping him to achieve worldwide success as an author. Because Nabokov, as a child, had first learned to read and write in English, rather than Russian, which was his mother tongue, there was even a point in time when he dismayed his intensely patriotic father. Later in life, Nabokov wrote the following in his autobiographical work entitled *Speak, Memory*:

«This was in the beginning of 1905. State matters required the presence of my father in the capital; the Constitutionalist Democratic Party, of which he was one of the founders, was to win a majority of seats in the First Parliament the following

year. During one of his short stays with us in the country that summer, he ascertained, with patriotic dismay, that my brother and I could read and write English but not Russian (except КАКАО and МАМА). It was decided that the village schoolmaster should come every afternoon to give us lessons and take us for walks.»¹⁾

Nabokov also succeeded in becoming an internationally acclaimed author as a result of having directly taken on themes that formed the undercurrents of modern literature as represented by Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*, where such themes focus on either the re-creation of memories or the tensions and fusions occurring between the imagination and reality. While memory functions as an important element in the vast majority of Nabokov's writings, Nabokov himself acknowledges his own obsession with this notion of memory in *Speak, Memory*.

«The act of vividly recalling a patch of the past is something that I seem to have been performing with the utmost zest all my life, and I have reason to believe that this almost pathological keenness of the retrospective faculty is a hereditary trait.»²⁾

II

That Nabokov was interested in chess is well known. His interest was not limited to the enjoyment of chess as a mere source of pleasure; indeed, he spent a considerable amount of time and effort engaged in the game. In fact, chess is mentioned often in Nabokov's works. «Защита Лужина» (*The Luzhin Defense*) is a novel that is precisely based on a chess theme with chess grandmaster Aleksandr Luzhin as the main character. *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*, *Lolita* and numerous other works feature plenty of characters that make references to chess. There are also several examples of his earlier poems in which chess is presented as a theme. «Три шахматных сонета», which was written in 1924, is an example of

one such poem for which a publishing opportunity was never granted during Nabokov's lifetime. Another example is «Шахматный конь», which was published in 1927 in the journal «Руть». The following is taken from the latter work:

«Круглогривый, тяжелый, суконцем подбитый,
шахматный конь в коробке уснул, —
а давно ли, давно ли в пивной знаменитой
стоял живой человеческий гул?
Гул живописцев, ребят бородатых,
и крики поэтов, и стон скрипачей...
Лампа сияла, а пол под ней
был весь в очень ровных квадратах.

Он сидел с друзьями в любимом углу,
по привычке слегка пригнувшись к столу,
и друзья вспоминали турниры былые,
говорили о тонком его мастерстве...

Бархатный стук в голове:
это ходят фигуры резные.

Старый маэстро пивцо попивал,
слушал друзей, сигару жевал,
кивал головой седовато-кудрастой,
и ворот осыпан был перхотью частой —
скорлупками шахматных мыслей.

И друзья вспоминали, как, матом грозя,
Кизерицкому в Вене он отдал ферзя.
Кругом над столами нависли
табачные тучи; а плиточный пол
был в темных и светлых квадратах.
Друзья вспоминали, какой изобрел
он дерзостный гамбит когда-то.

Старый маэстро пиво попивал,
слушал друзей, сигару жевал
и думал с улыбкою хмурой:
“Кто-то, а кто — я понять не могу,
переставляет в мозгу,
как тяжелую мебель, фигуры,
и пешка одна со вчерашнего дня
черною куклой идет на меня”.

Старый маэстро сидел согнувшись,
Пепел ронял на пикейный жилет —
и напаял, пузырями раздувшись,
неудержимый шахматный бред.
Пили друзья за здоровье маэстро,
вспоминали, как с этой сигарой в зубах
управлял он вслепую огромным оркестром
незримых фигур на незримых досках.

Вдруг черный король, подкрепив проходную
пешку свою, подошел вплотную.

Тогда он встал, отстранил друзей,
и смеющихся, и оробелых.
Лампа сияла, а пол под ней
был в квадратах черных и белых.

На лице его старом, растерянном, добром
деревянный отблеск лежал.
Он сгорбился, шею надул, прижал
напряженные локти к ребрам
и прыгать по квадратам большим,
через один, то влево, то вправо, —

и это была не пустая забава,
и недолго смеялись над ним.

И потом, в молчании чистой палаты,
куда черный король его увел,
на шестьдесят четыре квадрата
необъяснимо делился пол.

И эдак, и так — до последнего часа —
в бредовых комбинациях, ночью и днем,
прыгал маэстро, старик седовласый,
белым конем.³⁾»

First, in examining the structural aspects of this poem, it is difficult to claim that it conveys a well-ordered sense of beauty in its form. While the poem consists of ten verses, there is no pattern to the number of lines in each verse, with eight lines in verse one, six lines in verse two, and five, seven, eight, eight, two, four, eight and eight lines in verses three through ten, respectively.

Moreover, while there may be quite a good sense of rhythm conveyed when the poem is recited, this is not to say that a rigid meter is maintained. For example, the cadence in verse one can be illustrated as follows, with \smile used to indicate weak syllables and — used to indicate strong syllables.

Line 1: $\smile\smile\text{—}\smile\smile\text{—}\smile\smile\text{—}\smile\smile\text{—}$
 Line 2: $\text{—}\smile\smile\text{—}\smile\text{—}\smile\text{—}$
 Line 3: $\smile\smile\text{—}\smile\smile\text{—}\smile\smile\text{—}\smile\smile\text{—}$
 Line 4: $\smile\text{—}\smile\text{—}\smile\smile\text{—}\smile\text{—}$
 Line 5: $\text{—}\smile\smile\text{—}\smile\smile\text{—}\smile\smile\text{—}$
 Line 6: $\smile\text{—}\smile\smile\text{—}\smile\smile\text{—}\smile\text{—}$
 Line 7: $\text{—}\smile\smile\text{—}\smile\smile\text{—}\smile\text{—}$
 Line 8: $\text{—}\smile\text{—}\smile\text{—}\smile\smile\text{—}$

On the other hand, it can be said that the poem does deliver a

fairly precise rhyming arrangement. A look at verse one reveals that sets of rhyming words are presented, with line one ending in «подбитый» and line three ending in «знаменитой». Indeed, the emphasis here is placed on the penultimate syllable according to a female rhyme (женская рифма) pattern. In addition, lines two and four rhyme with each other based on the use of «уснул» and «гул». In this case, the emphasis is placed on the last syllable according to a male rhyme (мужская рифма) pattern. Lines five and eight end in «бородатых» and «квадратах», respectively, for a female rhyme pattern and lines six and seven end in «скрипачей» and «ней», respectively, for a male rhyme pattern. To summarize the rhyme patterns found in verse one, we see that the first half consists of matching rhymes in lines one and three and in lines two and four, for an alternating rhyme scheme of a b a b (перекрестная рифма), whereas the second half consists of matching rhymes in lines five and eight and in lines six and seven, for an enclosed rhyme scheme of a b b a (охватная рифма).

If we go on to examine the rhyme patterns in the second verse, line one «углу» rhymes with line two «столу» according to a male rhyme pattern, line three «былые» rhymes with line six «резные» according to a female rhyme pattern, and line four «мастерстве» rhymes with line five «голове» according to a male rhyme pattern. As with verse one, the second half of the verse follows an enclosed rhyme scheme.

In shifting our attention to the content of this poem, the first point of concern centers on the identity of the individual to whom «он» (he) refers in line two of verse four. Mentioned immediately before this word is «Кизерицкий» (Lionel Kieseritsky, 1806–1853), the name of a leading chess player of the nineteenth century who was also the top rival of Adolf Anderssen (1818–1879), widely regarded as the strongest player of his day. While game records for a large number of match-ups between these two players have been kept to this day, a game that was held in London in 1851 is especially

famous, and mention of it was made by Nabokov in several of his works and interviews. In the actual game, as was described in the poem, Anderssen, who played White, ultimately sacrificed his Queen to mate Kieseritsky's Black. Accordingly, Nabokov had this match-up in London in mind, and it is believed that «он» refers to Anderssen, but there is a discrepancy with the facts in that the particular game in this poem is written as having taken place in Vienna. The largest chess database currently available to researchers indicates that all games between Anderssen and Kieseritsky took place in either Paris or London, and no records exist to support the notion that a game was ever held in Vienna between these two players.

Another point of interest in terms of content pertains to the expression «управлял он велепую огромным оркестром / незримых фигур на незримых досках» in lines seven and eight of verse six. The chess player referred to as «он» in this expression is likened to a conductor manipulating an orchestra consisting of chess pieces. To begin with, Nabokov often portrayed chess with analogies to music. For instance, the game between Luzhin and Turati, arguably the climax of «Защита Лужина» (1930), utilizes a musical metaphor.

«И Турати наконец на эту комбинацию решился, — и сразу какая-то музыкальная буря охватила доску, и Лужин упорно в ней искал нужный ему отчетливый маленький звук, чтобы в свою очередь раздуть его в громовую гармонию. Теперь все на доске дышало жизнью, все сосредоточилось на одном, туже и туже сматывалось; на мгновение ⁴⁾полегчало от исчезновения двух фигур, и опять — ⁴⁾фуриозо.»

Incidentally, this section is translated in *The Defense*, the English-language version of this work that came out in 1964, as follows:

«And Turati finally decided on this combination — and immediately a kind of musical tempest overwhelmed the board and Luzhin searched stubbornly in it for the tiny, clear note

that he needed in order in his turn to swell it out into a thunderous harmony. Now everything on the board breathed with life, everything was concentrated on a single idea, was rolled up tighter and tighter; for a moment the disappearance of two pieces eased the situation and then again — *agitato*.⁵⁾»

By its nature, the game of chess combines a competitive aspect by which players confront each other in a battle of skills and technique with a mathematical, intellectually informed aspect by which each side pursues the best moves to use at difficult phases of the game. For Nabokov, however, chess went beyond this summation and constituted an art akin to music. He perceived more beauty in certain arrangements of pieces and in brilliant combinations than in anything else. The following passage from *The Defense*, which compares chess to music, is especially memorable:

«“No, no, I’ve already finished,” replied the violinist, getting up. “Excellent chessmen. Do you play?” “Indifferently,” said Luzhin senior. (“What are you doing here? You too come and listen to the music...”) “What a game, what a game,” said the violinist, tenderly closing the box. “Combinations like melodies. You know, I can simply *hear* the moves.” “In my opinion one needs great mathematical skill for chess,” said Luzhin senior. “And in that respect I... They are awaiting you, Maestro.” “I would rather have a game,” laughed the violinist, as he left the room. “The game of the gods. Infinite possibilities.”⁶⁾»

III

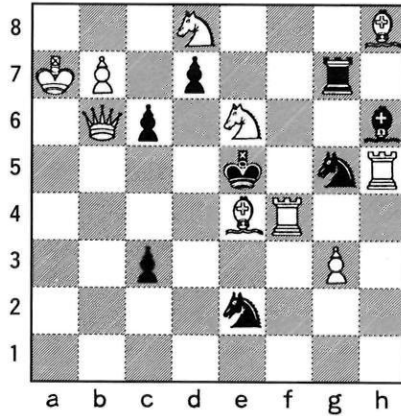
It is not precisely known when and from whom Nabokov learned to play chess. That said, however, in 1917 when he was eighteen years old, Nabokov is said to have begun composing chess problems. Diagrams for nearly one chess problem per poem were attached to a notebook in which he had jotted down poems drafted around this time. In other words, it can be said that for Nabokov,

the composition of problems complemented the drafting of poems. Chess problems are essentially artistic puzzles that can be prepared independently without requiring the presence of another individual. In this respect, they differ from chess, which consists of games in which opponents compete against one another. In addition, it is claimed that chess problems are such that, no matter the extent to which they are undertaken, they are largely of no use in helping to improve one's ability to play real games of chess. There are very few chess players who are also engaged in composing problems. However, in Nabokov's case, he was, if anything, more passionately committed to the composition of chess problems than to chess itself, as a board game. Nabokov discusses chess problems in *Speak, Memory*:

«In the course of my twenty years of exile I devoted a prodigious amount of time to the composing of chess problems. A certain position is elaborated on the board, and the problem to be solved is how to mate Black in a given number of moves, generally two or three. It is a beautiful, complex and sterile art related to the ordinary form of the game only insofar as, say, the properties of a sphere are made use of both by a juggler in weaving a new act and by a tennis player in winning a tournament. Most chess players, in fact, amateurs and masters alike, are only mildly interested in these highly specialized, fanciful, stylish riddles, and though appreciative of a catchy problem would be utterly baffled if asked to compose one. <...>

I have before me the sheet of paper upon which, that night in Paris, I drew the diagram of the problem's position. White: King on a7 (meaning first file, seventh rank), Queen on b6, Rooks on f4 and h5, Bishops on e4 and h8, Knights on d8 and e6, Pawns on b7 and g3; Black: King on e5, Rook on g7, Bishop on h6, Knights on e2 and g5, Pawns on c3, c6 and d7. White begins and mates in two moves.»

If this problem, which was supposedly composed by Nabokov in Paris in 1940, were to be marked down on a diagram, it would appear as follows:



This diagram depicts the arrangement of pieces for a typical problem and constitutes an improbable phase in a real game of chess. If this were in fact a real game, then White, having obtained so many pieces, would be in an overwhelmingly superior position such that Black would be expected to concede. Yet, if you were to regard this as a problem in which the challenge was to determine how to mate in two moves, how should you assess this phase?

While I myself may be a mere chess player, one who is designated a national master in Japan, I am a complete amateur when it comes to problems. As I was unable to solve this problem after thinking about it for about five minutes, I chose to consult the answer.

According to the answer, White's first move is key and entails moving his Bishop from e4 to c2. It is explained that no matter what move Black undertakes afterwards, Black will be subject to checkmate with White's next move. For example, if Black takes his Knight on e2 and captures the Rook on f4, mate is achieved with Qd4, and if Black's King tries to flee from e5 to d5 or d6, it will

succumb to a checkmate with Qc5.

Certainly, there are no mistakes in this problem as composed by Nabokov. However, I feel that this is mediocre fare as a chess problem. This is because Black can still be checkmated by other means so long as the insistence on doing so within two moves is removed. For example, White could make its first move by bringing its pawn on b7 to b8 and thereby promoting it to Knight. Black would follow with a smart move by taking its pawn on c3 to c2, which would enable Black to evade a checkmate, as noted by Nabokov himself. Yet it is here that an oversight on the part of Nabokov can be found. If White were to subsequently check with Qc7 on its second move, Black can only head this off by moving its pawn on d7 to d6. By next moving its freshly promoted Knight on b8 to c6, White achieves a checkmate. If a separate solution for checkmating in three moves exists in spite of the rule to checkmate in two, then the value of this problem as a creation is somewhat diminished.

Incidentally, even chess problems reflect national characteristics, as can be seen with the existence of a number of different schools, such as the Anglo-American school and the Teutonic school. This is also mentioned in *Speak, Memory*:

«Experts distinguish several schools of the chess-problem art: the Anglo-American one that combines accurate construction with dazzling thematic patterns, and refuses to be bound by any conventional rules; the rugged splendor of the Teutonic school; the highly finished but unpleasantly slick and insipid products of the Czech style with its strict adherence to certain artificial conditions; the old Russian end-game studies, which attain the sparkling summits of the art, and the mechanical Soviet problem of the so-called “task” type, which replaces artistic strategy by the ponderous working of themes to their utmost capacity. Themes in chess, it may be explained, are such devices as fore-laying, withdrawing, pinning, unpinning and so forth; but it is only when they are combined in a certain way that a problem is

satisfying.⁸⁾»

Among these varying schools, Nabokov apparently maintained an antipathy towards “task” type problems of the Soviet school. Nevertheless, a comprehensive examination of problems composed by Nabokov reveals that most of these problems were rather mediocre and did not substantively rise above the nineteenth century level of the preceding age. Nabokov did not possess the requisite genius needed to become a problem composer of the first order. On the other hand, despite an inability to devise superb problems, it is possible to recognize that Nabokov’s pursuit of chess problems enabled him to successfully forge his own unique style of writing in terms of writing novels. His writings on chess and chess problems as they appear in such works as «Защита Лужина» (*The Defense*), «Дар» (*The Gift*) and *Speak, Memory* are, without doubt, inimitably unsurpassed, even within the world of European literature. Such writings could not have been possible had Nabokov not taken such a keen interest in chess and in this sense, chess can be said to have exerted a huge influence on the literature of Nabokov.

IV

In Japan, there are few examples of serious literary works based on the theme of chess or chess players given the lack of popularity of chess relative to *Go* or *Shogi*. To my knowledge, Yukio Mishima’s *Forbidden Colors* is the only work of Japanese literature in which characters are depicted playing chess in some memorable passages. As I am not an expert on Japanese literature, I unfortunately do not know of the precise extent to which Mishima was involved with chess. In contrast, *Go*, another board game, is featured often in memorable passages appearing in important works of literature. For example, characters appearing in *I am a Cat* and *The Wayfarer*, both written by Soseki Natsume, play *Go*. Above all, Yasunari Kawabata’s *The Master of Go*, a compilation of interviews with grand champion Honnimbo Shusai conducted after his retirement,

can be regarded as a masterpiece of this type of literature.

Turning to Europe, we see that chess makes frequent appearances in literary works. Chess defines major themes in Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass* and Stefan Zweig's *The Royal Game*. Vladimir Nabokov's «Защита Лужина» (*The Luzhin Defense*), which has been introduced herein as a subject of this study, is the foremost masterpiece among European literary works in which chess is featured. In passing, it should be noted that Nora Buhks, a professor at the Université de Paris-Sorbonne, has published «Двое игроков за одной доской: Вл. Набоков и Я. Кавабата», an exceptionally unique paper that looks at comparisons between Nabokov's *The Luzhin Defense* and Yasunari Kawabata's *The Master of Go*.

Let us return to «Защита Лужина». This work first appeared between 1929 and 1930 as a serial piece in the émigré Russian quarterly «Современные записки» (Paris) under the author's pen name "V. Sirin". Immediately afterwards, it was published in book form by the émigré publishing house "Slovo" in Berlin. Acclaimed ever since it was first released, the work has been extolled by the likes of Vladislav Khodasevich, a poet and critic respected by Russian émigrés, and Evgeny Zamyatin, a major figure among twentieth century Russian writers as the author of «Мы» (*We*), and was responsible for suddenly raising the profile of "V. Sirin", at least among a limited readership.

In 1964, thirty-four years after the Russian-language version of this work entitled «Защита Лужина» (*The Luzhin Defense*) was first introduced to the world, an English-language version was published as *The Defense*, with the name Luzhin dropped from the title. The translator was Michael Scammell, but Nabokov himself was involved in the translation process as a collaborating translator. By this time, Nabokov had already released such masterpieces as *Lolita* (1955) and *Pale Fire* (1962), and had established himself as an English language writer. Besides these efforts, he was also enthusiastically engaged in translating his earlier Russian-language works that had

been published in Europe into English on his own. Nabokov himself supplied the foreword to *The Defense*, the English translation of «Защита Лужина», in which he honestly describes his creative intent as it pertained to this work:

«Rereading this novel today, replaying the moves of its plot, I feel rather like Anderssen fondly recalling his sacrifice of both Rooks to the unfortunate and noble Kieseritsky — who is doomed to accept it over and over again through an infinity of textbooks, with a question mark for monument. My story was difficult to compose, but I greatly enjoyed taking advantage of this or that image and scene to introduce a fatal pattern into Luzhin's life and to endow the description of a garden, a journey, a sequence of humdrum events, with the semblance of a game of skill, and, especially in the final chapters, with that of a regular chess attack demolishing the innermost elements of the poor fellow's sanity.¹⁰⁾»

As the famous match-up between Anderssen and Kieseritsky mentioned above was also depicted in «Шахматный конь», an earlier poem examined in Section II hereof, it is generally regarded as a famous game in which Anderssen, playing White, surrendered his two Rooks and ultimately relinquished his Queen to checkmate Black. Nabokov himself is held spellbound by this one apparently bold and brilliant game, a fact that emerges from time to time in interviews and other such situations. However, a more detailed examination reveals that this game, which is often cited in chess textbooks, amounts to nothing more than a victory that Anderssen happened to secure due to an error in play committed by Kieseritsky and is not in fact a famous, historical game in the manner imagined by Nabokov. In other words, the sacrifice of two Rooks in this game has never been established as having occurred. I will hereby reproduce the relevant moves as extracted from surviving records:

White: Anderssen, Adolf — **Black:** Kieseritsky, Lionel
(London “Immortal game,” 1851)

1. e4 e5 2. f4 ef4

The game opened with the King’s gambit accepted. Presently, the generally accepted opinion is that it favors Black and is for the most part not played.

3. Bc4 Qh4+ 4. Kf1 b5 5. Bb5 Nf6 6. Nf3 Qh6 7. d3

While White’s d3 is not a bad move, Nc3 would be the standard move to expect in this case.

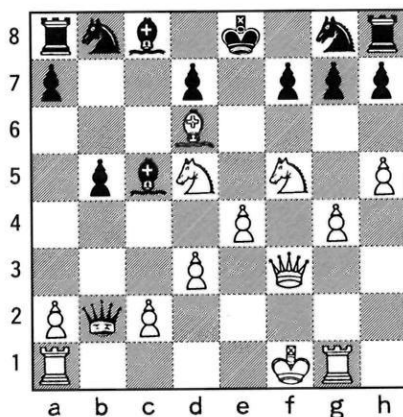
7. ...Nh5 8. Nh4 Qg5 9. Nf5 c6 10. g4 Nf6 11. Rg1?

As this Rg1 results in the capture of the Bishop on b5 with no apparent repercussions, I feel that it is a questionable move. Perhaps Bc4 should have been played instead.

11. ...cb5 12. h4 Qg6 13. h5 Qg5 14. Qf3 Ng8 15. Bf4 Qf6
16. Nc3 Bc5?

Bc5 is clearly a poor move. If White were to respond with d4, Black’s Bishop would have no choice but to flee, thereby clearly disrupting the flow of the game. While admittedly a difficult phase to encounter, I would have moved with Qc6 in this situation.

17. Nd5 Qb2 18. Bd6??



This is the problematic phase in question. This latest move by White with Bd6 is a terribly poor one, and this sacrifice has not actually been established as having occurred. If Black were to respond correctly, he would have won the game then and there, but we may ask ourselves: *How in fact should he move?* Of course, the capture of this White's Bishop by the Black's Bishop on c5 (18. ...Bd6) is not an option. Checkmate would result with 19. Nd6 + Kd8 20. Nf7 + Ke8 21. Nd6 + Kd8 22. Qf8 #.

Another close look at this phase shows that White's two Rooks are susceptible to capture. The Rook on a1 could be taken by the Black's Queen on b2 and the Rook on g1 could be taken by the Black's Bishop on c5. The move to capture the Rook on a1 (18. ...Qa1 +) is correct. As this move also results in a check at the same time, White would be expected to move his King to safety with 19. Ke2. If Black were then to return his Queen to its original position with 19. ...Qb2, then Black would have no real prospect of winning regardless of whatever changes might occur thereafter. Of course, if White were to get greedy and undertake, among others, 19. ...Qg1, combined with the capture of its Rook on g1, then this could lead to a remarkable reversal of fortune as the checkmate is overcome with 20. Ng7 + Kd8 and 21. Bc7 #.

However, as Kieseritsky moved with 18. ...Bg1 and captured another Rook, the game became complicated.

18. ...Bg1 19. e5 Qa1 + 20. Ke2 Na6??

This move by Black (20. ...Na6) led to his defeat. If Black had moved with 20. ...Ba6, then while the situation would have been critical, it would have at least allowed him to remain in the game for a bit longer. This is because, with 23. ...Kc8, the King could have escaped even if it were targeted for a mate by White with 21. Ng7 + Kd8 22. Qf6 + Nf6 and 23. Be7 +, as based on the same scenario that unfolded in the actual game. Naturally, White would likely not have moved with Ng7 + with respect to Black's Ba6. While the other changes may pose difficulties, I would have attempted to

check with Nc7+ by the other Knight.

21. Ng7+ Kd8 22. Qf6+ Nf6 23. Be7#

Anderssen's finishing moves are dynamic. He ultimately abandons his Queen and caps off the game with a fantastic checkmate.

V

I have examined Vladimir Nabokov's relationship with chess while citing examples from, among others, his poem «Шахматный конь», his novel «Защита Лужина» and his autobiographical work *Speak, Memory*. I believe that the fact that chess and chess problems are not of minor significance in terms of Nabokov's creative activities has been clarified to some degree. However, a more precise, detailed analysis of «Защита Лужина» is probably necessary in order to elucidate this esoteric writer's creative technique. Just as it is written in the foreword to *The Defense*, the English translation of «Защита Лужина», the framework of this work is likened to a game of chess. Along with the complexity of the framework of this work, images and scenes that seem to be trivial at first glance are depicted based on chess techniques. Thus, unless the reader is very attentive when reading, he or she will fail to spot the Nabokovian details, which will be overlooked in the process. It is not merely that chess-related vocabulary appears often in the text of the novel, but that the novel is brimming with, among others, parodies of previous writers' works, wordplays, and metaphors and analogies relating to chess. Upon carefully examining each such item, I would like to take the opportunity to someday deal fully with *The Luzhin Defense*.

The home in St. Petersburg where Nabokov was born (No. 47, Bol'shaya Morskaya Street) now houses the Nabokov Museum. I managed to visit this museum on March 4 of this year and after taking a gracious tour led by a Russian-speaking guide, I was presented with several precious documents relating to Nabokov, for which I am tremendously grateful. I became friends with Mrs.

Tatiana Ponomaryova, the curator of the museum, and was invited to attend a conference of the International Vladimir Nabokov Society, to be held at the museum in July of this year, and present my research findings at that time. As such leading contemporary researchers as Brian Boyd and Nora Buhks are also expected to participate, I would like to summarize my research findings and be in a position to participate in the conference by the date in question, given that I can contribute my own conclusions with respect to the creative technique used in *The Luzhin Defense*, and thereby accomplish a task that I regard as somewhat of a weighty challenge that I hope to be able to meet.

Notes

- 1) Vladimir Nabokov, *Novels and Memoirs 1941–1951* (New York: The Library of America, 1996), p. 376.
- 2) *Ibid.*, p. 420.
- 3) Набоков, В. В. «Русский период. Собрание сочинений в 5 томах». Симпозиум. Санкт-Петербург. 2001. Т. 2. СС. 558–559.
- 4) Там же, С. 389.
- 5) Vladimir Nabokov, *The Defense* (New York: Vintage International, 1990), p. 138.
- 6) *Ibid.*, pp. 42–43.
- 7) Vladimir Nabokov, *Novels and Memoirs 1941–1951*, pp. 608, 612.
- 8) *Ibid.*, p. 609.
- 9) Nora Buhks. «Двое игроков за одной доской: Вл. Набоков и Я. Кавабата» in *Vladimir Nabokov et l'emigration (Cahiers de l'emigration russe 2)*. Institut d'études slaves. Paris. 1993. pp. 39–50.
- 10) Vladimir Nabokov, *The Defense*, p. 8.

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