

Title: Pictorial Origins of Three Biblical Poems By Vladimir Nabokov

Author: Gavriel Shapiro, Cornell University

This paper centers on Vladimir Nabokov's three poems, "The Last Supper," "The Glasses of St. Joseph," and "Mother," which he composed in the early 1920s. In the example of these and some other poems, all Biblical in their subject matter, the paper attempts to demonstrate that pictorial models, some obvious and some less apparent, from the Renaissance to the nineteenth century, often served Nabokov as stimuli for his writings. The analysis of the poems vis-à-vis the paintings shows, however, that even at the very outset of his literary career Nabokov approached his sources of inspiration creatively. In each case, Nabokov, a true poet, pursues the humane and emotional rather than the conventional aspect of the story and expresses a highly original, personal point of view. In all these instances, Nabokov employs visual imagery as a springboard, and then, by virtue of his splendid poetic powers, ingeniously recreates the Biblical event within his own artistic universe, thereby showing it in a new light, or imbuing it with an additional, previously unnoted meaning. The paper is accompanied by slides.

Bibliography

- Boyd, Brian. 1990. *Vladimir Nabokov: The Russian Years*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Nabokov, Vladimir. 1991. *The Gift*. Trans. Michael Scammell with the collaboration of the author. New York: Vintage International.
- . 2005. "The Glasses of St. Joseph." Trans. Dmitri Nabokov. *The Nabokovian* 54: 4.
- . 2008. "The Last Supper." Trans. Dmitri Nabokov. *The Nabokovian* 60: 6.
- . 1970. *Poems and Problems*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- . 1999-2000. *Sobranie sochinenii russkogo perioda*. 5 vols. St. Petersburg: Simpozium.
- . 2002. *Stikhotvoreniia*. Comp. and comm. M. E. Malikova. St. Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt.
- . 1997. *The Stories*. New York: Vintage International.