

Title: Creating Fact between Commentary and Autobiography: *Eugene Onegin* as Memory's Rite of Passage
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The years during which Vladimir Nabokov prepared and published the translation of and commentaries on *Eugene Onegin* overlap with the years he wrote and revised his three autobiographies—*Conclusive Evidence: A Memoir* (1954), *Drugie Berega* [*Other Shores*] (1956) and *Speak, Memory: An Autobiography Revisited* (1966). Though some scholars indicate the parallelism, we may show that Nabokov privately utilized the commentary to create “the fact” of his autobiography.

One of the strangest commentaries within *Eugene Onegin* appears in Chapter 4 stanza XIX; here Nabokov proposes a rather obscure hypothesis that Pushkin fought a duel with minor poet and Decembrist Kondraty Ryleyev. According to Nabokov, the duel most certainly occurred in the suburb of St. Petersburg, Batovo—the estate of Ryleyev's mother. Spending nine pages, he could not show any conclusive evidence of the duel; however, at the end of this long commentary, Nabokov adds the story that his ancestor had obtained the estate. Nabokov even tells of a “vague family tradition” that Ryleyev had a real fight there and he had loved rambling Ryleyev's favorite walk through “Chemin du pendu” into the forest.

In 1966 Nabokov published the new, revised and translated edition of his autobiography— *Speak, Memory: An Autobiography Revisited*. In this version, Nabokov added a map of his estates—Rozhestveno, Vyra and Batovo. On this map, he also depicted a curved path—“Chemin du pendu.” Moreover, he deliberately revised some descriptions in the new autobiography according to his own commentary of Chapter 4 stanza XIX. Comparing the two old versions with the new one, we may find that Nabokov created the “vague family tradition” through the process of writing the commentary on *Eugene Onegin* and mythologized his memory's place in the tradition of Russian literature.