

Title: The Riddles of Nabokov's "L'Inconnue de la Seine"

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Abstract:

In 1934 Nabokov published his famous poem «L'Inconnue de la Seine». Although a detailed study of the possible sources of inspiration was done by such scholars as Anne-Gaelle Saliot, Don Barton Johnson and others, there is one more motive never discussed before: the suicide of F. Sologub's wife Chebotarevskaya in Petrograd's river in 1921. The poem has been subtitled "From the poetry of Fyodor G.-CH.". This subheading was a riddle for Nabokov's readers, and only after the publication of "The Gift" novel some guessed that it was from Fyodor Godunov-Cherdyntsev. However, the poem had nothing in common with the novel. Maybe that first time Nabokov had in mind a different Fyodor, for example, Fyodor <Solo>Gub-Chebotarevsky? In her recollection of Sologub Taffy mentioned how he invented the game of deconstructing the words into separate meaningful parts. In this case, Solo-Gub means "lonely Gub". There were different rumors about her suicide, but Akhmatova and Michael Kuzmin were certain that Chebotarevskaya drowned herself because of unrequited love. Who was this man, Nabokov gives tips on different possible individuals from the inner circle of Sologub's family. However, Nabokov did not rule out the murder option because of jealousy.