

Title: Tolstoy, Shklovsky, and the Image of Creativity in Nabokov  
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Abstract:

Nabokov's admiration for the works of Tolstoy is well-known; his engagement with Victor Shklovsky and other Formalists has been explored in detail by Irina Paperno and Marina Kostalevsky as well as by Michael Glynn. This paper examines Tolstoy's (and Shklovsky's) strong presence in three of Nabokov's works—"Sounds," "The Circle," and *Speak, Memory*—that all include portraits of Tolstoy formed entirely from the words of his own writings. Each one occurring in a village schoolhouse, these portraits are emblematic of the way that Nabokov set himself before the image of his great predecessor as he undertook the task of learning to be a writer. Each of these portraits is accompanied by echoes of Tolstoyan imagistic and thematic concerns, which shed direct light on the given work by Nabokov. Nabokov turned to Shklovsky to help identify the Tolstoyan tools he might use to advance his own art. This analysis offers new insight into the manner in which Nabokov engaged the work of the 19th century master, both as a source of great inspiration and as a model to be overcome.