

Title: Pushkin's presence in Nabokov's unfinished novel *Solus Rex*
Author: Irena Ronen, Independent Scholar

My purpose is to demonstrate the impact and the artistic transformation of Pushkin's themes and motifs in a chapter from the unfinished novel *Solus Rex*, later published separately under the title "Ultima Thule." These Pushkinian allusions support the connection detected by Dolinin (2004, 278-293) between *Solus Rex* and the draft sequel to *The Gift* published by Grayson (1994, 21-67).

Pushkin's themes sometimes enter Nabokov's text through intermediary sources. The inception and the conclusion of "Ultima Thule", addressed to the lost beloved, resemble a poem in prose: "esli posle tvoei smerti ia i mir eshche sushchestvuem, to lish' blagodaria tomu, chto ty mir i menia vspominaesh' [...] Slyshish' li menia?" (Nabokov 5, 2000, 113-114). There is a perceptible echo here of Tiutchev's poem commemorating the death of Denis'eva ("Vot tot mir, gde zhili my s toboiu. / Angel moi, ty vidish' li menia?"), itself influenced by Pushkin's late lyric poetry and by *Rusalka* (Berkovskii 1987, 42).

Pushkin's approach is noticeable in Nabokov's treatment of the pervasive theme of the death of a loved one and the attempted communication with her in "Ultima Thule" as well as in *The Gift*. These themes, a salient component of Nabokov's English novels, had already been present in "The Return of Chorb," which in several respects had prefigured "Ultima Thule" and some episodes of the sequel to *The Gift*, as well as manifested a creative debt to Pushkin, especially to *Rusalka* and *Feast during the Plague*.

Bibliography

- N. Berkovskii, "F. I. Tiutchev" in: F. I. Tiutchev, *Polnoe sobranie stikhotvorenii*, L., 1987, 5-42.
A. Dolinin, *Istinnnaia zhizn' pisatel'ia Sirina*, SPb., 2004.
J. Grayson, "Washington's Gift: Materials pertaining to Nabokov's *Gift* in the Library of Congress," *Nabokov Studies*, vol. 1, 1994, 21-67.
V. Nabokov, *Sobranie sochinenii russkogo perioda v piati tomakh*, 5, SPb., 2000.