Gary Wihl A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate

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NABOKOV'S THEORY OF PROSODY

by

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I wish to thank Professor I, Gopnik for guiding me through one of the most tangled thickets in the field of literary criticism. In this matter, as in many others, he has shown the greatest patience and consideration.

ABSTRACT

Nabokov's translation of Pushkin's <u>Eugene Onegin</u> (1964) led him to compose an appendix on prosody. The appendix was.published soon after in its own edition, entitled <u>Notes on Prosody</u>. The <u>Notes</u> claimed to provide a way of improving traditional modes of scansion. This thesis attempts an account and evaluation of Nabokov's contribution.

Chapter I describes the way he reworks the concept of the "foot" and makes a distinction between rhythm and metre. Chapter II reviews the origin of this approach in the work of modern Russian theorists and summarizes their previous findings. Chapter III concentrates on the work of Halle and Keyser who apply a similar theory of prosody to English verse. Their work sets expectations for the rhythm/ metre theory in English. Chapter IV is a critique of Nabokov's prosody in the light of the two preceding chapters. His prosody is shown to be a modification of the work of his Russian predecessors ... This modification fails to give an adequate description of English metres. However, it does provide valuable criticism of flaws which are inherent in the strictly metrical method of scansion. Ultimately, his prosody is shown to serve the special interests of translators more than those of contemporary English prosodists.

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RÉSUMÉ

Nabokov fait une traduction de <u>Eugene Onegin</u> de Pushkin en 1964 qui l'induit à composer un appendix sur la prosodie. Une publication d'une édition séparée de cet appendix intitulée <u>Notes on Prosody</u> parait peu après. Ces "<u>Notes</u>" ont pour but d'améliorer les modes traditionnels de la scansion. Ma thèse se propose d'offrir un compte rendu complet autant que possible ainsi qu'une évaluation de la contribution de Nabokov au domaine de la prosodie.

Le premier chapitre décrit en quelle manière Nabokov retravaille le concept du "pied" et établit une distinction entre le rhythme et la Le second chapitre traite de l'origine de cette approche dans mesure. les travaux des théoriciens russes modernes, et résume leurs découvertes Le troisième chapitre se concentre sur les travaux de antérieures. Halle et Keyser; ces derniers appliquent une théorie de la prosodie au vers anglais similaire à celles des théoriciens russes. Leurs travaux préparent le champ pour la théorie "rhythme/mesure" anglaise. Le quatrième chapitre est une critique de la prosodie Nabokovienne à la lumière des deux chapitres precédents. En fait, sa prosodie est une modification des théories de ses predécesseurs qui ne sied pas la description de la Néanmoins, il offre une critique importante des mesure anglaise. défauts inhérents à la methode métrique de la scansion. Finalement, ma thèse suggère que la prosodie Nabokovienne peut servir les interêts des traducteurs beaucoup plus que ceux des prosodistes anglais contemporains.

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INTRODUCTION

Nabokov's Notes on Prosody first appeared as the second appendix to his four volume translation of and commentary on Pushkin's Eugene Onegin. It was reprinted almost immediately in two separate little editions'- one with the first appendix (on Pushkin's dubious African ancestry) and one without; both editions had some minor The second text of the Notes was hardly more analyzed than corrections. the first, which was completely submerged in the overall (and often bitter) controversy surrounding Nabokov's translation of Pushkin's poetry itself. Almost every reviewer who readily questioned the odd diction of the translation or the extravagant commentary gave the Notes, which were a proportionally small part of the whole work, a proportionally small mention, but generally in inviting terms. Christopher Ricks, in the New Statesman (Dec. 25, '64) said, "The 100 page appendix on prosody animates that corpse of a topic and seems to me to break important new ground in its definition and English instances (wittily chosen)." Ernest J. Simmons, in the New York Times Book Review (June 28, '64) called it "an enthralling study of prosody"; similarly; Robert Conquest in Poetry (June '65) suggests that "the sound and penetrating appendix on prosody deserves a much wider readership..."

There are many instances of such loose journalistic glosses,² yet serious students of proceed have not responded even though the <u>Notes</u> is now included in scholarly bibliographies on the subject and is listed

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as one of the four major Anglo-Russian comparative studies in contemporary prosody. It is sad to think that this neglect possibly stems from the fact that the Notes is in the form of an 'appendix, supposedly bound to This is the the work on Pushkin which occasioned them and no more. view Paul Fussell takes, who has spent three pages (two more than most) criticizing them in Encounter magazine (April '65). Mr. Fussell has written on the history of English prosody and should know better. least two significant works on English prosody, Robert Bridges' Milton's Prosody and Tyrwhitt's essay on prosody in his edition of Chaucer,4 Nabokov was quite to the point in his reply had a similar origin. (Encounter, May '65) - "I am glad Mr. Paul Fussell has nothing against my notes on prosody provided they remain attached to a work of repelling length and limited appeal. ' I am amused by his objecting to them when published in the form of a separate easily available little volume."⁵

It is true that Nabokov is modest in his prosodical intention, claiming to provide no more than "a few things that the non-Russian student of Russian literature must know in regard to Russian prosody in general and to <u>Eugene Onegin</u> in particular" (p. 4). But that only reflects how well-focused Nabokov's choice of topics is; he deals only with iambic tetrametres (Pushkin's Russian ones and a cross-section of English ones) and primarily with one aspect of the metre, the place of weak stresses. , What is not so apparent is the underlying theoretical basis for his comparison, or why he should even propose to write a taxonomy that is applicable to metrical poetry in general, be it Russian, English or even German (he gives a German illustration of his approach on p. 42). At other points in the

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text he claims his prosody could be applied to pentametres, trimetres, and ternary forms of verse as well (p. 76).

It is perfectly valid for Nabokov to limit himself to a specific category of metre for the sake of describing Pushkin's tetrametres, that is \sim no ground to doubt his methods, but Nabokov should hardly be surprised if English readers misinterpret the theoretical import of the Notes when he fails to present the theoretical context in which he is working. He states at the very outset, in his section on "prosodies" that Russian theorists have done good work, but that English treatments of the iamb, and particularly the tetrametre, are not "even remotely acceptable to a student of prosody" (p.3). Yet, of the English school only Saintsbury and Bridges are mentioned at all (and then only in a deprecating way), while Andrei Belyj is the only Russian Nabokov admits he has borrowed from, at the same time disclaiming any real influence because he has not read Belyj since his youth (p. 14). It, is ironic that the specificity of the Notes, which is certainly a strong point, should be cause for attack by critics such as Fussell or Edmund Wilson, ⁶ while many of the favourable comments are based on the assumption that Nabokov is being so original, which is very doubtfully the case when one has looked at some of the previous Russian work in comparative prosody.

Professor Gerschenkron of Harvard has written what is probably the most scholarly review of Nabokov's <u>Eugene Onegin</u> (but again does not go into any detail on the prosody). Interestingly, he makes a similar objection to the commentary as a whole. He admires Nabokov's punctilious research -

"Nabokov's inability to suppress any bit of information brings into the pages of the Commentary one John Metschl who, in 1928, in describing an American collection of firearms, misspelled the make of pistols that happened to be used in Onegin's duel; we are favoured with a very plausible reason for the misspelling (III, 39)."⁷

But he says,

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"Nabokov does not like to give credit where credit is due..."

"Very unfortunately, this is true of the Commentary as a whole. A couple of times Nabokov says contemptuously 'as is known to Russian commentators' (I, 30 and 136), which is quite inappropriate, because he would have to repeat the phrase a hundred times, were he to point out every bit of knowledge and every suggestion that he has gleaned from others." In general, his references to his predecessors, unless designed to criticize their shortcomings, are very sparing indeed."⁸

I propose to give Nabokov's prosody the examination which is Chapter I will characterize already overdue in the following manner. his approach to verse in general terms. Chapter II will discuss the Russian context of his prosody. This context is perhaps the most crucial aspect of the Notes since the Russian approach is very different , from the English one and it has already had success in comparative studies Nabokov has borrowed heavily from it and there is with English verse. evidence that he was well acquainted with the work of the literary critics who followed Belyj (see my footnote 47 to Chapter II). This work was carried on primarily by a school known as the Russian Formalists (1916-1934 circa); but reference will also be made to post-Formalist studies " such as Boris Unbegaun (1956), another one to whom Nabokov momentarily refers (p. 23) though his work is described as "frankly compilatory", and

Robin Kemble (1965), who has published one of the four important comparative studies mentioned above. Chapter III will concentrate on relevant aspects of English prosody. Nabokov's dismissal of the English approach obviously implies that the bulk of the English mode of analysis has little However, there are aspects of English verse which to do with his notes. do not exist in Russian verse (e.g., elision, secondary accents). Τf Nabokov's method is truly comparative we must see how fairly he treats Also, current theoretical revisions in English prosody these differences. which are similar to the Russian approach, but which concentrate only on This work is equally important to the English verse, will be discussed. context of Nabokov's prosody. Chapter IV will be a detailed critique of the Notes, prepared by the first three chapters. In this chapter, I intend to prove the following thesis: Nabokov's Notes on Prosody are based strictly on a modern Russian theory of metre; however, Nabokov is truer to his objective than he might have wished because he applies the Russian method in a partial way only. His notes are thus a good translator's model for comparative prosody since he focuses on the salient features of Pushkin's verse which can be mimicked and formalized in English verse but he cannot claim to have corrected or solved a number of issues in English prosody when he has shrewdly avoided them. However, Nabokov's prosody should be recognized by English metrists as significant for the contemporary English prosody has undergone profound debates in English prosody. changes recently, notably in the work of Halle and Keyser. Much of this work has been under a Russian influence. I propose that Nabokov's Notes are akin to the general critical tendency, and as such the text is a valid contribution, albeit a rather limited one.

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- 1. Alexandr Pushkin, Eugene Onegin. Translated with a Commentary by Vladimir Nabokov. 4 Vols. (New York:Bollingen Foundation 1964).
- 2. See my bibliography under the heading "reviews"., Any reference to the Notes on Prosody among them was a positive but superficial one.
- 3. See the English bibliography by Rae Ann Nager in Versification: <u>Major Language Types</u>, ed., W.K. Wimsatt (New York: Modern Language Association. New York University Press, 1972) pp. 204-217. Nabokov is listed on p. 206, item no. 23. The three others listed are: Robin Kemble, "English and Russian Versification. A General Comparison" in his Alexander Blok: A study in Rhythm and Metre (The Hague: Mouton, 1965, pp. 55-156); Victor Erlich, "Verse Structure: Sound and Meaning" in <u>Russian Formalism: History-Doctrine</u> (The Hague: Mouton, 1969) pp. 182-98; and Victor Zhirmunskij, Introduction to Metrics: The <u>Theory of Verse</u> (The Hague: Mouton, 1966) trans. C.F. Brown (Org. pub. Leningrad 1925).
- 4. Bridges' book is a small classic in the field and developed from an appendix he wrote to an edition of <u>Paradise Lost</u> for the Clarendon Press. In fact, in the final edition of his study which was published by Oxford (1921) as a separate work on its own (dike Nabokov's) he devotes an appendix to the history of this appendix. T.S. Omond in <u>The English Metrists</u> (1921, rpt. New York Phaeton, 1968) p. 86, considers Tyrwhitt's "Essay upon his Language and Versification" to be a major work of English prosody. Tyrwhitt's essay appeared as part of his edition of Chaucer and did much to render "Chaucer's rhythm intelligible to many who had only 'made shift' to read him".
- 5. Nabokov is, of course, referring to the 1964 edition published by Princeton University Press. All subsequent reference in the thesis will be to this edition unless otherwise noted, and will be noted directly within the text of the thesis.

6. Wilson's attack (a two-pager this time) appeared in <u>N.Y.R. of Books</u>, 15 July, 1965 and is reprinted as "The Strange Case of Pushkin and Nabokov" in <u>A Window on Russia</u> (New York:Farrar, Strauss Giroux, 1972) pp. 220-221. Wilson's discussion of substitution of feet and spondees shows that, like Fussell, he has missed the essential aspect of Nabokov's notes simply because the Russian approach Nabokov took has no use for such English borrowings of classical concepts.

Notes

* Alexander Gerschenkron, "A Manufactured Monument?" Modern Philology 63, (May '66), 337-347, p. 345 n.

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8. <u>loc. cit</u>.

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9. W.K. Wimsatt, in his excellent introduction to <u>Versification</u> (M.L.A., 1972) p. xix, mentions how modern prosody has been changed by phonetic, studies, something initiated by the Russian Formalists. Wellek and Warren too, describe the impact of the Russian studies in their <u>Theory of Literature</u>, 2nd ed. (1942, rpt. New York: Harcourt, 1955), pp. 159-162. The whole issue will be taken up in the actual discussion of Nabokov's theory.

CHAPTER I

NABOKOV'S PROSODY: GENERAL REMARKS

The second topic of the thirteen which comprise the <u>Notes on</u> <u>Prosody</u> is "Feet", a term so orthodox it almost belies Nabokov's approach. But in the space of the section's five pages (4 - 9) we arrive at such unheard of terms as "false spondees", "false pyrrhics", "tilts" and "scuds" the heart of Nabokov's new taxonomy.

Feet are used in two ways by Nabokov. In the first way, Nabokov follows the customary means of distinguishing metrical verse, based on a foot system, from cadential or syllabic verse. It is only proper for him to isolate his field of inquiry, metrical verse, since he intends to write a "comparative" prosody. Within the traditions of Russian (since Lomonosov) and English (since Chaucer, if not Gower), metrical verse is so prevalent that it would be pedantic to make these distinctions, save in the cases of marginal or innovative poetry.¹ Thus Nabokov is simply situating his comparison within these traditions when he describes in detail how unmetrical the syllabic French Alexandrine is (p. 6).

Once in the metrical context, the foot undergoes swift and consequential redefinition which is the way it is to be used in Nabokov's own prosody. Nabokov does this in such a subtle way that readers have objected to the wording, such as Wilson's protestation of "semeia" for parts of the foot,² without realizing that the more accepted classical

words such as "iamb", "trochee", "dactyl" etc. have just been given new meanings too. The key paragraph is this -

The metrical system... is based first of all on a regular recurrence of rhythm within a line of verse, in which foot stress tends to coincide with accent (word stress), and nonstress with non accent. This recurrence is seen as a consequence of similar feet. Each such foot can consist of either two or three divisions (semeia) one of which is stressed by the metre but not necessarily by the syllable of the word coinciding with it. This stressed division is called the ictus, while the unstressed divisions are called depressions. Mathematically, only five kinds of feet can exist: the iamb, the trochee, the anapest, the amphibrach, and the dactyl. (p. 67; my emphasis).

We can extract several principles from these remarks: (1) The higher frequency and patterning of stresses, characteristic of metrical verse, is generally termed the rhythm; it is not described <u>a priori</u> in a metrical way as iambic pentametre, iambic tetrametre, anapestic and the like (in fact, on p. 29 Nabokov speaks about using the "dominant rhythm" to decide the metre of specific lines that are ambiguous). (2) Rhythm is defined as the interaction (or points which "coincide") between the word accent of <u>syllables</u> and the abstract <u>ictuses</u> of a metrical formalism. "Feet" describe this rhythm insofar as there is a recurrence of similar intersections between the strong syllables and the formally defined strong places throughout the line(s), but this is merely a) "nomenclatorial handle" (p. 5). Feet are not meant to stand conjunctively for the interaction as a whole, they are only half of it. (3) Thus, not every foot will have a lexically strong syllable in its

ictus (see my emphasis above) but it will still have an ictus in the

sense of a stress <u>in principle</u> even if not fulfilled or fulfilled in the depression (weak place). (4) Every foot must have one and only one stress in principle. Thus there is no such thing as a pyrrhic foot (no stress). or a spondee (two stresses).

Generally speaking, this mode of analysis which separates the actual sequence of word accents from the theoretical sequence of ictuses and maps their intersection can be called the "<u>rhythm/metre</u>" approach. It has been touched on by English prosodists in the past and expanded by the most recent English prosodists (see below Chapter III), but to most English students of prosody it must appear awkward and over-indulgent. Conversely, in Russian analysis it is an accepted and highly elaborated mode (see Chapter II). As Nabokov is going into the matter for the English student, I will venture to say that he has been ruthlessly brief but faithful to a system which is, in fact, more elegant and simple than the strictly foot approach.

The crux lies in how each approach treats of variations, or irregularities in the metrical line, and it is no surprise to see Nabokov turn immediately to problematic metrical cases after having stated his terms. These samples from the <u>Notes</u> are all in strict conformity, whether one chooses to describe them as iambic tetrametres, or regularly recurring coincidences of accent and ictic position; in such cases a standard metrical notation $\upsilon <$ holds.

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1.	Appease my grief, and deadly pain	Surrey (p. 8)
2.	Of Humber would complain. I would	Marvell (p. 58)
3.	When Fainting Nature call'd for aid	Johnson (p. 61)
4.	The little village looks forlorn	Tennyson (p. \15

Group A

The difference between the rhythm/metre mode and the solely metrical mode, and their notation, is that the former provides for the inevitable "modulation" (Nabokov) of the basic pattern and can describe these modulations consistently, whereas the latter does not and cannot. Compare the following lines from the same poems.

5. And thinks to play he in the fire Surrey (p. 55) 6. Thine Eyes, and <u>on</u> thy Forehead Gaze Marvell Group B 7. Officious, innocent, sincere Johnson 8. In loveliness of perfect deeds . Tennyson

In each of these lines we have an elementary and very common modulation of the normal weak-strong iambic pattern; a weak syllable falls in an ictic position. Metrists have long been aware of this, and other common deviations, and have described them in strictly metrical terms as the replacement of one foot by another; in these cases a pyrrhic foot for an iamb, producing a metrical scansion such as o/|o/|oo|o' for lines 5 and 7, and o/|oo|o'|o' for lines 6 and 8. This in effect disqualifies these

lines as iambic and suggests that they are "mixed" - i.e., composed of more than one kind of foot.

Nabokov's approach considers groups A and B both to be iambic tetrametres from a metrical point of view in that the predominant pattern of stresses in the various poems and their individual lines is such for purposes of classification (and it is this assumption of a metrical "background" which allows Nabokov to select the examples he does, in iambic tetrametre, in the first place). However, the two groups are rhythmically different, which is theoretically permissible according to rules two and three above. Nabokov's notation takes this into account. The lines in group B contain what Nabokov calls "scuds" ("false pyrrhics") and are notated metrically as iambs, with depression and <u>ictus</u> U-, but also accentually according to the actual strength of the syllables which occupy the metrical positions. Thus lines 5 and 7 are scanned as

v - | v - | v - | v - - v

or scudded in the third foot; similarly, lines 6 and 8 are scudded

v- |v- |v- |v-

in the second foot. It should be realized that this scansion is actually simpler than the English one because it applies to both groups whereas the English system introduces new combinations of feet <u>ad hoc</u>. The difference becomes clearer as we encounter further complications in lines of verse.

The same method of scansion also deals consistently with another common modulation in English verse which Nabokov calls "tilts" ("false trochees") and with the same metrical notation. A tilt is defined as 「ないいい、「「「「「「「」」」

the occurrence of an accent in a metrical depression v - r; in the more traditional scansions this would call for the introduction of yet another foot, a trochee, into the line. To take an elementary example again, foot notation shows a trochaic foot at the beginning of the following line and iambs in the rest.

Like as the fly that see'th the flame Surrey Nabokov's scansion, recognizing that the poem as a whole is essentially iambic, projects the abstract metrical pattern as a constant but notes this line as another kind of modulation.

ú-'|u-'|u-'|u-'| Til+

Working in tandem, the tilt and the scud quickly surpass the foot system and its inconsistences in simplicity and accuracy. Enid Hamer, taking the usual approach in English prosody, finds the last line of this passage from Spenser's <u>Shepheardes Calender</u> to be the only one which "refuses iambic scansion".³

> That nource of vice, this of insolencie, Lulled the shepheards in such securitie, That not content with loyall obeysaunce, Some gan to gape for greedie gouvernaunce, And match them selfe with mighty potentates. Lovers | of Lord | ship and | troublers | of states.

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Here we have trochee, iamb, pyrrhic, trochee, iamb all together. If I adapt Nabokov's prosody to pentametre in this case, I would still call this line iambic in the sense that it belongs to a poem which is clearly written in that metre but note that it contains several modulations, all of which are logically compatible in that my scansion and theory allow for them. There is a tilt in the first foot and a combination scud-tilt in the third and fourth feet (Nabokov calls this a "reverse tilt" which "denotes a combination of unaccented stress and accented depression, $-\vec{u}$, instead of the expected $-\vec{u}$ or $-\vec{u}$, and may coincide with any evenplace, odd-place segment of the iambic line except the last. The result is a scud tilted in reverse" p. 19). The new scansion goes



Furthermore, I could refine upon Hamer's regular lines without damage to the concept of the metre by noting that the third foot of the first line is scudded, and the first and second feet of the second line are tilted; and were it not for Spenser's rich rhymes, the last foot of the first five lines would be scudded too.

Nabokov's prosody, indeed the entire Russian approach, has its own complications too, of course. There are many kinds of scuds and tilts (we just passed by the "reverse" brand), and they can be used in a variety of ways to study characteristics of different metres. I have only represented the most basic forms to provide an outline of the difference between Nabokov's approach and the usual English one at the point where they

clash most cogently, i.e., the definition of the foot, and hence where the English reader is most likely to go astray, even at the outset. This was, in fact, the case with Paul Fussell, one of the most orthodox of metrists who has a penchant for seeing lines as mixed. He refers to the <u>Notes</u> as an overelaboration of the simple fact of pyrrhic substitution.⁴ We have just seen that neither the pyrrhic foot nor metrical substitution has anything to do with Nabokov's prosody though in isolation the scud does resemble the pyrrhic foot in that both describe a weakness where we expect a strong accent in the metrical pattern.

On the other hand, simply streamlining an awkward prosodical system of notation by feet, by separating accent signs from metrical signs is hardly an occasion to compose a whole taxonomy, much less an appendix on the subject, even if it is more sensible and accurate. Implicit in Nabokov's approach (it is never proposed as an individual topic in the way "feet" is) is another profound Russian borrowing, which is that prosody is very much a question of phonology, if only basic phonology. Nabokov actually refers to this question when he scoffs at the "old-fashioned" mixed foot approach -

> Only a blunt ear can perceive in it. [a duplex tilt]⁵ any "irregularity of meter", and only an old-fashioned pedant would treat it as the intrusion of another species of meter. In English poetry, its carefree admission by poets, especially in the beginning of the iambic lines, is owing partly to the comparative scarcity of such words in English as conform to the regular iambic foot and partly to accents in English words not being so strong and exclusive as they are in, say, Russian. (p. 20)

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This, in effect, posits a cause why modulations in metrical verse occur and why syllabic values should be separated from ideal metrical ones, as Nabokov did at the beginning of his discussion. It is only in the most self-conscious attempts to follow a metrical ideal that the strength of each syllable will coincide perfectly with the positions of the ictus Such verse is often monotonous (which may be an asset and depression. if one is attempting satire or burlesque); it usually occurs when poets strive to imitate the rules of classical poetry (where the whole foot system originates), such as in Sackville and Norton or in Johnsonian ideas about classical decorum⁶ (of Johnson's poetry, Nabokov says it contains "scant microbes of rhythm." p. 61). In the majority of verse phonological values can obviously be expected to conflict with metrical ones from time to time, and rather than deny this linguistic fact, as is the classically oriented metrist's wont, Nabokov, like the Russians who first began looking at verse phonologically as well as aesthetically, sees in this a pleasurable balance between metrical rule and rhythmic reality:

> As with all modulation in iambic meter, the beauty of tilt [and this could apply equally to its converse, the scud] which is such an admirable and natural portion of English iambic pentameter, and gives such allure to the rare lines in which Russian poets use it, lies in a certain teasing quality of rhythm, in the tentative emergence of an intonation that <u>seems</u> in total opposition to the dominant metre, but actually owes its subtle magic to the balance it tends to achieve between yielding and not yielding - yielding to the metre and still preserving its accentual voice. (p. 20)

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Such heady. appreciation of rhythm is worthy of a follower of Belyj as we shall see when we come to a full discussion of the Russians' work. Earlier in the text Nabokov addresses the issue directly in the context of his discussion of the scud when he gives a phonological account of its existence, "When in verse a weak monosy labic word (i.e., not accented in speech) or a weak syllable of a long word happens to coincide with the stressed part (ictus) of a foot, there results a modulation that I term a "scud" (p. 9).

In many places in the text Nabokov details phonological aspects of English and Russian to show how they produce different rhythms in the same metre (tetrametres almost exclusively). Again, I will reserve comment on these remarks until the Russian comparative findings which are based on the same idea and antedate Nabokov's have been discussed. However, if we turn back to the examples of scuds above, we can see several instances of the weak monosyllables and secondary accents in polysyllable words occupying an ictus: example 5 - the word "in"; example 6 - the word "on"; example 7 - the last syllable of "innocent" (only the first syllable qualifies as the fulfilment of a stress position) and similarly in example 8 - the last syllable of "loveliness", and the word "of" in the first line from the Spenser excerpt.

This concludes my preparatory remarks on Nabokov's prosody. The two main features of Nabokov's prosody are the rhythm/metre approach to scansion and the application of phonological facts in explanation of こういろう うちのない ちちちちち

of how metrical verse works (i.e., its tendency to modulate). This accounts for Nabokov's mode of analysis with its treatment of the metre as an ideal pattern of analogous rhythms in a group, particularly in the concept of the foot as stressed in principle if not always by the coincidence of a strong syllable. This mode produces a more consistent taxonomy which continues to make use of feet either simply to describe the rhythm (if all the lines are regular) or more importantly, in the cases of modulation, as the background which relates all modulations (tilts, scuds) to each other. In fact Nabokov considers all tilts to be a species of scuds "since the stress in such feet is not accented" (p. 18) the accent is displaced onto the "depression" position. I have omitted a great deal which follows from these premises but I have said enough to assert that Nabokov's prosody is derived from a Russian system which he has kindly abstracted without bothering to establish his references. These references are established in the following chapter where we can trace the origin of this sort of prosody and summarize the relevant comparative findings, not all of which Nabokov has elaborated.

If I may (since there is really not much choice of critics who have challenged the <u>Notes</u> to any significant degree) I refer to Fussell a last time as the English foil to Nabokov the Russian intruder, to raise a minor objection to Nabokov's approach which should be cleared away.

Fussell complains,

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To be told by Nabokov of the <u>In Memoriam</u> extract that 'I have chosen this as a particularly brilliant example of scudding (based mainly on monosyllables and partly owing to the repetition of a specific split tilt)' is to have the rhythm described but not interpreted (Encounter, April 1965, p. 72)

There is a school of probody which believes that interpretation is the philosophical duty of probody and Fussell's writings are definitely of this sort - he is constantly showing the thematic purpose of pyrrhics and spondees.⁷ No doubt probody can contribute to an understanding of poetry, but Nabokov, like many other modern critics and particularly the Russian school, sees probe more as a scientific study⁸: that is simply the way Nabokov answers this criticism. I am including a little extra of Nabokov's reply which precedes the point about interpretation because his remark on "accidental" confirms that probe is a matter of coincidence of syllabic accent and metrical pattern (it is accidental merely in the sense that scuds and tilts cannot be predicted though they are bound to occur).

The presence or absence of scuds in a given passage may often be accidental but only a philistine can assert that the accidental is "undiscussable". If Mr. Fussell is puzzled by my having had to invent terms for new or unfamiliar concepts, it only means that he has not understood my explanations and examples. The purpose of my little investigation was to describe (<u>not</u> to 'interpret') certain aspects of verse structure. (<u>Encounter</u>, May 1965, p. 92):

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- For example, the syllabic experiments of poets such as Bridges, Moore, and some of Auden's poems or the accentual attempts in Yeats' "Why Should Not Old Men Be Mad" or Coleridge's "Christabel". In Russian, modern accentual verse emerged with the <u>dol'nik</u> as exemplified by Blok.
- 2. Edmund Wilson. "The Strange Case of Pushkin and Nabokov" in his Window on Russia (New York: Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, 1972), p. 220.
- 3. Enid Hamer. Metres of English Poetry. 5 ed. (1930; rpt. London: Methuen, 1969), p. 47.
- Fussell writes, "And yet for all its admirable energy and bustle and for all its welcome gaiety, Nabokov's demonstration leads exactly to this small point that Pushkin is a master of pyrrhic substitution."
 Encounter, April 1965, p. 76.
- 5. The duplex tilt is one of four varieties of the tilt (see Notes, p. 8). It consists of a disyllabic word accented on the first syllable in ordinary speech..." found in an iambic position, e.g., Nabokoy's mock poetic line, "Guarded by dragons, castles sleep."
- 6. Sackville and Norton's <u>Gorboduc</u> (1565) is composed in a "rigorously regular" metre with "little or no variation" (Fussell). Johnson's ideas about prosody are in a preface to his dictionary (1755). "He makes syllabic uniformity the basis and ideal." See T.S. Omond <u>The English Metrists</u>, 2nd ed. (1921, New York: Phaeton, 1968), pp. 54-56.

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- See his Poetic Metre and Poetic Form, (New York: Random House, 1965), passim.
- One of the most interesting aspects of the Notes on Prosody is how 8. full it is of mock poetic examples that Nabokov composes to illustrate prosodical principles (e.g., as in footnote 5, above) implying that "sense" has virtually nothing to do with his analysis. Even more telling, is the discrepancy between lines from Pushkin that he translates in the context of the Notes as opposed to the context of his own translation itself, to which the Notes are appended. "For example, on p. 22 he translates the Russian P'yot obol'stitel'niy obman as "drinks irresistible deceit" so that the pattern of accents is identical in the two lines. Yet he says he has bent the meaning of the Russian ' line when translating to get this match; "imbibe the ravishing illusion!" would be semantically closer but metrically too far apart. It is the second translation which he actually uses in his Eugene Onegin I will return to this feature of the Notes in Chapter IV when text. I discuss it as a translator's theory of prosody.

CHAPTER II

Nabokov makes only a single concession in his discussion of prosody to the Russian theorists he claims are so superior to their English counterparts. In a note to page 48 he uses his own analytic metaphor "scud" to say of Andrei Belyj's work of 1910 (meaning his <u>Simvolism</u>) that it "found in scudding a separative agent to distinguish genius from mediocrity in the untheorizing past." He mentions that Belyj's work occurs during a "revival of poetry in the first two decades of this century" but does not refer to any of the other theoretical work of the time which was abundant and full of controversy (especially Beljy's).

Otherwise, Nabokov devotes only two sections in the <u>Notes</u> to aspects of Russian verse alone - section 7 (pp. 33-46) on "The Origination of Metrical Verse in Russia", and section 10 (pp. 69-76) on "Counts of Modulations in <u>Eugene Onegin</u>" - the rest of the sections are either on comparative questions of English and Russian versification, or solely on English verse. If the past is truly "untheorizing", and if the point of the <u>Notes</u> is supposedly to describe Pushkin's verse, then Nabokov's selection of topics and his relative attention to them must certainly, look peculiar. One questions why section 7 is spent on poor explanations of verse when there is no section on the prosodists of Beljy's time, or why

the whole point of the <u>Notes</u> is covered so briefly and in such a condensed way in section 10 since the English reader is incapable of judging it and it is no doubt familiar to the Russian reader already.

This is all the more puzzling considering that Nabokov's prosody is given greater legitimacy (but not necessarily total sanction) in the context of the early twentieth century studies, whereas his very elementary review of the history of Russian metrical verse is similarly of no scholarly value to the English or Russian reader. It can be of use only in the same way as Nabokov's mention of the French Alexandrine was, i.e., to measure his scope. We see that metrical verse only originated in the "Tighteenth century in Russia with the work of Trediakovsky (1703-1769) and Lomonosov (1711-1765) and thus a comparison of Russian scudding to English will cover unequal metrical histories.

But historically too, Nabokov seems determined to avoid theoretical issues even when they present themselves. For example, Lomonosov's "Letter about the Rules of Russian Versification" (1739) sent to the Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg is mentioned merely as an advocacy of the "total adoption of the metrical system" (p. 39). Nabokov then goes on to a very detailed account of Lomonosov's "Hotinian Ode" which Lomonosov attached to his letter as an illustration of his poetics. Nabokov says this is the first Russian poem "deliberately composed in iambic tetrametres". Of course it is important for Nabokov to point out the occurrence of scuds in this key metrical example but Lomonosov was making a significant theoretical point about metre here too.

Unbegaun (1956), who is not so dedicated to the existence of the scud, refers to the linguistic discovery made by Lomonosov in his letter. Lomonosov recognized that the accent of the Russian language was more suited to the composition of metrical verse than the syllabic kind of verse Russians were then writing in imitation of Polish verse (where it was suited to the weaker Polish lexical accent). Lomonosov "appealed to the only sound principle: namely, that versification should be adapted to the natural resources of Russian and should know nothing inconsistent with them. He declared himself in favour of binary as well as ternary. metres."¹

My point is simply that where the phonological issue in Russian prosody has raised istelf momentarily as a principle Nabokov chooses to skip over it and treats the "Hotinian Ode" in an implicit phonological way by showing the appearance of the unheeded scud during the clumsy birth of Russian metrical verse.

This chapter is concerned with the early twentieth century issues in Russian prosody. A look at this work will not only enable us to assess Belyj's role in Nabokov's prosody but also the development of the rhythm/ metre approach and the first serious phonological insights into verse which went hand in hand with it. This period has had a decisive influence on the whole field of comtemporary prosody. Krystyna Pomorska writes, "The Russian scholars were the first to distinguish the concept of metre from the concept of rhythm... The structural metrics of today is deeply indebted to the <u>Opòjaz</u>² studies when it defined rhythm as metrical variations. All the experience of the 'Formalist' period was necessary for modern scholars to come to this conclusion."³ It is Nabokov's source

and the context which gives his propody an immediate relevance to propodists today who are continuing to promote the Russian system. In order to gather the important material from this period I will concentrate on reviewing the evolution of the propodic theory and summarizing its comparative conclusions on English and Russian verse. The application of these conclusions to Nabokov's propody will be discussed in Chapter IV.

One of the difficulties in discussing the rhythm/metre theory is that it was conceived from the first in multiple ways. This was due to the radical atmosphere and historical commotion under which it grew.

Belyj's influential discoveries about the Russian iambic tetrametre (in his <u>Simvolizm</u>, 1910) established a new empirical basis for the prosody which followed but it was no less an occasion to promote metrical deviation for the purposes of Symbolist verse making. By the time of his <u>Rhythm as Dialectics</u> (1929) metre "is scornfully referred to as the 'sclerosis of tissue' while rhythm [deviation from the norm] is described glowingly and vaguely as the 'principle of metamorphosis and growth'."⁴ Similarly, Zhirmunskij's <u>Introduction to Metrics</u> (1925), which is a fundamental exposition of the Formalist approach (and a critique of Belyj) tends toward the end to encourage the <u>dol'nik</u> (a more accentual form of verse which had come into prominence, notably in the work of Blok) as a form of metrical "de- canonization".⁵

These controversies are relevant to the methodologies that were proposed, not because they seemed to adversely prejudice the actual analyses,⁶ but to the degree they show an arbitration between the rhythmical

and the metrical factor in poetry. The independence of the two categories can no longer be ignored, it is simply that the question of how to mediate the two factors remains open. Indeed, Unbegaun's : authoritative text <u>Russian Versification</u> (1956) discusses specifically rhythmic factors (phonetics, syntax) apart from metrical ones (e.g., and crusis, caesura) and he gives what is probably the most evenly balanced view of how they cooperate differently in binary or ternary. metres; but even so, in practice he must make some arbitrary decision too, giving preference to one or the other in scansions.⁷

Since no metre should be expected to be absolutely regular that would make poetry extremely monotonous - the concept of rhythm was really an attempt to explain why deviations do occur and to redefine their role in verse. To simply define a break in the metrical pattern in metrical terms (e.g., "trochaic" foot in an "iambic" line) is no more than a theory of substitutions (the Russian Zamena), and that is a very difficult thing to explain without either resorting to an assumption of poetic error or blithely accepting the inconsistency of the taxonomy. If, on the other hand, the phonology and the grammar of a given language are taken into account, deviations no longer appear as metrical contradictions but rather as adaptations of the language to an artistically chosen The energetic revisionism of the Russian critics in the formalism. first two decades of this century succeeded in replacing the theory of substitution with a theory of modulation. In tracing the stages of this shift from the work of Belyj to the gradual breakup of the Formalists (under Soviet pressure circa 1936) we see the disappearance of many of the

traditional metrical problems and the emergence of some new problems (i.e., the question of mediation mentioned above) which constitute the centre of contemporary prosody.

"Andrei Bely] uses the term rhythm to designate the sum total of deviations from the metrical scheme."8 But as Zhirmunskij points out in his analysis of Belyj,⁹ the negative connotations in the term "deviation" indicate nothing more than a remnant from the terminology of the metrical theories Belyj was already overturning. 🔻 Belyj's ` concern, aside from the promotion of the Symbolist tenet of rhythm as spirit, was to show the variety of modulations within a given metrical "Belyj demonstrated by means of painstaking rhythmical scheme. analysis, that even a seemingly 'regular' lasherse, such as Pushkin's iambic tetrametre, cannot dispense with metrical/interruptions; time and again one finds in Pushkin 'half-stresses' where one is lead to expect full metrical accents. These departures from the scheme, insisted Belyj, are too frequent to be regarded as exceptions. They constitute too organic a part of the actual rhythmical flow of many poetic masterpieces to be discussed as occasional, formal deficiencies."¹⁰ Belyj was not the first to note the high frequency of deviations, 11 but he was the first to study this systematically, by graphic and statistical methods. Thus, Belyj deduces stress is most frequently omitted in the sixth syllable in the iambic tetrametre on the whole (in fact, 40-60% of the time), while stress is omitted on the fourth syllable more specifically in the eighteenth century, and on the second syllable in the nineteenth century.¹²

I only quote these generalizations to give some idea of the potent methodology Belyj instigated. Without doing away with the concept of metre as an ideal pattern of alternating stresses a more accurate description of verse structure is possible. One only has to look at Unbegaun's comparative discussion of eighteenth to twentieth century binary metre,¹³ with its computation of numbers of stresses in the line and their combinations to realise the lasting impact of Belyj's work. Furthermore, new criteria for style emerge as a corollary of this approach in the "preference of some authors for a particular combination of stresses..." (Unbegaun).

Today, wherever we see stylistic criticism being exercised in positional terms (i.e., where the major stresses in a particular period's or poet's verse tend to fall), some acknowledgement to Belyj is only proper. Thus critics as far apart as Nabokov, Zhirmunskij, and presently Freeman¹⁴ (who is the most strictly based in linguistics) all take Belyj as the precursor of their own separate theories.

Belyj, of course, was far from moderate in his application of this insight and quickly turned his method into a mystical sort of geometry of verse. Or as Zhirmunskij puts it, Belyj forgot that graphical representation was merely an auxiliary device and proceeded to describe the pattern of omissions as "roofs", "squares", "diamonds", these being unconscious preferences of their respective authors.¹⁵ The basic tabulation of omitted stresses continues in other critics such as Unbegaun or Nabokov, but needless to say, Belyj's been pursued with similar interest.

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Belyj's approach does, however, touch on a crucial theoretical question. The ability to draw up distinct graphs clearly still depends on a binary form of reading - i.e., stress/non-stress (or omission). A few lines from Pushkin's <u>Onegin</u> which have been "faithfully" translated by Nabokov can help to illustrate. I am juxtaposing a simplified Belyj-type graphic scansion to each line, like the one Nabokov uses in his <u>Notes</u> (passim) which shows rhythmic variation (X) by foot, not syllable. The examples are, of course, in iambic tetrametre:

1)	I vozbuzhdat' ulibku dam	x000	*.	
	. and to provoke the ladies smiles	-		
2)	Sred' modnih i starinnih zal	ox 00		,
	in modern and in ancient halls	4	1	
3)	Zarétski, nékogda buyan	00x0	\backslash	
	Zaretski, formerly a roque		(Notes p.	75)

Each line has one foot where the stress is weaker and that is all that is required to distinguish it as a "rhythmic" expression of the iambic pattern. Rhythm thus becomes a justification of deviations on a quasi-phonological basis (in the sense that only two kinds of stress are studied), but once the variation in metre is seen, Belyj is satisfied to describe this in metrical terms. In other words, verse is described logaoedically, as composed of various kinds of feet within a single line. In the above examples one would say it is the substitution of a pyrrhic foot for an iambic foot, but Belyj's terminology also makes use of paeons,

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spondees, trochees, cretics and tribrachs, to classify these variations as the "metres of classical lyric poetry".¹⁶ The polemical intention behind this is obvious; Belyj wants to promote violations in order to wage an attack on literary correctness, but Zhirmunskij points out the key theoretical issue at stake here which is the need to reexamine the definition of metre in the light of the new understanding of deviation.

The logacedic terminology of the most recent Russian metrical theory [i.e., Belyj] is based on a confusion of the concepts of rhythm and metre. The foot is not really an element in the actual phonetic realization of the line and consequently does not belong to the province of "rhythm"; it is an abstract unit of repetition, a pattern of alternation established in the metrical scheme and applied only in relation to the metre of the poem. For this reason the line 'I klanjalsja neprinuždenno' which has only two stresses, on the second and eighth syllables - is just as much a representation of the lambic tetrametre within the context of Evgenij Onegin as a line with four stresses: 'Moj djadja samyx čestnyx pravil...'. Within the metre, the foot is a regularly recurring sequence of strong and weak syllables - in the iambic metre, for instance, the strong syllable following regularly the weak syllable If, however, we introduce the principle of "replacement" and identify the foot with the actual elements of verse rhythm, the result is "mixed" verse, composed of various disyllabic and tetrasyllabic feet, the alternative of which in any one line or in a sequence of lines is not conditioned by any regular periodicity. Hence the familiar - and wholly erroneous - conclusion that the Russian iambic line can be "made up" of any disyllabic (or tetrasyllabic) feet ... arranged in any order, and that the so-called "iambic" metre exists only in "school metrics"... But the principal error of these authors lies in their transferring the concept of "foot", the element of metre, to the actual rhythm of the line...17

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Belyj's radicalism thus unfortunately transforms a sound methodological principle into a poor theory of metre. What Zhirmunskij is really criticising is only the latter; as we noted above, successful formulations, which maintain a clear distinction between rhythm and metre, have followed from Belyj's work. In fact it is quite arguable that the worth of the succeeding theories is dependant upon their ability to isolate the rhythmical factor from its metrical context. Belyj goes fallaciously from a critique of the "school metrics" way of using replacement to define "deviation" to his discovery of modulation of the metre, back to an even more intensive replacement mode. This apparently circular discovery contains a few more complexities though, than can be explained away simply by referring to Belyj's ideology.

Granted Belyj failed to distinguish metre from rhythm in his terminology, it is nonetheless true that the principle of <u>omitted</u> stress yields a notation that appears to resemble a metrical notation (i.e., feet) - the pattern is composed of only two diacritical signs, one for word accent and one for its absence. It is obviously analogous to an abstract metrical notation of stressed positions and unstressed ones. For example, the first line from Nabokov's text could be represented with a superimposed foot division (meter) and the lexical accent signs (rhythm) in this way: /--/--'/--'/ (this is the usual means of representation Unbegaun uses) or, the first two iambic feet (which are rhythmically different) could be grouped as one paeon followed by the two remaining iambs: ----'/--'/--'/. ¹⁸ The first case is preferable to the second for

all the theoretical and practical reasons given by Zhirmunskij, I only wish to point out the need for a very clear definition of the relation of rhythm to metre if one is working on the basis of a <u>single</u> criterion, i.e., <u>omission</u> of stress and thus in binary terminology. For if it is confusing and erroneous to equate word-accent with metrical-stress this does not necessarily imply that the principle of omission itself is a weak criterion. Unbegaun, in fact, makes judicious use of omission to describe different verse forms (see below). But it was more or less the omission principle the Formalists who followed Belyj objected to.¹⁹ In doing so, they sought to characterize verse in a much deeper sense as pure euphonic modulation and so revised the entire concept of metre.

"If the Formalists were less 'militant' than was Belyj in their treatment of metrical verse, they were a good deal more radical in their conceptual framework. Not only did they push beyond the limits of traditional verse study in focussing on such problems as verbal, orchestration and phrase melody. [sic] Moreover, in their rhythmical analyses of Russian poetry they questioned the usefulness of the key concept of Graeco-Roman prosody, that of 'foot'."20 The Formalists' approach to metre grew out of a more general concern for a separate discipline for the study of language. Belyj's analysis, we saw, made no distinction between the objective properties of language and their aesthetic function (hence his geometry). Eichenbaum, in his comprehensive essay "The Theory of the Formal Method" makes the Formalist

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divergence clear (if not condescending).

"The work of Andrei Belyj (who discovered the complete sound picture that champagne makes when poured from a bottle into a glass in two lines of Pushkin, and who also discovered the 'noisomeness of a hangover' in Blok's repetition of the consonantal cluster <u>rdt</u>) were quite typical. Such attempts to "explain" alliteration, bordering on parody, required a rebuff and an attempt to produce concrete evidence showing that sounds in verse exist apart from any connection with imagery, that they have an independent oral function."²¹

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In isolating language as a unique field of inquiry, and in ' exposing the interpretive (or non-empirical) nature of previous studies, 22 , the Russian Formalists were zealous and productive. It is beyond our scope to survey the totality of their work. However, one methodological principle constantly underlies their analyses; that is to define species of language according to their function and their particular organization of basic linguistic elements (lexical, phopological, morphological, syntactic).23 Verse then, is treated as a distinct form of language; rhythm is its dominanta, or the main property which distinguishes it from other forms of language. Since verse is such a highly structured form of language, Erlich (1969) has grounds for suggesting that it was in the field of versification that the Formalists made their "most impressive contribution." But it is also their advanced attention to so many factors in language which is the cause of their multifarious analyses of verse. Tynjanov, in his essay "Rhythm as the Constructive Factor of Verse", rebukes Grammont for his Le Vers francais, ses moyens d'expression, son harmonie, because Grammont does not isolate rhythm

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from its semantic role, and 'so rhythm "is given beforehand, functions which it has in general speech activity (emotionality and communicativeness)."²⁴ If this criticism seems valid in terms of Formalist theory, its object of attack is relatively clear-headed compared to the compositions of rhythm the Formalists themselves developed out of the totality of linguistic elements. Zhirmunskij posits a phonological conflict between the general metrical pattern and the prosodic pattern of conversational speech" (a reasonable starting point, in my opinion, and solid ground for comparative prosody as well); but Osip Brik "demonstrated the existence of fixed syntactic forms in verse (such as inversion of verb and subject)"; Eichenbaum "showed the union of the euphonic and semantic sides of verse, joined through syntax"; Tomaševsky "declared that the function of poetic rhythm... is the disposition of explatory energy in the limits of a single wave in the verse".²⁵ In contrast to Belyj's 'missing accents' Tomaševsky would prefer to speak of nothing more definite than a "rhythmical impulse" which tends to let the stress fall on even syllables.²⁶

Rhythm seen as pure modulation of sound is obviously much more the case in all these critics than it was in Belyj. To most of these writers the line of verse has subsumed the foot as the measure of verse; it is doubtful whether one could even properly speak of a "metrical" theory in this context. At this point one either accepts rhythm (in all manifestations) as the absolute of verse or one chooses to reserve the onotion of metre and see what modifications occur when the study of language

It seems to me (and not just for purposes of is brought into play. this thesis which is not concerned per se with the Formalist doctrine but with Nabokov who does maintain a metrical approach) that the second course is the better one. Syllabo-accentual (metrical) theory is clearly of no use with certain forms of poetry, such as some modern forms of free verse (Russian and English) or any cadential verse. As we suggested earlier, part of the theoretical impetus of the Formalists arose from their polemical situation or out of their alliance with the Futurist movement (which emphasized pure sound in verse). 27 , However, at least two major figures in the Formalist school, Zhirmunskij and Jakobson, chose to reexamine the specific question of traditional metrical description in the light of linguistics rather than dismiss it outright. 28 They thereby saw the need to acknowledge some metrical principle if one is to properly study a great deal of extant verse.

In this sense, the questions posed by the Formalists can be grouped around two aims - (1) the search for a more accurate description of what constitutes a <u>stress</u>, considered jointly as the interplay of linguistic accent and the convention which establishes expectation as to where stresses will fall (i.e., position of the ictus), and (2) a reclassification of the components of metre in structural terms in order to attempt a more consistent description of the different types of syllabo-accentual verse (e.g., ternary vs. binary metres) and the kinds of modifications which are particular to each. Both these aims have implications for any theory of prosedy which attempts to be comparative and so are touchstones for a critique of Nabokov.

In rejecting Belyj's binary approach to stress as too rigid the Formalists sought to increase the accuracy of scansion by recognizing the ictus as only a "stress in principle" (Zhirmunskij). That is to say that the degree of stress of any word in any line is dependant upon its context, or as Brik has put it - "the basic law according to which there is no such thing as stressed or unstressed syllables but only stressable and unstressable ones, had been ignored... Strength is not an inherent property of a given syllable; rather it is the effect gained by reshaping the syllable in accordance with one rhythmic impulse or another."²⁹

The possibility of metrical anarchy is obviously great here unless one has already stopped worrying about feet altogether and so is indifferent to where or whether the stresses fall consistently. Zhirmunskij offers a different solution, however. He conceives <u>prosody</u> (as opposed to <u>metrics</u>) as the study of which types of words can have variable stress and which cannot. Here we have an extremely sharp theoretical insight, for how it should be possible to distinguish those cases where a word violates the metrical norm - because its inherent stress falls where it should not, e.g., the common trochaic inversion in the first foot of an iambic line

> My vegetable love should grow <u>Vaster</u> than Empires, and more slow (Marvell)

from those cases where a word with a weak linguistic stress either does

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not actualize the metre (Belyj's discovery of omission) or constitutes a hypermetrical (or supplementary) stress which does not violate the overall metrical pattern of the line and may be read with more or less emphasis depending on the context, e.g., Milton's "Sole reigning holds the tyranny of Heav'n" where the second stress in "tyranny" is weaker in comparison to the first and may be considered an <u>omission</u>; or his "Rocks, caves, lakes, fens, bogs, dens, and shades of death" where the iambic pattern is really only clear in the last four words (contrasting minor conjunction and preposition to the stronger nouns) but where ______ "caves", "Fens", "dens" can be read hypermetrically if only to give some iambic "rhythm" to the line as a whole.

Rhythm is thus redefined by Zhirmunskij as deviation from the metrical scheme in two principle ways - "by the omission of metrical accents and by the supplementary stressing of syllables where there is theoretically no metrical accent."³⁰ This sort of "prosody" (in the sense Zhirmunskij uses the term³¹) represents a major theoretical advance which subsequent critics cannot ignore. At once it furthers the empirical study of metre by refining the description of kinds of stress in verse "language" but more importantly it does so without sacrificing stylistics (the individual modulation found in all verse) or metrical standards (defining which lines contain true deviations and which do not).

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The implication for comparative metrics is perhaps greatest of all and one sees in Zhirmunskij's work an immediate attempt to compare Russian with English and German verse and to criticize English and German

metrists in the light of his system (<u>passim</u>). It is no longer sufficient to note formal similarities such as the fact of Russian or English iambic tetrametres without taking into account how the characteristics of the native language affect their usage and explain their success or failure. Thus Lomonosov can be credited not simply for adopting a metrical system he discovered in Germany, but with discovering a fact about accent in the Russian language which made it more conducive to syllabo-accentual verse than cadential verse.

Modern studies of versification have yet to refute the Formalist imperative to be more aware of the linguistic factor; the problematic issue now lies in the application of the prosody itself and it is there the relation between different metrical concepts and use of metre in different languages is decided. Even though we can correlate many metrists because they have properly understood the subtleties of the rhythm/metre approach, we continue to find a great diversity in their approaches.³² To see the cause of this we must go back to Zhirmunskij's prosody.

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We note that the theory of prosody proposed by Zhirmunskij yields three <u>metrical</u> factors, or three interpretations of how variations in the rhythm modulate the metre of a poem - "They consist, as we know, of the <u>omission</u> of metrical stresses, the <u>hypermetrical</u> stressing of metrically weak syllables, and <u>displacement</u> of stresses."³³ The classification, indeed the existence, of each modulation depends on the empirical examination of the strength of the syllable where the modulation occurs.

This we consider to be the major innovation set forth in the work of the Formalists. Beyond this, their broader concerns with a science of language overstep the study of metre or seek to abolish its usefulness, i.e., there are only phonemes, not syllables. Within our scope only three degrees of stress are needed to judge the disposition of the metre - weak, intermediate and strong. The metrist thus can be satisfied with his native knowledge of accent; grammatical role and/or lexical accent are the mainstays of this approach.³⁴

Comparative prosody in the broad sense is more complicated, In this field the Formalists were quite right to argue that of course. "prosody...must be 'oriented' not toward phonetics, that is, the physical and physiological description of speech sounds, but toward phonemics, which examines the speech-sounds sub specie of their linguistic function that is, their capacity for differentiating word-meanings."³⁵ But this has really to do with the sort of success Jakobson had in showing the versification of different languages to be based on different linguistic potentials,³⁶ his use of "semasiological" factors in verse as a general criterion however, may be brilliant but it is perfectly irrelevant to us. It does not concern the main theoretical principle with which we are concerned: the study of an already analogous verse system (in our case the syllabo-accentual type) according to a systematic prosody, here based on the category of stress (as opposed to pitch or quantity). English and Russian metres share a linguistic basis in stress and so satisfy the comparative prerequisite.

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The crucial point, then, of the Formalist discovery of "stress in principle" is that it shows that the same metre can consist of various rhythmic possibilities. In other words, it can be shown, for example, that an omitted stress (weakening the stress of metrically strong syllables) which occurs on a weakly accented word in an anapestic line -

I am monarch of <u>all</u> I survey³⁷ (Cowper)

is logically connected but still capable of being accurately differentiated from a hypermetrical stress in the same kind of metre (here a tetrametre, however)

From the blood-bedewed vallies and mountains of France <u>See</u> the Genius of Gallic invasion advance!

(La Sainte Guillotine)

The advance over Belyj consisted not only in the positing of at least three kinds of stress instead of his two (providing only an omission criterion) but also in the deeper recognition of the metre as an abstract unity (not the logacedic jumble of all "replacement" theories).

Even later students of the Russian Formalists have failed to see the significance of the theoretical distinction, probably because it is contained in such a mixture of competing formulations within the Formalist school. Robin Kemble, for example, gives a thorough comparison

of the work of Russian metrists and their English counterparts,³⁸ but overlooks the essential distinction between the metre as an inviolate abstraction and the prosodical deduction of modulations from there on. This is all the more disturbing since his work is considered to be one of the best representations of a comparative English-Russian prosody.³⁹ Instead, he takes the prosodical factor too literally (so it is not surprising that he chooses to work from Sengeli's <u>intensa</u> theory,⁴⁰ probably the most subtle interpretation of stress which appeared at the time, and one which Zhirmunskij rejected precisely on that ground) and applies the relativity of stress to individual feet (Belyj chose the line), badly fracturing the basic metrical component:

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What counts is not how the stress of the syllable coinciding with the metrical ictus (arsis) compares with other such syllables in the line, but how it compares with the other syllable (in triple time, two syllables) in its own foot (thesis). In other words: "There is no necessity for a uniform degree of stress; it is sufficient if the arsis is (or is capable of being made) slightly heavier than the thesis." This the intensa theory enables one to do, and it is therefore not surprising to find that Zhırmunskij has no sooner raised the objection mentioned above⁴¹ than he himself invokes the theory of . the intensa to explain the stronger second syllable in the "pyrrhic" in (basically) iambic verse and the stronger first syllable in the "pyrrhic" in (basically) trochaic verse.42

However, in the passage Kemble is referring to, Zhirmunskij is considering hypermetrical stresses in relation to omitted stresses (and immediately we see the need to keep in mind the triple axis of his prosody which Kemble misses) as a prosodical refinement but he does not suggest a new metrical structure -

In both cases, however, [pyrrhic in a trochaic or an iambic line] the customary sequence of light and heavy stresses, or of light and heavy syllables, is preserved. Thus the cases of so-called "omitted stress" or "supplementary stress" are, in fact, to be considered as cases in which certain syllables' are made more or less prominent, but in no sense are they descriptions of the basic metrical pattern, of the rhythmical inertia.⁴³

On the basis of an "arsis/thesis" breakdown of a foot, almost any prosodical reading is possible, and we wonder if Kemble's respect for prosodical categories does not create too great a violation of the necessary metrical principle. He writes of cases of the inversion of stress -

> Where the first (of the two in question) establishes predominance - for whatever reason - over the second syllable, then that first syllable establishes itself in the arsis of the first foot (the thesis of which is the preceding compensatory pause [X] which the stress in the first syllable instinctively entails); the (original) second syllable thus becomes the first syllable in the thesis of an anapestic second foot, viz. X - / uu - / ... 44.

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Thus he shows that a line from <u>MacBeth</u> can be transformed from a case of inversion to one of "anisosyllabic" substitution (i.e., inserting a pause, changing the uniform time pattern between syllables). For

> His sil/ver skin/ laced with/ his gold/en blood His sil/ver skin,/% laced/ with his gol/den blood.⁴⁵

he posits

Obviously all cases of trochaic substitution can be similarly rationalized by the insertion of a pause before the trochaic foot, breaking it into two parts of two different feet. Whatever the value as a "reading" Kemble's anisosyllabism may have, it is too ad hoc The Formalists' | insight is made to to be a sound metrical theory. verge on pure rhythm again and would thereby lose its sharp delimitation of omission, displacement, and hypermetrical stresses vis à vis a The tendency to over-rate the prosodical factor metrical formalism. is not solely the enthusiasm of linguists. The real significance of the critic's work lies in his ability to make use of the three criteria in order to characterize metres, not do ingeniously away with them. This task has its own complexities to which we turn now.

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The discussion above points out one essential factor in the relation of prosody to metrics, which is simply that the former finds its theoretical role in the context of the latter. An <u>a priori</u> analysis of the relativity of stress in general is damaging to the study of metre to the extent it bursts the three main classes of "deviations". These three classes are already excellent prosodical criteria for the analysis of syllabo-accentual verse, remembering however that they are, in fact, extra-metrical criteria derived from the most significant "rhythmic" factor in the language, syllabic stress. Metrics, once it has freed itself from "replacement" theories where the concept of the foot is made to do all the descriptive work, is primarily a taxonomy of

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various rules or norms of syllabo-accentual verse (e.q., iambic, It is thus an abstract premise, not a descriptive dactylic, etc.). methodology, and short of noting such secondary metrical features as caesura, rhyme, elision, anacrusis, etc., it can be content with patterning the "strong" and "weak" positions of the particular metre in question. Prosody, on the other hand, "is precisely a descriptive method which can produce thoroughly systematic results where (1) its classifications of stress are tenable, .and (2) where the same metrical formalism is being These two conditions permit the theoretical possibility for a used. comparative prosody of Russian and English versification (and German too). Both languages have strong/weak accents which have led to similar rhythmical variations, at least since the inception of the syllaboaccentual principle in Russian when they also shared similar metres. Proof of this analytical possibility is found in the work of the Formalists themselves (notably Zhirmunskij) who were quick to make comparative studies of Russian and English (and German again) adaptations of the same metre. 46

Nabokov's attempt at an Anglo-Russian comparative prosody is thus hardly original yet he makes no reference to previous work of the sort, save for Belyj's system;⁴⁷ however, his concerns are much more in line with the Formalists' prosody than Belyj's. This is evident when we look at Zhirmunskij's comparative findings, most of which Nabokov repeats in different form.

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Binary metres are the most common in Russian and English. In the pre-Formalist scapsions where only two levels of stress were recorded, the "pyrrhic" foot covered all deviations caused by weak stress. Theoretically, then, there was no difference between a pyrrhic substitution in the third foot of this iambic line from Pushkin -

On v pervoy yunosti svoey

and a pyrrhic substitution in the third foot of a line from Charles Cotton's
The New Year

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So smiles upon <u>us the</u> first morn
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Scansions applying the pyrrhic foot to Russian and English abound in the work of metrists of both languages.⁴⁸ The Formalist discovery that the single criterion of omission of stress was insufficient to characterize any verse led Zhirmunskij to revise the meaning of pyrrhic substitution in binary verse, with implications for Russian and English. It was seen that pyrrhic deviation was a predictable phenomenon in Russian binary metre given the sharp hierachy of lexical accent in Russian polysyllabic words and given the frequency of polysyllabic words generally. Thus in the tri-syllabic "yunosti" above, there is no secondary stress, and since three syllables must necessarily take up more than one binary foot, the opportunity for omissions of stress is great. Monosyllabic words which are generally weakly stressed in Russian such as enclitics, proclitics, and other minor grammatical forms, are further inducements. This, of course, suggests nothing about metrical regularity itself, the alternation of stresses in principle is still maintained, omissions concern only the rhythmic actualization. The theoretical insight lies in using prosody to deduce that Russian binary metre will show a tendency to omit stresses. So strong, yet so simple, is this argument that it seems to have prodded Unbegaun to pick up this particular Formalist thread and define the practice of Russian binary metre completely on this basis (he uses the term "strong syllables" to refer to metrical positions not lexical accent); I quote -

- 1. Omission of stress in strong syllables if a word is spread over more than one foot and would incur more than one stress.
- Omission of stress on strong syllables when these occur in certain words, such as prepositions, conjunctions and particles which are usually unstressed.
- 3. Omission of stress on certain monosyllables and disyllables, such as adverbs and various kinds of pronoun, which are normally unstressed, but which in certain circumstances can be given stress. These circumstances are generally determined by the meaning.⁴⁹

From here he ultimately goes on to decide that the only consistent metrical positions in binary verse are the weak positions, omission being so common in the strong ones. Thus an <u>unmetrical line</u>, one with a true deviation from the metrical norm, has a lexical accent in a weak metrical position. In an abstract iambic

line the violation would appear thus --/s-/--/ : the strong syllable (s) in the second foot violates the weak position.

If omission Zhirmunskij made a comparative discovery as well. of stress was the salient factor in Russian binary metre, it was displacement of stress or hypermetrical stress in English binary metre. Taking a similar point of departure, English we see, is a much more monosyllabic language than Russian; this means that words of major importance in a line will be monosyllabic but will darry more stress than other mono-Also, English polysyllabic words contain secondary syllabic words. stresses unlike Russian ones (though more so in American pronunciation that in British). It seems then that the existence of a pyrrhic foot was a compound error in English metrics, firstly on formal grounds and secondly because it has much less probability of really occurring. Zhirmunskij says -

> The rhythmic structure of the binary metres is in English poetry much freer and more varied especially in the most frequently used metre, the fambic pentametre (drama and epic). It is true that the omission of stresses ("pyrrhics"), is not characteristic of English metres; here one should speak, as in the Germanic languages in general, not so much of omission as of weakening of the metrical stress.⁵⁰

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Zhirmunskij feels justified in giving a hypermetrical stress to weakly accented words which fall on the metrically strong positions I have indicated.

Nor serv'd it to relax their serried files His Ministers of vengence and pursuit The Sojourners of Goshen, who beheld...

(Milton)

Zhirmunskij goes on, "But especially characteristic of English iambs is the extensive use they make of <u>displacement</u> of stress." Examples of this are provided for every foot except the last -

lst foot Dewy with Nature's teardrops as they pass... (Byron)
2nd foot The eye winks at the hand, yet let that be (Shakespeare)
3rd foot Into the hall stagger'd his visage ribbed (Tennyson)
The general conclusion is that "Russian verse departs from the scheme
principally in the number of stresses (omissions), English - in their
arrangement (displacement)."⁵¹ And again, Unbegaun echoes the very
same thing in his comparison of English and Russian binary metres -

"In English, words are even shorter than in German, and long words normally have a secondary stress. It follows that the removal of stresses in English is less common than in Russian. But the abundance of monosyllables in the English vocabulary often means that significant monosyllables follow one another, each of them bearing its semantic stress. The result is that in English verse weak syllables (again, a metrical term for weak position) may receive a stress, disyllables as well as monosyllables... A comparison of the three systems shows that German binary verse stays closest to the scheme. Russian verse deviates from it by the number of stresses, and English by their distribution."52

The same propody can be used to characterize ternary metres too. But just a few choice observations are relevant owing to the fact that ternary verse has "thrived" (Nabokov) in Russia (though less

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than binary) while it has only mushroomed in the margin of the English The amphibrach hardly exists in English (Swinburne's tradition. Dolores is usually trotted out as the only pure example); in Russian it has its unique place beside anapestic and dactylic metres. The anapest and dactyl in English are either subject to erratic shifts in stress or are found in light or satiric verse forms. 53 The difference is not surprising considering the effects the poly/mono- syllabic ratios have on binary verse. If English is prone to shift the stress when it has only to maintain one-syllable long intervals of weak stress, it can hardly be expected to conform to two-syllable long intervals. Russian, on the other hand, can take advantage of the clearer stress in its polysyllabic words to mesh rather well with the abstract pattern. As a prosodic category, the omission factor has practically no role to play, obviously, in either versification. It may distinguish Russian from English binary metres, but omission is rarely possible in Russian ternary metre except possibly in the first foot. The explanation is simple, "...the threat of a hiatus of five syllables ensures the preservation of stress in ternary verse. All the same, this threat does not hang over the first foot of a dactylic line. In fact, the removal of the initial stress would produce a sequence of only three unstressed syllables, which as has been shown, is extremely frequent in binary metres."54 The regular fulfilment of the strong metrical position does, however, permit the emergence of a greater number of hypermetrical stresses in Russian.

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Thus the hypermetrical factor plays the main prosodical role in the analysis of ternary verse. However, it must be noted that unlike English which is always slightly hypermetrical (and thus this criterion serves only to distinguish it from Russian rhythms but does not have any great critical value <u>infra</u> English metres), the role of hypermetrical stress in Russian is more delicate. The strict hierarchy of stress in Russian polysyllables implies that hypermetrical stresses can occur only in monosyllabic words in binary metre, for the weakness of the monosyllabic stress precludes the word from having enough weight to make it into an actual displacement of stress. (The weak syllable of a polysyllabic word, we remember, is treated as an omission). Thus, Zhirmunskij says a hypermetrical stress in a binary line such as,

Dni pozdnej oseni branjat obyknovenno

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is possible because the first word is weaker in comparison to the dominating stress of its neighbouring polysyllabic. But something like, "<u>Radosti</u> <u>oseni</u>..." is not, for it constitutes a displacement as it begins with the unequivocal strong stress of a polysyllabic in a weak metrical position.

In ternary metres however, the regular expectation of a strong stress in the metrically strong positions permits strong accents in metrically weak positions, e.g. -

Dolgo snilis' mne vopli rydanij tvoix

Okružus' ja togda gor'koj sladost'ju roz

or,

Of these lines Zhirmunskij says, "that in ternary metres the rhythmical inertia of the stresses, regularly recurring on every third syllable, is much more strongly felt than in lambic or trochaic metres, and the metrical stress generally overshadows the supplementary stress..."⁵⁵. Thus two kinds of hypermetrical (monosyllabic in binary verse, polysyllabic in ternary verse) exist in Russian to one in English (where it simply indicates the general lack of omissions of stress as a rhythmic fact).

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The treatment of displaced stresses also seems to be slightly different in Russian than in English. Clearly, displacement is a hetrical violation and in principle it permits the differentiation of metrical lines from non-metrical ones (i.e., an unambiguously strong accent in a weak position). However, since the advent of syllaboaccentual versification with Trediakovsky, it has been a habit to treat the line as three separate parts in Russian - "(a) anacrusis, (b) metrical line which covers everything from the first stress to the last stress inclusive, (c) ending, i.e., everything from the last stress of the line onwards, again inclusive."56 These are really secondary metrical structures. Endings in Russian are easy to isolate because the potential for, and frequency of, feminine and dactylic rhymes is so high, unliké English.57 This has to do again with the more polysyllabic nature of the Russian language and the fact that it is more inflected. Openings of the line in both languages often deviate (I cite the familiar trochaic inversion again) and so they too might well be classed seaprately. In

structural terms, the Russian mode can be used to define binary and ternary "families" - Zhirmunskij simply takes iambic metre to be trochaic metre with constant one-syllable anacrušis and then proceeds to solve the Englishman's problem of the amphibrachic line with reference to Byron along the same idea.⁵⁸

This is mostly a formal exercise, but if the same structural categories are applied to displacements of stress, the tendency is to look upon them in a more hormative way. Thus Zhirmunskij classifies all displacements of stress in the first foot as insignificant - "Besides the first foot of the most diverse metres - not only Russian verse but also German, English and others - plays a special role, being to a certain degree metrically 'ambiguous': The movement of the rhythm has not yet been unequivocally laid down, since it is only from the second foot that a regular repetition of a definite movement can be said to have begun."59 By the same "syntagmatic" logic, unmetrical lines could be similarly normalized since they are exceptions which prove the stanzaic Theoretically, the matter comes down to a critical opinion and rule. does not weaken the value of the 'displacement' criterion in English or We only need be aware of this when Russian as a metrical criterion. reading Russian criticism though we need not reach the same practical conclusions.

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My survey of the Russian Formalists' contributions to prosody and their comparative finds has been rather circumspect. It was necessary to isolate the rhythm/metre approach in its clearest form from the general なんに北京にのの意思

discoveries about linguistics and its application to poetics which enveloped it. Nabokov follows very closely the approach we have described, but he does so without acknowledging his predecessors or the conclusions they first reached. However, as far as we are concerned, it is not a question of suggesting sources for Nabokov as much as seeing whether or not Nabokov improves or falls short of the major points we have reviewed, both in his methodology and in his comparison of Russian and English. At least in 1945 when Nabokov composed his poem <u>An Evening of</u> <u>Russian Poetry</u>, he seems to have thought pretty much the same things about Russian and English verse as we have noted -

"Is your prosody like ours?"

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Well, Emmy, our pentameter may seem to foreign ears as if it could not rouse the limp iambus from its pyrrhic dream; But close your eyes and listen to the line. The melody unwinds; the middle word is marvelously long and serpentine: you hear one beat, but you have also heard the shadow of another, then the third touches the gong, and then the fourth one sighs

We might subtitle this stanza "Ode on a Hypermetrical Stress"; Nabokov certainly recognizes (and clearly tries to mimic) the difference the polysyllabic "serpentine" lexicon of Russian makes to the English ear which hears only weakened (pyrrhic) iambuses instead of the sound of its own monosyllabic bouncing balls. But Nabokov the translatorscholar of the Fifties (when he first began the translation of Pushkin out of which the <u>Notes on Prosody</u> grew) is another story. ういいない

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- 1. Boris Unbegaun. Russian Versification (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956) p. 11.
- 2. The name of the Formalist group in St. Petersburg in 1916 circa and short for "Society for the Study of Poetic Language". It included people like Shlovski, Ejxenbaum, Brik.
- 3. Krystyna Pomorska. <u>Russian Formalist Theory and Its Poetic Ambiance</u>. (The Hague: Mouton, 1968) pp. 30-31.
- 4. Victor Erlich. Russian Formalism. (The Hague: Mouton, 1969) p. 38.
- 5. In his concluding chapter on "Pure Tonic Versification", Victor Zhirmunskij sketches a little history of the rejection of the strict metrical guidelines set down by Lomonosov and the experimentation that was leading to the emergence of the <u>dol'nik</u>. <u>Introduction to</u> <u>Metrics</u> trans. C.F. Brown, (The Hague: Mouton, 1966), pp. 196-208.
- 6. None of Belyj's colleagues such as Brjusov or any of the Formalists seem guilty of ideologically misreading actual linguistic elements, unlike the unfortunate Marxist critic Frice who tried to explain free verse "by references to the rhythms of the capitalist city". See Erlich op. cit. p. 145.

7. e.g., <u>op</u>. <u>cit</u>. p. 43. When scanning a passage from <u>Childe Harold</u>, Unbegaun gives one polysyllabic word secondary stress for the sake of the metre, but denies another polysyllabic secondary stress for the same reason -

> Grieving if aught inanimate e'er grieves Over the unreturning brave, -- alás!

- 8. ¹ Zhirmunskij, p. 37.
- 9. Ibid, pp. 37-48.
- 10. Erlich, p. 37.
- Zhirmunskij mentions Vostokov, Samsonov, Klassovskij, and Perevlesskij, all of whom had studied the frequency of pyrrhics before Belyj. p. 36.

12. See Ibid, pp.37-38.

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Notes

- 13. Unbegaun, pp. 18-20.
- 14. Nabokov in his Notes and Zhirmunskij, passim. Freeman in his "Primes of Metrical Style", Language and Style, I (1968), 63-101, in footnote 34.

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- Quoted in Victor Erlich, "Russian Poets in Search of a Poetics" Comparative Literature, IV (1952), p. 61.
- 16. Zhirmunskij, p. 72.
- 17. Ibid, p. 73.
- 18. One could also call the first scansion an example of pyrrhic substitution, which is another way of denying the significance of the metrical abstraction (here iambic). The predilection for inconsistencies is apparent.
- 19. In fact Belyj's Symbolist colleague Brjusov also objected to Belyj's arbitrary selection of one component on which to base his theory. See Erlich, p. 38.
- 20. Ibid, p. 216.
- 21. Boris Eichenbaum, in Russian Formalist Criticism; trans. and ed. Lee T. Lemon (University of Nebraska Press, 1965) p. 110.
- 22. See William E. Hawkins, "Slavic Formalist Theories in Literary Scholarship", <u>Word</u>, 7, No. 2 (1951). The Formalists attempted to carve out the language of literature from the "prevailing eclecticism of literary theory. Such eclecticism had lead to the study of literature by a number of different disciplines, philosophy, psychology, sociology, philology, cultural history, etc., each of which, imposing its methods on literary scholarship, had found that literature was only a reflection of its own content." pp. 177-178.
- 23. See Hawkins, loc. cit.
- 24. Jurij Tynjanov. "Rhythm as the Constructive Factor in Verse" in <u>Readings in Russian Poetics</u> trans. M. Suino, ed. Ladislav Matejka and Krystyna Pomorska (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1971) p. 135 n.

25. See Hawkins, op. cit., p. 182.

26. Erlich, p. 216.

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27. See Pomorska. op. cit. 119-122. For the "sound" principle, see p. 78.

- 28. For example, see Zhirmunskij's reply to Cudovsky where he maintains the need for a metrical scheme. op. cit., p. 63.
- 29. Osip Brik, "Contributions to the Study of Verse Language" in <u>Readings in Russian Poetics</u>, ed. Ladislav Matejka and Krystyna Pomorska, (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1971) pp. 117-125, p. 118.
- 30. Zhirmunskij, p. 34.
- I am basing my distinction on the fact that Zhirmunskij divides his 31. chapters into those on metrical topics and those on prosodical (phonemic) In fact he even calls part of the chapter on prosody "Prosody topics. and Metrics" op. cit., p. 119. It is possible Nabokov is playing on this word too, since his "prosody" is definitely more Russian than it is English, though one gets the opposite impression from his footnotes. In English, in general the two words are completely interchangeable. However, W.K. Wimsatt notes that at present in English the word "prosody" does, in fact, have a linguistic connotation as distinct from "meter" or "versification". The fact that "prosody," has been taken over by linguists may suggest how influential the work of the Russian Formalists has been in modern studies of meter, See Wimsatt's "A Note on the Terms of Versification, Verse, Meter, Prosody", Versification (New York: M.L.A., New York University Press, 1972) p. xix.
- 32. And this would include for example the work of Nabokov or Halle and Keyser, though neither gives the slightest indication of being aware of the work of the other. See Chapter III.
- 33. Zhirmunskij, p. 149.
- 34. See Zhirmunskij's classes of stress according to grammatical type pp. 99-112. Cf. Nabokov's classes in his Notes, pp. 73-74.
- 35. Erlich, p. 218.
- 36. See his influential "On Czech Verse" where he showed Russian versification to be based on stress, Greek on quantity, Serbo-Croation on pitch and so why each required different interpretations of metre, <u>loc.cit</u>. Also, in his "Comparative Slavic Metrics" he similarly defines the growth of "Macedonian" and "Bulgarian" versification as rooted in the disappearance of pitch and quantity in favour of stress, though the stress takes different lexical form in each, the former being constantly on the penult or antepenult syllable, the latter "free".

- 37. Cf. the perfectly regular anapest from the same poem -"I am lord of the fowl and the brute."
- 38. Robin Kemble, Alexander Blok (The Hague: Mouton, 1965) pp. 114-144.
- 39. See note 3 to my Introduction.
- 40. Sengeli proposed the widespread existence of secondary stresses in Russian binary and ternary metres on phonological grounds, so that even the single anapest or dactyl would have a secondary stress. See Zhirmunskij, p. 115.
- 41. See Kemble, p. 121, i.e. the insignificance of secondary stresses compared to English or German verse.
- 42. Kemble, p. 123.
- 43. Zhirmunskij, p. 119.
- 44. Kemble, p. 143.
- 45. Ibid, p.130.
- 46. Zhirmunskij, <u>passim</u>. But especially "Russian verse as compared with German and Romance", pp. 80-87.
- 47. Nabokov reveals his true, and very thorough, knowledge of modern Russian criticism in another translation which he did. In the notes to his version of Lermontov's <u>A Hero of our Time</u> (New York: Doubleday, 1958) he refers to an "admirable Russian commentator", Tomashevsky, who is one of the Russian Formalists, p. 209 n.
- 48. In Russian it exists as early as Trediakovskij (see Kemble, p. 116). In English Paul Fussell and Enid Hamer make extensive use of the foot, though Saintsbury says the pyrrhic foot is "very doubtfully found in English" in his <u>Manual of English Prosody</u> (see the glossary).

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- 49. Unbegaun, p. 35.
- * 50. Zirmunskij, p. 82.

51. Ibid, p. 85.

52. Unbegaun, pp. 43-44. I would like to point out that like Nabokov, Unbegaun does not acknowledge that these facts were first revealed by the Formalists. Unlike Nabokov, he does make mention of them in his bibliography. Troubetzkoy (Prague School actually), Zhirmunskij, Tomasevsky, Jakobson are a few of the ones cited. でいてあるという

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- 53. See Enid Hamer, The Metres of English Poetry, 5th ed. (1930; rpt. London: Methuen, 1969) pp. 259-278.
- 54. Unbegaun, p. 53.
- 55. Zhirmunskij, p. 67.
- 56. See Kemble, p. 60 n.
- 57. For a thorough discussion see the introduction of Mme. Jarintzov's book where she shows the overwhelming advantage the Russian rhymster has over his English counterpart. Russian Poets and Poems (Oxford: Blackwell, 1917).

58. See Zhirmunskij, pp. 130-132.

59. <u>Ibid</u>, p. 66.

CHAPTER III

THE ENGLISH CONTEXT

References to English prosodists in the Notes are as negligible Only two prosodists are named - Saintsbury as they are to Russian ones. and Bridges (pp. 20-21) - and only because both have touched on the question of "tilts". This is hardly surprising since even without the insjights of the Russian critics the displacement of accent onto metrically weak positions is one of the most well recognized modulations in all Nabokov is merely quibbling when he finds this an English verse. occasion to object to terms such as "recession of accent" or "equivalence" instead of his "reverse tilt" or "duplex tilt". At other moments Nabokov does not even bother to cite the writer or describe the theoretical background of English terms he finds similarly disagreeable, such as "hovering accent", "wrenched accent" (p. 20), ¹ or "quantity" and "substitution" (p. 4). In the case of the latter two, no reference is really necessary as the terms are generally used to indicate notions about metrical feet and reflect the Graeco-Roman ideas about verse which have Nabokov is hardly giving a source always been the tradition in English. (even of contempt) away when he calls such terms "traditional nonsense".

In view of the work of the Russians, Nabokov's stance as an original revisionist of prosody does have some truth when it comes to

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English studies, if none when it comes to Russian ones. This is simply because the English fixation on the classical foot system is largely irrelevant to the Russian rhythm/metre approach Nabokov has adopted. Thus he is not under an obligation to make reference to English prosodists; and it would be odd if he did, considering the fact that he does not review any Russian ones. In Russia, the rather late arrival of metrical verse and the immediate recognition of its suitability to the linguistic base of word accent perhaps enabled Russian theorists to avoid classical orthodoxies and to distinguish much sooner between the metre as a formal entity (i.e., the foot in principle) and its phonological realization. English, with its much earlier exposure to classical influence, has been . burdened with strict adherence to metrical scansion and with confusion between Latin linguistic quantities and its own linguistic accents. Omond, in his comprehensive history of English metrical theory to the early part of this century, suggests that Thomas Sheridan (1775) was the first Englishman to realize that accent was the "master key" to English prosody.² And not until Coleridge is there an intuition (still not properly understood according to Omond at his own time) that omission of accent in the ictus could be a normal part of verse.³ Otherwise, there is a great assortment of peculiar ideas about English quantitative verse or about strictly observing the number of syllables in a line in imitation of classical metres. When Omond concluded his survey he could still see no end to the English muddle:

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What then is the upshot of the whole matter? This. for certain: that we have as yet no established system of prosody. Much analytic inquiry has yielded no synthesis authoritative and generally accepted. It is a strange fact, so late in the history of our literature; Greek metrists would have viewed it with surprise. That the synthesis will come is surely past question. When it does come, I suspect it will be found less and not more complex than its many predecessors. It will not come on lines of Greek prosody. Our syllables do not directly express time, are not regarded by us primarily as measures of time; any attempt to prove that they do so in our ordinary verse must fail, and any attempt to make them do so in verse of novel pattern seems to me illjudged.4

It would be as pointless for us as it was for Nabokov to summarize errors in the history of English prosody when the whole purpose of the rhythm/metre approach is to break with the concepts of the past. Even Saintsbury, when he came to write his massive history of English prosody (1908), saw how the doctinaire nature of the debates in prosody had left most terminology devoid of sense; thus he chose to describe verse in very simple, if theoretically useless (by his own admission) words - e.g., "octosyllabic" or "decasyllabic" lines instead of the more connotative "tetrametres" or "pentametres".⁵

What is very interesting however, is the recent emergence of a new English prosody in the work of Halle and Keyser (1966)⁶. Their prosody fulfills Omond's expectation - it proposes a methodology which is simple and yet takes into account all the problems of traditional scansions; and it unequivocally posits lexical accent in and of itself as the linguistic basis of English verse. Halle and Keyser's prosody is of great relevance to Nabokov's too, for they accomplish their end of taking an essentially rhythm/metre approach to English verse.

It is possible that Halle and Keyser have been influenced in a very general way by the Russian Formalists; they begin with linguistic premises and reject scansion by feet; but one, unlike Nabokov (or Zhirmunskij) they are not attempting to be comparative and do not juxtapose Russian rhythms with English ones; and two, they go much deeper in their reworking of the concept of metre. Nabokov.or Zhirmunskij maintains feet as the component of the metrical background. Halle and Keyser, while recognizing the importance of a formal background in metrical verse, do away with feet entirely and replace them with their own metrical This formula has its own unique logic for dealing with various formula. rhythmic possibilities in a consistent way. Their "correspondence rules" which connect the abstract metrical pattern to its linguistic "actualization" are much more well defined than the matching of an lambic pattern, for example, to the actual series of word accents in a line.

Halle and Keyser have posed a most serious challenge to the community of English metrists, calling forth the resistance of Wimsatt, for instance.⁸ What is significant about this debate is that the rhythm/ metre distinction itself (i.e., the fact that Halle and Keyser define metre from the outset as an abstraction) or the attention to lexical accent, is not the point of contention. Curiously, it is their unrivalled consistency in handling all the awkward deviations, exceptions, equivalences, etc. in one theoretical swoop that makes English metrists, so used to enduring these inconsistencies as poetic licence, balk.

The publication of Nabokov's <u>Notes</u> antedates that of the Halle and Keyser theory of prosody by two years. We know the <u>Notes</u> caused hardly a stir amongst English metrists, and when it did get a response it remained mostly unintelligible (whether positively or negatively so). An understanding of the Russian theoretical background clarifies the <u>Notes</u> completely but its position in English metrical theory is now determined as much by the work of Halle and Keyser as by the English reader's ability to follow Nabokov's argument.

'On the one hand, Halle and Keyser's breakthrough gives the rhythm/metre approach a new and important legitimacy in English. Nabokov attempted to instate a similar theory into English prosody; thus he deserves to be recognized as a participant in the contemporary debates in English prosody. On the other hand, it is doubtful Nabokov would find the total elimination of the foot convincing, or that he would exchange his concept of "modulation" for Halle and Keyšer's main critical objective, which is to distinguish "metrical" (conforming to their rules) from "unmetrical" lines Nabokov is oblivious to any "meta-theoretical" issues, he of verse. goes only as far as necessary to make comparisons between Pushkin and English poets. Yet if his text is to make any real contribution to English prosody it must be seen against Halle and Keyser's theory which is the most well developed version of the rhythm/metre approach applied to English verse. Nabokov is not authorized simply by virtue of having an affinity with their work. A look at Halle and Keyser's conclusions about the structure of English verse and their concerns with particular problems provides a context for the last of the three prosodic aspects (i.e., Russian, comparative, English) of Nabokov's Notes.

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In conformity with what we know already about the rhythm/ metre approach, Halle and Keyser present their theory, as a means of overcoming the inconsistencies of the usual metrical scansions. Such scansions often lead to lines of mixed feet in English (just as logacedic scansion was common in Russian scansion before Zhirmunskij's solution). The most typical "deviations" in English are - (1) weak accent in the ictic position, or "pyrrhic" substitution; (2) abutting accents or "spondees"; (3) the inversion of the first foot in iambic lines, "trochaic" substitution; (4) the inversion of a medial foot in an iambic line, "trochaic" again; (5) extra weak syllables at the end of a line, or the dropping of the first weak syllable at the beginning of a line; adjustment in the number of syllables could also include forms of elision (synaloepha, apocopation) or diaeresis.

Halle and Keyser identify the foot as the flaw in a system which produces so many recurring irregularities. As Nabokov has said too, the foot is only an abstract entity, it does not actually account for the pattern of word accents in a line of poetry except where that pattern is totally regular. Happily much poetry is irregular, thus the foot causes more problems than it helps to solve. "The difficulty arises from the fact that the standard theory expresses allowable deviations in terms of feet. (In fact, it is only in this domain that the entity foot plays a significant role.)"9 Thus Halle and Keyser decide to abolish the foot entirely, even as the formal definition of the line, and substitute their own abstraction of weak-strong positions. 1 reproduce their rules for iambic pentametre here in its revised form. 10 By "stress" Halle and

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Keyser mean the stress of the word, not stress in the sense of ictus.

a) Abstract Metrical Pattern

(W) SWSWSWSWS(x)(x)

where each x position may only be occupied by an unstressed syllable and where elements in parentheses may be omitted.

- b) Correspondence Rules
 - A position (S or W) corresponds to either a single syllable, or a sonorant sequence incorporating at most two vowels (immediately adjoining one another, or separated by a sonorant consonant).

Definition: when a stressed syllable is located between two unstressed syllables in the same syntactic constituent within a line of verse, this syllable is called a stress maximum.

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- ii) stressed syllables occur in S positions and in all S positions
- or stressed syllables occur in S positions but not necessarily in all S positions.
- or $\int_{-\infty}^{\infty}$ stress maxima occur only in S positions, but not necessarily in all S positions.

Lines of verse in iambic pentametre which do not follow these rules are the only deviations. The simplest sorts of deviation, the dropping or adding of syllables and/or elision, are obviously solved by the abstract metrical pattern itself and rule (b)(i). For example, these lines from Chaucer, Twenty bookes clad in blak or reed (W) S W S W S W S W S A. Prol. 294

O, Salamon, wys and richest of richesse E. MCH. 2242 W S W S W S W S W S (x)

It seems to me that the question of elision or truncated or lengthened lines is not of major consequence as long as we recognize that poets, in search of ideals of syllabic conformity, expanded or contracted the pronunciation of words to fit lines, such as the diaeresis in Kyd's

And he that would not strain his con<u>science</u> Spanish Tragedy III, iii, 8 or the elision practised by Milton (to which Bridges devotes a full third of his study, demonstrating how carefully Milton measured his lines),

They summ'd their Penns, and soaring th'air sublime P.L. vii, 421

Halle and Keyser have simply given linguistic expression to elision as a means of assigning syllables to their metrical positions whether the elisions were vocalized or not in actual recitations, though they are careful not to contradict historical evidence of the prevalent speech pattern. But since not many readers who study poetry do, Halle and Keyser are really trying to break down the rigid one to one correspondence of foot unit and syllable which tends to provoke more irregularities in metrical scansion.¹¹ Nabokov, I must say, is extremely careful and open in his scansion though he continues to count positions in terms of foot divisions

In fact he mentions the need to take elision especially (or semeia). into account in scanning Milton in his example from "L'Allegro" (p. 56). Nabokov does not define elision in any way except to show a few examples of it (pp. 30-32), and obviously he does not consider it a barrier between English and Russian poetry (where it does not exist). I would agree; if one is flexible in measuring out whatever the metrical unit happens to be (and this is all Halle and Keyser intend to emphasize) there are more significant aspects of verse to consider.

If we turn to the rules in (b)(ii), we see that in the case of the more problematic deviations which usually call for the introduction of mixtures of feet Halle and Keyser argue that most of these deviations can be normalized, thereby implying that lines which truly break the metre are a rare occurrence. It is just that the previous imprecision in the description of verse has lead metrists to think (even expect) the opposite.

The first rule states that stressed syllables occur in every S position and this would simply be the most regular line in the old taxonomy, e.g.

From thence a length of burning sand appears W S W S W S W S W. S

Crabbe, "The Village"

Arbuthnot"

The things, we know, are neither rich nor rare Pope, "Epistle to W S W S S W W S

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day Gray, "Elegy" w
These lines can fit easily into any system and consequently are not of much prosodic interest.

The next case in which stressed syllables occur in S positions only but not in all S positions takes us back to the discovery of "stress in principle" of the Formalist, or Nabokov's "scuds" (or the ancient It is interesting to note two things about this pyrrhic substitution). particular case in the context of Halle and Keyser's theory. Firstly, the distinction between the abstract metrical pattern and the actuality of the syllable(s) which occupies the metrical position is so well defined from the outset that this case is more of an auxiliary feature of the theory than a basic discovery (which it was to the Russians). Secondly, the oritical importance of this case is less than in the cases involving "stress maxima" because one, it does not solve as many cases of deviation as the "stress maximum" does (in fact it concerns only "pyrrhids") and two, it is considered to be a minor stylistic feature compared to the use poets Donald Freeman, for example, has employed the make of "stress maxima". Halle-Keyser theory of prosody as a theory of poetic style, ¹² and in doing so he finds that the number and the distribution of "stress maxima" give a reliable, consistent, means of describing the work of individual poets or even periods of poetry. Another extremely interesting point is that Freeman likens his computations to the sort of work Andrei Belyj did with omitted stresses. 13 Freeman no doubt means the graphic method Belyj is credited for, not the erroneous usage he eventually made of it which confused rhythm with metre again. All this, of course, has great implications for Nabokov's prosody since he finds "scuds" to be most

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significant in English poetry (their significance in Russian poetry is undeniable), especially when computed in a Belyjian fashion. Examples of this case are familiar enough,

And leaves the world to darkness and to me Gray, "Elegy" W S W S W S W S W S

Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing Shelley, "Ode to W S W S W S W S W S W S (x) the West Wind"

I might add that the case of weak accents in metrically strong positions has been noted by metrists before in a way that suggests that they too realized it was a typical feature of English, meaning it was not considered a contravention of the metre. Bridges, for example, posits a whole category in Milton as "Variety in the Number of Stresses" and shows this variation in different positions in the line and in different combinations¹⁴, e.g.

Serv'd only to discover sights of woe	P.L.	i,	64
A Dungeion horrible, on all sides round		i,	61
Transfix us to the bottom of this Gulfe		i,	329

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Verrier, who made a phonological study of English verse (1909), also recognized the frequent occurrence of weakened ictic positions (which coincidently he called <u>les fortes</u>, as opposed to the other positions he called <u>les faibles</u>).¹⁵

Thus Nabokov is not wrong (or, for that matter, the first) However, what separates the earlier metrists to focus on this case. from the Formalists or Halle and Keyser (who use Bridges as a point of departure) is that a rhythm/metre theory relates all cases of "modulation" or "actualization" (Halle and Keyser's term) logically to each other, showing how each is part of a system that can be used to characterize metre(s) consistently; this approach does not simply itemize variations. Nabokov obviously attempts a systematic approach when he says things like "tilt's" (inversions of stress) are a sub-class of "scuds" (omissions of stress) (p. 18). And this is why he too grinds his ax on Bridges for calling a tilt a "recession of accent" which, of course, goes against the rhythm/metre distinction since accents have no fixed places to begin with, only the ictus and its counterpart do. The question that remains open however, is whether Nabokov's prosody is actually systematic in a way that accounts sufficiently for all cases of modulation in English metres, or whether the case of weakly accented ictuses in English is a good starting point.

For Halle and Keyser, as I suggested above, it is not. Their major innovation lies in the conception of the "stress maximum". This concept finds its role in the third rule of section (b)(ii) which covers all lines not covered by the first two rules. This would be all the remaining so-called "deviations", i.e. inversion of the first or a medial foot (trochees) or abutting stresses (spondees). As the rule states, for these lines to be truly unmetrical a stress maximum would have to fall

In a weak position; and since stress maxima occur only when a syllable is clearly stronger than its <u>two adjacent syllables</u> within the same syntactic constituent, abutting stresses or inversions of stress are by definition acceptable actualizations of the metre. For example, where there is an inversion of stress at the beginning of a line,

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Batter my heart, three-person'd God, for you Donne, Holy Sonnet 14 W S W S W S W S W S W S

there is no weak stress before the first stress so the first stress cannot be a stress maximum, thus it cannot constitute a violation of the metre. Similarly, within the line

The Millere was a stout carl for the nones Chaucer, A.Prol.1.545 W S W S W S W S W S (x)

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"carl" is adjacent to a stress on one side, from "stout", and again it is not a stress maximum, nor a violation of the metre.

Spondees are not violations for the same reason; abutting stresses mean that a stress maximum does not occur. This precludes spondees from ever being violations. Thus Pope's well known couplet, which is full of spondees, is a perfectly regular iambic line.

When Ajax strives some rocks vast weight to throw The line too labours, and the words move slow. An unmetrical line which does contain a stress maximum in a weak position would be,

How many bards gild the lapses of time Keats W S W S W S W S W S

"lap" is stronger than both its neighbouring syllables. Similarly,

From hence your memory <u>death</u> cannot take Shakespeare, Sonnet 83 W S W S W S W S W S S

or

With	sword	of	wit,	giv	ing	wounds	of	dis	praise	Sidney, "Astrophel and
W	S	W	S	W	ន	W	S	W	S	Stella" 10, 10

In all the examples above I have simplified Halle and Keyser's scansion so that the particular prosodic aspect in question would be presented clearly. Obviously more than one aspect at a time could be at work in a single line. In this line from Yeats' "After Long Silence" a full scansion shows reduction of one syllable, omission of a stress in two strong positions and the neutralization of abutting stresses (i.e., no violation by stress maxima), yet the line as a whole is considered perfectly metrical,

Speech after long silence: it is right (W) S W S W S W S W S S S

The main point of the theory (as of the whole rhythm/metre approach) is

that there are a number of ways of actualizing a metre all of which are compatible. This compatibility is not only fashioned in a logical way, by showing the consistency with which the differences can be handled, it proves the fallacy of calling this poetic potential "deviations" from the idealized metrical patterning of stresses, for the ideal is nothing but a formal definition of monotony. いい ちょう ちょう ちょう

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The reason Halle and Keyser believe that the first duty of any theory of prosody is to differentiate a variety of metrical lines from the odd case which is truly unmetrical (and not just a richer expression of the metre) is their belief in the reader's intuitive competence to tell good lines from bad ones in any case. Their theory gives greater range to the reader's intuition than a purely metrical description. The criterion of stress maximum may seem to permit almost any variation in the metre but in fact when a line is singled out as truly unmetrical the reader can sense the difference; a formal description of verse in terms of feet could never achieve this result in a reliable way.

Nabokov's concerns (as with most metrists) are remote from the higher philosophical issues of prosody Halle and Keyser propose. But as the most developed rhythm/metre formulation of English prosody, the Halle-Keyser theory indicates specific prosodic points which all other versions of the rhythm/metre approach must consider. Firstly, the occurrence of weaknesses in the ictic position is seen as a valid but relatively minor factor in English. Secondly, the term "spondee" may be misleading but the fact of abutting stresses in English remains and

must be taken into account. This is equally true for displacements of stress. Thus the most significant factor in English verse is the occurrence of totally distinct strong stresses (stress maxima) for only they are capable of causing real irregularity in English metre; or conversely, they project the most salient stylistic feature when they occur in positions which do not violate the metre (this is Freeman's insight).

In a sense, the work of the Russian Formalists foreshadowed these conclusions for in comparision to their own verse they quickly noted the greater flexibility and levels of stress in English. It was only to be expected that English theory would have to come to terms with this; and this would include Nabokov too, once he decided to comment on English rhythms.

These two terms are also quoted by T.S. Omond as belonging to an American metrist, Professor Gummere, from his <u>Handbook of Metres</u> (1885). See T.S. Omond, <u>The English Metrists</u> (1921, rpt. New York: Phaeton, 1968) p. 210.

- See <u>ibid</u>, pp. 80-82. Omond is referring to Sheridan's "Lectures on the Art of Reading", but here too accent is nonetheless still referred to consonantal and vowel lengths. Sheridan also supported the idea of mixed feet in a line.
- 3. Ibid, pp. 116-118. Coleridge was actually talking about writing accentual verse, based only on a count of four stresses, without specific arrangement, per line. Omond interprets this for Coleridge as the discovery that poets writing metrical verse are permitted to use a weak syllable in place of a strong one.
- I. Ibid, pp. 226-267.

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- 5. George Saintsbury expresses his complete indifference to the "accent man" or the "stress man" etc. almost immediately. See his <u>History</u> <u>of English Prosody</u>, 2nd ed. (1923; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, 1961), I, p. 11. Throughout his work, Saintsbury deliberately relegates all matters of prosodic "doctrine" to appendices and "interchapters".
- 6. This theory was first proposed in "Chaucer and the Study of Prosody". <u>College English</u>, 28 (Dec. 1966) pp. 187-219. It should be noted, that they chose Chaucer because he is the official starting point of the most prevalent English metre, the iambic pentametre; but their theory applies throughout the history of metrical poetry and their rules could be modified for trochaic and other metres as well. For instance, see Keyser's "Old English Prosody", <u>College English</u>, 30, (1969) pp. 331-356.
- 7. Jakobson is a colleague of Halle's and Halle is sufficiently acquainted with Russian linguistics to have written <u>The Sound Pattern of Russian</u>. (The Hague: Mouton, 1959). However, Halle and Keyser cite only the Danish metrist Otto Jespersen who first branded the foot an outright "fallacy" (1900).
- 8. See W.K. Wimsatt. "The Rule and the Norm: Halle and Keyser on Chaucer's Meter". College English, 31 (May 1970) pp. 774-788.

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9.7 Morris Halle and Samuel Keyser. "The Iambic Pentameter" in Versification, ed. W.K. Wimsatt (New York: M.L.A., New York University Press, 1972) p. 222.

10. <u>Ibid</u>, pp. 223-224. This is the third version since 1966; there was one other in 1971 published in the May issue of <u>College English</u> and entitled "The Study of English Prosody: An Alternative Proposal". Each version simplified the previous one.

- 11. Saintsbury for example, ends up with monosyllabic or trisyllabic feet when scanning lambic pentametres. See <u>op. cit., passim</u>.
- 12. See Donald Freeman "On the Primes of Metrical Style". Language and Style, I (Spring 1968) pp. 63-101.
- 13. Ibid, note 34. "
- 14. Robert Bridges, <u>Milton's Prosody</u> final ed. (1921; rpt. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965) p. 39.

Paul Verrier, <u>Essai sur les principes de la metrique anglaise</u>.
 (Paris: Librairie Universitaire, 1909), 1, pp. 150-152.



CHAPTER IV

CRITIQUE OF NABOKOV'S THEORY OF PROSODY.

Nabokov begins his discussion of prosody on the joint assumption that English students of prosody can benefit from the work of Russian theorists and that the verse of both languages can be treated on a comparative basis. Eugene Onegin is the convenient place for this synthesis to occur. In principle we can have no objection to Nabokov's attempt to realize his opinion in the form of an original 'We know that the poetry of each language shares the same taxonomy. basis, a hierarchy of accents and the same metres. Even the choice of metre under discussion for the most part, the `iambic tetrametre, is Pushkin has put it to impressive use in Russian, but fair game. Saintsbury considers the metre to be the oldest, and one of the richest, in English too. In fact, Nabokov selects some of Saintsbury's favourites - e.g., the Keats, the Marvell, the Morris (which Nabokov seems to choose as if in spite of Saintsbury, see p. 68) and others. All the conditions seem most favourable for Nabokov. In order to assess the Notes we shall have to disrupt this harmony somewhat and treat the three mingled aspects of the text - the Russian, the comparative, the English - each in turn.

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* Nabokov uses "accent" with reference to the word, "stress" in reference to metre. To avoid confusion I will follow his terms throughout.

Belyj is the only theorist who receives even a token of recognition from Nabokov. However it is clear that Nabokov has absorbed the methods and conclusions of Belyj's critics too. The "scud" may originate with Belyj's awareness of the role of omitted stresses in Russian verse, but Nabokov uses the scud to maintain the difference between the feet as abstract entities, each with its unique ictus in principle, and the syllables which coincide with them. This distinction was not pursued by Belyj who grew more interested in the problem of omitted stresses itself than in its relation to a single Thus, Nabokov parts company with Belyj very quickly metrical form. and partakes of the Formalist theory which followed. This is evident He calls it a "modification of Belyj's in Nabokov's own graphic method. system of notation" (p.42). ' Similar to Belyj, Nabokov's graphs enable / him to plot modulations throughout a poem, vertically and horizontally, which is a valuable descriptive technique (particularly in Russian where scuds may follow a very regular pattern, e.g., Eugene Onegin; Four, IX, Notes p. 68). Unlike Belyj, Nabokov scans modulations by scud or foot, not individual syllable. This means that each notated modulation is theoretically related to the others. The various kinds of tilts are defined as a sub-class of scuds and they are identified by the same sign. Scuds, in turn, are a sub-class of feet, i.e., those whose ictus does not receive a lexical accent. This attempt at logical consistency is more in line with the rhythm/metre approach than it is with Belyj's geometric speculations. In fact, Nabokov is probably more formal when it comes to the definition of metre than Zhirmunskij was. He advances the idea

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of stress in principle by refining it into a more integrated view of the metre as a whole; he does this to such a degree that the metrical abstraction not only permits prosodic^{*} description (i.e., separate treatment of the phonological properties in a line of verse), it contributes to the overall accuracy of his taxonomy. He accomplishes this by working in the following order.

First he redefines feet in the way we have discussed in Chapter I, i.e., he begins by assuming one and only one ictus which always exists in principle and which is accompanied by either one or two depressions. This is stated as an axiom, and we see immediately that metre has been divorced from its phonological realization or "rhythm"; an iambic foot in theory is only ictus and depression, not until practice does accent enter. As I suggested, this seems odd to the English reader at first, though from a Russian point of view Nabokov is playing with a foregone conclusion. Actually Nabokov initiates the reader in the simplest way since it is more important to accept this distinction from the outset than to question its complicated origin.

The origin of the distinction, we saw, rests upon a twofold linguistic realization; one, that irregularities were an inevitable aspect of verse for phonological reasons - that is, that languages adapt to metrical schemes in a variety of ways; and two, that this could, in fact, be the source of a better and more consistent description of metrical verse. Hence Zhirmunskij's systematic breakdown of metrics into phonological tendencies.

* For a description of prosody, as opposed to metrics, see Chapter II, footnote 31.

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Working in reverse order, Nabokov turns immediately to the cause of the rhythm/metre distinction (pp. 9-13) after having noted the theoretical conclusions (p. 8), i.e., scuds (Formalist omission of stress), and tilts (Formalist displacement of stress). The rationale for Nabokov's taxonomy is familiar phonological data - the frequency with which weak monosyllabic words (articles, prepositions, etc.) or secondary accents in polysyllabic words (even less significant in British than in American parlance) occur in ictic positions in English; similarly in Russian, where there is not even the bother of discussing the secondary accents. This accounts for all scuds, v -. Intermediate accents in English (hypermetrical stresses) are to be counted as full stresses in the metre (p. 10).

At this point Nabokov seems to improve on the Formalists' He does not pursue the phonological argument directly as analysis. Zhirmunskij did by continuing to classify modulations as further phonological tendencies against a constant metrical background (e.g., fewer omissions of stress 'in ternary metres, the tendency in English to displace the stress as opposed to omitting it, etc.). Instead, Nabokov uses the scud, which has been defined jointly as a metrical and phonological unit (as ictus and phonologically weaker syllable) as the building block for all subsequent prosodic analysis. Thus displacements of stress or "tilts" are seen not only as a phonological probability within the metre, but like scuds, as joint metrical and phonological entities. In fact, the tilt is formally derived from the scud because all tilts (i-) contain a scud (v-).

This leads to greater critical refinement because the phenomenon of displacement has been given a formal content by the metre itself without weakening the formal integrity of the metre. We can speak of tilts that are, by definition, the same but which are phonologically different, just as we can speak of metres which are abstractly the same but which are rhythmically different. Nabokov illustrates the kinds of tilts with a mock quatrain.

Deep in the night on mountain steep, split tilt strong, weak monosyllables

 Dark inaccessible and proud, short tilt strong monosyllable, weak

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 secondary accent

Guarded by dragons, castles sleep, duplex tilt disyllabic word with accent on first syllable

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Terrible stars above them crowd. *long tilt* trisyllabic word with accent on first syllable.

Thus far, Nabokov has furthered the specificity and taxonomic consistency of the rhythm/metre approach. Phonological insights are used not just to separate rhythms from a metre but to separate rhythm from rhythm more accurately. For example, Tennyson (p. 65) follows the general English tendency to displace the accent but specifically in the form of split tilts. Furthermore, the theoretical link between tilts and scuds provides equal accuracy in overall terms. Every rhythmic factor (whether tilt or scud) contributes to the general sense of modulation in a metre. The importance of this was demonstrated by Halle and Keyser. Nabokov captures this fact in his Belyjian-style graphs which plot modulations collectively so that the rhythmic complexity of the poem is evidenced.

Thus Prior (pp. 59-60) shows very little complexity even in the "most modulated passage" from "An Epitaph".

Thus far Nabokov has formalized the rhythm/metre approach much more than his predecessors. He tries to sharpen the relationship of the rhythm and the metre by focussing it into a group of combined "rhythmicq-metrical" entities which are the virtual components of verse. In Nabokov's prosody, lines are literally made up of scuds, tilts and regular feet; each of these prosodic particles contains a metrical and a linguistic component. This is certainly a genuine theoretical effort which yields a taxonomy of the best sort. . In knowing what to look for in metre (i.e., modulations) and why they exist (i.e., the phonology of the language) an attempt can be made at a complete description. The "long tilt" may be the rarest kind of tilt (which never occurs in Russian iambics, p. 25) but it obviously deserves its mention in the context of such a project.

Regardless of whether or not Nabokov says anything new about Pushkin's verse (and it is dubious that he does, except for an assortment of witticisms), he is carrying on a theoretical task that began with Belyj's own studies of Pushkin. This is the purely Russian aspect of the <u>Notes</u>. Nabokov's taxonomy gives us yet another rhythm/metre solution to prosody, and one that attempts to go one step better in accuracy and consistency. However it remains to be seen whether or not a more formal breakdown of phonological tendencies into a series of new metrical components succeeds. The background of the Russian theory, so implicit in Nabokov's work, has 「「大人」の「「大人」」

played a great role in determining his taxonomy. However the taxonomy does not reach its full development at this early stage of definition (up to p. 20), but in its application to comparative problems and English poetry. Unfortunately, at these stages it reveals the weakness of its formal sophistication.

In the very centre of the text (pp. 50-51), there is a summary of the differences between Russian and English modulations of the iambic tetrametre. The six conditions that are listed make pointed contrasts. Some of these are straightforward, such as elision which exists only in English, or feminine rhyme which is a much greater feature of Russian The major differences are defined in Nabokov's own terms but verse. they do not offer any insights that are not contained in Zhirmunskij's previous work. The monosyllabic nature of English as opposed to the more polysyllabic Russian (with its absence of secondary accents) had already led Zhirmunskij to see omission of accent more as a property of Russian metres than of English ones. Nabokov echoes this view when he says, "scudless lines predominate over scudded ones", and "sequences of scuds are never very long" in English. In Russian it is precisely the reverse situation.

Nabokov's conclusions are rather disappointing, for we now expect more accuracy from his descriptions, without which the earlier theoretical exercise would be in vain. There is some indication of greater detail in condition three, which states that English scuds are "frequently associated with weak monosyllables, [and] duplex tilts", whereas in Russian, scuds are associated with unaccented long words and duplex tilts are exceptional. This too disappoints, however. Zhirmunskij had also stated that in binary metres Russian poets avoid letting the strong accent of disyllabic or polysyllabic words fall in a metrical depression since this would constitute a displacement of stress; the less strong monosyllabic words which create only hypermetrical stresses are permitted. This accounts for the absence of the duplex tilt (involving disyllabic words) in Russian. Earlier, Nabokov said that short and split tilts are "as natural a modulation in Russian as they are in English, but occur less frequently" (p. 21). This confirms his agreement with Zhirmunskij since these tilts concern the shifting of stress by monosyllabic words.

Further consideration of the comparative facts moves us from disappointment to criticism. In Formalist terms, the most significant difference between English and Russian verse was that the former tended more often to displace the stress while the latter tended to omit the stress; this, for the same phonological reasons as above. Nabokov is obviously in accord with this comment since even in his terms English has a greater frequency of tilts than has Russian. However, his very formal refinement of each modulation leads him to call attention more to the individual species of modulation (i.e., whether `it is a duplex tilt or simply a scud, etc.) than to the generic phonological difference between a line of Russian verse and a line of English verse. Here Nabokov is simply following his approach to its logical end; the phonological element has been incorporated directly into his prosodic terminology in a most specific way. Thus he turns to the particular instance rather than

to the general phonological tendency. Comparing scuds to scuds should not be the point in the above comparison, but it is for Nabokov. The better comparison would be English tilts to Russian scuds, reflecting the phonological nature of each. In a later comparison his point of view leads to an actual confusion of English and Russian.

On pp. 78-79 Nabokov makes a direct comparison of three lines of Russian verse to three lines of English. The context of the comparison is a discussion of differences in scudding in ternary metres. Here Nabokov is arguing the theoretical applicability of his taxonomy to forms of verse other than the iambic tetrametre he has been concentrating on all along. However the conclusions he reaches on these pages put all the previous work into serious doubt and suggest a fundamental error in a prosody that unites phonological and metrical aspects into a single taxonomy.

In the first case we have these two lines juxtaposed, with the following scansions.

1) None too prosperous but not a pauper NezazhItochniy, no i ne nishchiy

「中部に見た」と見た言葉

First Nabokov calls these lines anapestic (obviously with an extrametrical syllable which is permissible after the final accent) with scuds on "but" and "<u>no</u>" as indicated (-). In Nabokov's terms this would account entirely for the prosodic nature of both lines. The two unequivocal accents in each line allow us to make out two anapests per line; the absence of a strong accent in the central portion of the line can be rationalized as a weakly accented ictus of the middle anapest, or a scud.

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Since modulations are bound to occur in ternary forms of verse as much as in $b^{(2)}$ nary forms, Nabokov seems justified in extending his method to the above cases, where indeed a series of weakly accented words occupy the middle part of two lines of verse. But does Nabokov offer the best explanation of this "rhythmic" phenomenon in ternary metres? If prosody is a matter of using terms which immediately combine metrical facts with phonological ones, which is what we know the scud to mean, then Nabokov's description works. From a formal point of view he has fitted both lines to his taxonomy. The line is thus composed of three consistent "rhythmico-metrical" units which conform to the phonology of the line. Thus we finish with (uu-(uu-(uu-))) for both Russian and English.

At this point Nabokov jovially makes a point of contradicting himself in the text and thereby exposes his own taxonomy to criticism. He says, "Incidentally, as every poet knows, 1) can also be scanned as trochaic pentametre (with a scud on '-rous' and a semiscud on both 'None' and 'not')"; or abstractly put the line becomes (-v-v-v-v-v) where (•) is the semiscud, or intermediately strong stress usually noted as a full accent by Nabokov (as he stated above).

Although this makes prosodic nonsense by changing one metre into another at a whim, it is not surprising to see Nabokov come to this conclusion. Either scansion expresses a formal consistency in that either binary or ternary foot divisions are used plus an attempt to render the phonological contrasts by scudding in the appropriate place(s). As with

the general comparison of Russian to English verse above, this equation of one metre to another from one language to another stems from attention to an individual modulation, rather than an overall phonological consideration.

In one sense Nabokov is correct to point out modulations on phonological grounds and to see them as an inherent property of verse. This is the insight of the rhythm/metre approach. It is questionable whether or not prosodic analysis is improved by casting the modulation independently in metrical and phonological terms. In the English line above, everything hangs on the syllables "ous" and "but" which are both In the case of the ternary metre "but" is weak and which adjoin. scudded and "ous" is in a metrical depression. In the case of a binary trochaic metre it is the reverse; "ous" is the scud and "but" is the metrical depression. Either possibility is valid as a modulation in the context of a general metrical pattern, but not as a formal axis which then defines the rest of the metre, depending on the metrical component of the The latter is in effect how Nabokov is using the scud modulation itself. here; and he repeats the procedure twice again.

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2) Lived opulently but not wisely Roskoshestvoval, no ne mudro

which is termed an amphibrach or "An iambic tetrametre (with two adjacent scuds in II and III^{*}, '-lent' and 'but')". This again turns the rhythmic

* The Roman numeral refers to the number of the foot.

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factor of several weakly accented syllables in a row into alternate kinds of scuds, depending on which metre is used to formally define the ictic position. Similarly,

3) Sorrowful but not submissive Gorestniy, no ne pokorniy

which is either a dactylic trimetre or a "trochaic tetrametre (with scuds also in II and III, '-ful' and 'not')".

In Russian or in English verse a series of five syllables in a row in a ternary metre is not likely to run without a strong or at least an intermediate stress even if the stress must come from a word that is weakly accented in everyday speech, e.g., "but" or secondary accents in a polysyllabic word (line 2). The point about such weak accents in verse, as the Formalists have shown, is that they are capable of being stressed more or less. It is the strong accents in language with their distinct strength which are the serious prosodic problem if they should occur in metrical depressions, i.e., the question of the displacement of stress. Nabokov refuses to admit even an intermediate strong stress in these lines and this leads him to make up either binary or ternary scuds out of the very same syllables.

There is further contradiction in his scansion in the fact that he shows himself to be fully aware of the posibility of hypermetrical stresses in line 1. This, after all, is what he is making use of when he goes from calling "None too pros-" an anapest, and "none too prosper" two trochees (the first being semiscudded). Similarly, with "not a pau-" as an anapest and "not a pauper" as two trochees. "Not" and "none" can vary in strength, thus they are hypermetrical. If Nabokov obviously recognizes this (and rightly so) why, then, does he fail to see an intermediate stress on "but", especially since the stress is of more phonological necessity in the weak centre of the line?

Zhirmunskij's analysis found the occurrence of hypermetrical stresses to be most significant in distinguishing binary from ternary In English, hypermetrical stresses were seen to, metres in Russian. always exist to some extent owing to the more monosyllabic nature of the Interestingly, Nabokov switches from binary to ternary metres language. with reference to the English lines only. Thus he is exploiting the most vulnerable phonological aspect of these lines, i.e., their hypermetrical stresses which can be fitted either to binary or ternary feet. However, once again this is to construct a system of specific cases of modulation - either several scudded binaries or one scudded ternary in each line - without giving a proper theoretical explanation of the modulations. Once we consider the prevalence of hypermetrical stresses in English verse as a phonological tendency, Nabokov's formal exercises appear pointless. It would be of more serious consequence if Nabokov had tried to equate Russian binaries and ternary metres in the same way, though his unqualified juxtaposition of the English and the Russian lines. may lead the reader to believe the same possibility exists. In Russian, with its more definite hierarchy of accents, one cannot be so playful with hypermetrical stresses.

Obviously Nabokov's scuds have no critical value when it comes to characterizing metres on a comparative basis. Curiously Nabokov began the discussion of the three sets of lines by noting that scudded feet are "comparatively rare" in ternary metres. We know that this is true of the modulation the scud is meant to represent, i.e. omitted stresses, which do occur less frequently in ternary metres in both Russian 💪 and English. However, the fact that Nabokov finds the scud to be a means of equating binary and ternary metres confirms our argument - he is clearly less interested in pursuing modulations in an overall systematic way than in drawing prosodic analysis to the individual instance, which he is nontheless capable of doing with sensitivity to the rhythm. The basis and the purpose of his attention to rhythm take on a different meaning now.

Nabokov's prosody neither contradicts nor contributes to what has been said before about comparative differences between Russian and His taxonomy attempts only to refine these English versification. differences into a comprehensive set of related prosodic elements which But if the theoretical intention is not can be consistently employed. to give a better account of modulation qua metre but rather to turn the instances of modulation into equivalent metres, what we have is a theory This does seem to be the case with of imitation or translation. Nabokov's method. The metrical components he inserts directly into the discussion of modulation at first offer more accurate description but ultimately they become an excuse for playing with substitutions which lead to the production of analogous lines of Russian and English verse. In

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starting with the point of modulation where the two metres are most likely to diverge, Nabokov finds a way of bringing them even more closely together. This may be a skillful technique for translating verse but it does not make for good prosody.

If we return to Zhirmunskij's analysis of English and Russian metres we see that binary and ternary metres are actually very unlike each other phonologically. First of all, in English or Russian, the omission criterion is thought to be useless in a discussion of ternary metres. In English, stress is hardly omitted in binary much less ternary metres. In Russian an omitted stress would constitute too much of a gap between accents. Nabokov, in a contrary manner, begins with the assumption of a scudded foot, or one with an omitted stress. This may have formal meaning in terms of the ictuses he chooses to posit but it obviously blurs the phonological reality of the lines.

Thus far Nabokov has only obscured matters, he has not seriously erred. The fact that he transforms English ternary metre into binary metre only corroborates the facts, i.e., the instability of English ternary metre, the frequency of hypermetrical stresses, the uselessness of omission of stress (or scuds) as a reliable criterion in English. His general remarks on Russian and English are not as instructive as they could be but they are all right. All in all, his comparative method shows that his refinement of the rhythm/metre approach is directed toward the specific modulation rather than the general character of the rhythm. His prosodyleads more to the mimicking of rhythms than to a systematic phonological

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breakdown. Since the scud contains a metrical and a phonological component, and since it is the pivotal term for the classification of all modulations in his taxonomy, Russian rhythms can be equated to English ones and vice versa simply by following the formal expression of the rhythm. By the formal expression, I mean that scuds in one line correspond to scuds in another, and the same with tilts. Obviously this can be done consistently and accurately because the modulation is so well defined; the achievement of this definition, we saw, was the theoretical task of Nabokov's prosody. This accomplishment I would call a translator's theory of prosody (and a rather good one) because it solves specific problems in comparing English to Russian metres.

Nabokov began his work on prosody in the context of his work on a translation but he does not suggest that he is limiting himself to translators' problems in prosody. The Notes project a full-scale methodology under the guise of a modest intention, i.e., to teach English readers a little bit about Pushkin. Since his translation of Eugene Onegin was not a verse translation this appendix on prosody is somewhat remedial and thus it stands apart from his actual translating work (which was first and foremost concerned with semantics and, in fact, was written against the whole genre of verse translation). Even so, and even if ironically, the formality of his theory serves metrical translation best. Unfortunately Nabokov wished to go further and he subjects himself to more serious criticisms in doing so. As a comprehensive prosody the formal aspect of

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his taxonomy eventually leads to a contradiction of phonological facts. The proof of this lies in his analysis of English metre. It is unsatisfactory not because it obscures the characteristics of English rhythms but because it uses formal definitions of modulation in a way that denies their phonological nature.

In his detailed rebuttal to critics of his Eugene Onegin (Encounter, February 1966) Nabokov replies to Edmund Wilson's attack on his prosody. Wilson has reintroduced "the wretched old muddle" Nabokov had cleared up because Wilson "fussily puts back the 'secondary accents' and 'spondees'" where Nabokov had shown "they do not belong". Wilson did indeed misunderstand the theoretical basis of the Notes (as I mentioned in the Introduction and the first chapter) but that was because the rhythm/ metre approach was so foreign to English readers. Wilson speaks of Shakespeare or Milton as "manipulating other kinds of feet", or calls the scud a "secondary accent" without realizing it also maintains the ictus. in principle. However, is Wilson incorrect for holding to the existence of secondary accents or abutting accents (spondees) in English verse? If Halle and Keyser show that even a rhythm/metre theory must Surely not. account for these linguistic phenomena in English then it must be Nabokov who has gone astray.

Let us take the question of spondees first. All spondees are "false spondees" according to Nabokov, but because this conclusion is not so obvious to English prosodists he spends a specific section (no. 5, pp. 27 - 30) on the matter. The difference between a true and a false spondee

comes down to a question of form, not of accent. In metrical verse where the line is divided into ictuses and depressions we can have $(\vec{v}-)$ or $(-\vec{v})$. Nabokov admits these are "not infrequent". Supposedly, abutting accents thus defined are different from abutting accents in cadential verse where the position of the accent in the line is neutral (''), or where caesuras or pauses are likely to intercede between strong stresses. Nabokov composes a few more mock metrical lines to illustrate this argument (incidentally taking a swipe at his detested dramatic realism).

"Good God!" Blanche uttered slowly: "Good 1

"Rise! Rise!" I loudly cried to her

He goes on to describe their only logical rhythm as $\int_{-\infty}^{-\omega} \int_{-\infty}^{-\omega} \int_{-\infty}^{-\omega}$

In fact it is around this area of the text that Nabokov often puts things in a confused way. For example, of "duplex reverse tilts" he says, "Metrically, the iambic foot is stronger than the trochaic word;

dictionally, the iambic word is more self-conscious, and thus stronger, than the trochaic foot" (p. 20). This probably means that as in the case of spondees, an iambic tendency always wins out in English verse; but whatever Nabokov means one wonders when words suddenly became "iambic" or "trochaic". No doubt Nabokov is merely being metaphorical with his language. However, formal analysis of rhythm is tottering towards formal prescription here.

Nabokov is right in seeing that a syntactic break, which in effect puts a pause into a metrical line, smoothes out the phonological disruption a spondee can create. Thus in

Pity, if you have a heart, pretty Nancy Brown

the syntactic break neutralizes the abutting accents. This was shown too by Halle and Keyser who noted that any truly disruptive modulation has to occur completely within the same syntactic constituent. But that does not mean that if there is no syntactic break the ictus, just because it is the ictus, will add more weight to one syllable than another. · Either an ictus is a metrical concept which defines a metrical position or, as in traditional modes of scansion, it expresses the word accents directly wherever they occur. It cannot be both. Halle and Keyser, realizing that English prosody should concern itself with the most cogent accentual problems, the language being so full of shades of accent anyway, avoid going in the same direction as Nabokov, towards inaudible distinctions. If an iambic pattern can prejudice us when it comes to spondees, why not also with scuds?

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Clearly, a formalized spondee is no solution to this modulation in English verse. Halle and Keyser's work indicates that abutting accents must be recognized as a valid modulation in English.

/ Nabokov is still striving for a consistent way of handling the modulation. He is trying to be as accurate as possible too, to the actual sound of the modulation; but at this point his formal approach His need to combine the abstract foot with the actual lexical fails. accents in a direct way leads to phonological error. Ás far as Nabokov is concerned his treatment of the spondee is the end of the matter. "Believing that he has shown that his taxonomy is perfectly capable of handling modulations which are spondees as well as modulations caused by weak accents, he feels free to concentrate on modulations which are more relevant to comparisons with Russian, such as tilts and scuds. Spondees are naturally less frequent in Russian, again because of its more polysyllabic nature.

This adds negligence to error. The question of strong accents is of greater importance to English rhythms than weak ones. Yet Nabokov's scansions of English iambic tetrametres exclude reference to spondees. Wilson calls attention to spondees in two kines Nabokov uses in illustration of scuds on p. 16

> On the <u>bald</u> street breaks the <u>blank</u> day To a <u>green Thought</u> in a green Shade

Tennyson

Marvell

and in terms of English metre these are indeed the most significant rhythmic

Nabokov ignores these modulations completely factors in the lines. (after all, they are "false"), and focuses on the eight other words as examples of pure scuds. This is virtually turning English prosody upside down. Once again we see how Nabokov elevates the specific modulation at the expense of the overall rhythmic tendency. Except that here, he cannot excuse his scansion or pretend consistency by resorting to the formality of his terms. A scudded ternary foot may be divided into one or more scudded binary feet if there is a minimum of strong accents in the line (that is merely a question of frivolity) but where there is a concentration of strong accents the taxonomy that defines a scud properly does not necessarily define a spondee as well. то 'Wilson's examples I might add all the following ones, none of which is referred to by Nabokov in his section devoted to "English modulations" (no.,9, pp. 51-69): In a perverse manner, each of these lines is notated as perfectly regular while Nabokov goes after the less significant modulations, or scuds, in each excerpt

> To ern his Cream-bowle duly set, Milton Had we but World enough, and Time Marvell

(this line surely merits at least a tilt if not a spondee, but Nabokov does not note anything here, refusing to comment on spondees "even when so top heavy as to border on the split tilt" p. 54)

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Pox on't! the last was ill enoughCottonThen - all at once the air was still, ...WordsworthBut see! where'er the hailstones drop

This, too, <u>sinks af</u> ter many a league -	Byron	
Twice holy was the Sabbath-bell,	Keats	
Calm and deep peace in this wide air	Tennyson	

In this last line the spondee is forced to give way to the split tilt at the beginning; the only time Nabokov allows for more than one modulation is when modulations include scuds. Compared to Halle and Keyser's scansions this makes out English rhythm to be terribly simplistic by suppressing most of the accentual potential of the line.

The question of the secondary accents of polysyllabic words or the intermediately strong accents of certain monosyllabic words is not μ given a satisfactory analysis either. We know these accents are less problematic than strong accents since they only produce hypermetrical Therefore they always blend into the metre more or less. stresses. Nonetheless this does not mean they do not add a great deal to the rhythm of English verse. We know, in fact, that they are one of the most typical features of our verse. These relatively weaker accents, simply because they are so flexible, can be easily manipulated by Nabokov within Obviously the word "scud" was chosen as a term by Nabokov his taxonomy. because of its connotation of lightness and delicacy. However Nabokov's classification of the modulations caused by intermediate accents in English tends more to dampen their quality than enliven it.

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In the first place, hypermetrical stresses are barred from ternary metres, for much the same reasons that spondees were kept out of binary ones, i.e., the formal conditions set down by the foot. The two depressions contained in a ternary foot suddenly make room for the occurrence of two weak accents where the single depression in a binary foot did not. Thus "Disyllabic tilts in ternaries are not associated with scuds (as they are in binaries), since, as already mentioned, they coincide with two adjacent depressions. The disyllable is practically neutralized into pyrrhic. Their occurrence is common." (p. 79). Their occurrence is equally common in binary metres owing to the nature of English, but it is hard to see why hypermetrical stresses should be pyrrhics in one case and tilts in another. Phonologically, the opposite would make more sense. The fewer dominant stresses in ternary lines give much greater opportunity for the existence of hypermetrical stresses. The formal elimination of hypermetrical stresses tends to flatten the rhythm of the line instead of describing its modulating effect. Thus this amphibrachic line from Wordsworth's "The Reverie of Poor Susan" is scanned by Nabokov as follows (p., 79)

The one only dwelling on earth that she loves

"Only" is the key word. Nabokov suggests that the stronger accent on the first syllable is completely neutralized in this line. However, in the following line from the Tennyson excerpt (p. 65), "only" is allowed

to express itself phonologically, presumably because the line is composed in binary metre. In this case "through" is the word that gets neutralized. 大学の

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And only through the faded leaf

The question of weak accents in binary metres makes up the most elaborate analysis of English metre in the Notes (pp. 54-67). Twenty excerpts of fourteen lines each, covaring major poets from Surrey to Morris, are examined for their patterns of scuds. Of course the verses are generally found to be less scudded than Russian ones. Earlier, Nabokov had mentioned that even in specific cases of scudding, an English scud differs from a Russian one. The latter is truly an omitted accent, while in English "the metrical stress of a scudded foot is not 'omitted', but merely not trodden upon by the unaccented syllable of the passing word..." (p. 13). Elsewhere, when referring to the "minor poetry" of T.S. Eliot, Nabokov creates another of his clever poetic mock-ups to show the same difference between Russian and English.

> I am thinking of T.S. Eliot's "Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service" which begins with the (apparently, jocular) line: "Polyphiloprogenitive." This, of course, can be (but never has been) duplicated in Russian; e.g., 'polupereimenovat' (which means "To rename completely" and illustrates the additional metrical feat, impossible in English, of obtaining three scuds in a row instead of the scud, semiscud, accented stress-scudded terminal of the English example).

Therefore, what is actually presented in the examples of English scuds is an imitation of Russian scuds. In calling our attention often

enough to the occurrence of weak accents in ictic positions in English iambic tetrametres, Nabokov suggests something of the rhythm of Russian tetrametres. Scansions such as these are typical.

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weak	My lady! at that word no pang	Morris		
word	The watch-fires in the distance sparkling	Byron		
ţ		<i>i</i>		
	· ,			
weak secondary	To hear such mortifying stuff	Swift		
accent "	Call Fire and Sword and Desolation	Butler		

However, this tells us very little about the character of English modulations in itself. We know from the work of Halle and Keyser and the Russian Formalists that the displacement of stress and/or hypermetrical stresses are the key modulating factors in English verse. Nabokov has chosen excerpts which are more well scudded than In the two hundred and eighty lines he scans he finds one hundred most. and twenty-three examples of scuds. If we break down the modulations we find that only twenty-three of these are unequivocal tilts, i.e., a modulation involving a displacement of stress or a hypermetrical stress in a depression. The rest of the scuds express nothing more than the frequency of relatively insignificant secondary accents or weak monosyllables in ictuses. Moreover, out of the twenty-three tilts only three are not tilts in the first foot of the iambic (one in the Prior excerpt, line 90, and two in the Shakespeare, lines 11 and 14). Thus the significance of displaced stresses is reduced further since they

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merely evidence the familiar old trochaic inversion at the head of the line, already one of the most familiar modulations in the history of English prosody.

We have already concluded that Nabokov is more concerned with the specificity of his taxonomy than with the general character of rhythm. Thus we find no cause for additional criticism of the uninstructive results of his little survey. It obviously serves to help him make an analogy between Russian and English metres by showing the application of the same prosodic elements to both. For Nabokov, the distinction between their rhythms comes down to a question of the proportions of their constituent elements, not their respective phonological tendencies. However, we do find cause once more to criticize the formal emphasis in his discussion of individual sorts of modulations which overlooks essential phonological facts.

Nabokov says his taxonomy will be applied to English in the following way -

In all diagrams, a scudless foot is designated by an O and a scudded one by an X. Semi-scuds, (such as the word "when") are treated as regular beats. Duplex tilts are italicised in the text ... Split tilts... are not italicized. False spondees ... are not marked in the diagrams, even when so top heavy as to border on the split tilt... (p. 54).

The neglect of the spondees has already been discussed. As for "semi-scuds", these refer to intermediate accents in the ictus;

the same sort of accent would be a hypermetrical stress if it occurred in a metrical depression. The fact that Nabokov decides to count them as if they were full accents suggests that he is trying to isolate only those modulations which are unambiguous. In other words he wants to show a very high degree of accuracy in his scansions. This approach is perfectly valid. These intermediate accents are indeed more likely to tend towards a full accent than a very weak one. Thus Shakespeare's

But when she saw my woeful state

is scanned as a regular iambic tetrametre. There is no problem here, just as there is no theoretical problem if the ictus should happen to contain a weaker accent either.

The difficulties only begin to emerge with the classification of the tilts, where a full or intermediate accent falls in the metrical Here the need for accuracy is much greater othan in the depression. cases of modulation which concern the ictus only. Nabokov is well aware of this. Although scuds affect the balance of the foot as a whole, this is "especially" true of tilts (p. 13); and this, in turn, is especially true of English verse. In English verse it makes all the difference whether the accent in the depression is strong enough to upset the metrical pattern or is simply a common hypermetrical stress which adds to the rhythm of the line. The need to carefully draw a distinction between the two was one of the things that led Halle and Keyser to develop the concept of the stress maxima. We remember that their theory demonstrated that violations of the metre are caused solely by the unequivocally

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strong accent of a syllable in a metrical depression (or analogously, one of their "weak positions") in comparison to its neighbouring syllables. Otherwise a strong syllable in a metrical depression is part of the modulation of the line (spondaic or trochaic if one of its neighbours is strong, or simply trochaic if it is at the beginning of the line).

The problem we have with tilts, however, stems from the formal linkage between a strong accent or an intermediate accent in the depression, and a constant companion weak accent in the ictus. Nabokov's definition of a tilt always includes the fact that it is also a variation of the scud. We know that these definitions are the logical basis of his whole taxonomy. Theoret stally, this puts hypermetrical stresses and displacements of stress on the same level in English prosody. Each is relatively stronger than the single adjoining scudded syllable which is the only standard used to Fortunately for Nabokov, his dangerously one-sided view identify them. of a displacement of stress is protected by the fact that the overall number of scuds in English is minimal (especially if one counts intermediate . accents in the ictus as full stresses, as Nabokov does). Thus the risk of defining a tilt as a modulation when in fact it may be a stress maximum in a metrical depression is minimal. Halle and Keyser's own findings corroborate this by showing the rarity of true violations in a metre. Nabokov's formal definition of tilts benefits from this phonological aspect of English metre but it makes no theoretical provision to guard against it. In principle, any tilt could fall into this trap if it were to occur between two scudded ictuses. This lends Nabokov's classification of tilts a slightly reckless character as it goes blithely off in search of more scuds.

The difference between a split tilt and a duplex tilt is a matter of style only, as both are really only "trochaic" or "spondaic" modulations in the context of Halle and Keyser's theory. Yet Nabokov, whose neglect of the general phonological tendencies in English leads , him to pursue the subtle rather than the significant, makes a great point of distinguishing them. Even the phonological content of the two is treated in a reverse manner.

Duplex tilts, which are less phonologically ambiguous because they comprise disyllablic words, are italicized, e.g.

Welcome my long-lost love, she said, Cowper

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the purpose of the italicization is no doubt to suggest the fact that these tilts are extremely rare in Russian and so reflect something particularly English. However, split tilts, which are more ambiguous because they concern adjoining monosyllabic words, are not italicized. In many cases the "X" which denotes a modulation in a line is insufficient to inform us whether we are meant to perceive a simple scud or a tilt. For example,

And, thinks to play her in the fire Surrey Ere the first Cock his Mattin rings Milton Or, at the worst, as we brush'd through Cotton Such as do build their Faith upon Butler

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Not all are ambiguous of course; I believe these "X's" clearly refer to split tilts.

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Love, on whose influence I reliedCowperThirst of revenge, he powerless willColeridgeA sun beam in a winter's dayDyerDoth follow night, who, like a friendShakespeare

Outside of his discussion of English modulations, earlier in the text, Nabokov does make an attempt to describe a kind of tilt that trespasses from modulation to metrical violation; this is the reverse tilt. This tilt consists of the unaccented ictus of one foot followed by the accented depression of the following foot. It also comes in split and duplex varieties. I quote only the English versions from the Notes (pp./26-27).

and after the whole way was mute

This is the split sort - "The" falls in the ictus, "whole" in the following depression.

In memory of him I suggest drinking

This is the duplex sort where "sug-" falls in the ictus of one foot and "-gest" in the depression of the next.

This analysis of displacement of accent is an improvement because it has chances of isolating a stress maximum in a metrically weak position. Theoretically it is no more advanced than tilts which are described in the context of a single foot, except for the fact that Nabokov states that reverse tilts are objectionable, which is a possibility. Here they are still defined on the basis of the adjoining scudded ictus, but since this ictus is outside the foot where the violation is actually to occur, the following ictus is left open to potential scudding too. In the two above cases the second ictus is accented, thus there are no stress maxima. However, at the bottom of p. 27 in a footnote, another would-be example of a reverse tilt is actually the only example of a stress maximum in a metrically weak position in the Notes. 「二十二」の「二」「二」「二」「二」「二」「二」「二」」

Therefore let us drink unto his memory.

All told, Nabokov's prosody when applied to English is best at pinpointing the weakest accents in the ictus. However these accents are neither the most important aspect of English rhythms nor a good theoretical premise for English prosody if they lead to the denial of abutting accents, hypermetrical stresses in ternary metres, or a poor theory of English's most significant rhythmic factor, the displacement of accents. Scuds are best at rendering Russian rhythms in English, especially in "full" English lines, i.e. lines which are composed of a minimum of words as is often the case in Russian verse. Some of the most well-scudded iambic tetrametres in English are

Infallible Artillery Butler Interinanimates two soules Donne Influences of a year Cotton

However, in terms of rarity, Coleridge wins out.

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Fantastic Passions! maddening brawl!

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Here we have the unscudded full line in English.

Conclusion

Nabokov's <u>Notes on Prosody</u> was intended for the English reader. Its main contribution to English prosody consists in its underlying theory. The rhythm/metre approach is still very new in English prosody. The work of Halle and Keyser provides a thorough version in English but in many ways their theory is less accessible to most prosodists than Nabokov's, although Nabokov's has been less publicized. Nabokov's prosody is a valid contribution to the extent it makes English prosodists aware of the foot as an abstract entity. His attempt to treat English metre in the most consistent fashion and to put description in terms of "modulation" rather than "replacement" or "substitution" of feet help to move English prosody in the right direction.

At a more sophisticated level, the problem with his processory is its tendency to rest on the specific instance of modulation rather than the rhythm as a whole. His modification of his Russian predecessors' theory limits the usefulness of his proceed to a very specialized method for comparing the rhythms of Russian and English metres to each other. I would call this method a "translator's" theory of proceed. We have seen how this method fails to account for several phonological aspects of English rhythm but it produces excellent results whenever Nabokov wishes to mimick a Russian modulation in English. Here are a few instances: each set of lines shows the Russian, then the metrical translation as it appears in the Notes, followed by the semantic translation

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from Nabokov's "literal" translation of Eugene Onegin.

Eight: xvi1: 3 (p. 22) Kak? iz glushi stepnih seléniy How? from the depth of prairie homesteads What? From outback steppe villages.

Seven: xvi1: 10 (p.22) Kiy na bil'yarde ot dihal... cue on the billiard did repose a cue reposed upon the billiard

Three: v: 14 (p. 26)

and after, the whole way was mute . and henceforth the whole way was silent

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etc., especially on p. 75. The scud naturally serves this mode of imitation perfectly. It gives Nabokov a vehicule for scanning Russian reliably; since Russian is so scudded, and juggling weak monosyllabic words or secondary accents into the corresponding positions in the English lines, now that these positions are very well defined.

I posle vo ves' put' molchal.

Readers who are acquainted with Nabokov's fiction know of his fondness for metaphors of shadows and mirrors. Perhaps this is a way to see his prosody too. He finds a way of mirroring the rhythm of Russian lines of verse with English ones; but in strictly English terms, the scud is only a shadow of the major rhythmic factor in English (i.e., the strong stress).

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I have not discussed the last section of the Notes (no. 13, pp. 82-95) which is on rhyme because, as Nabokov says himself, rhyme is not really "a component of metre." There are a few other things in the Notes which are not a part of metre either. They simply reflect Nabokov the writer at his wily best. It is hoped that readers of the text will notice the mock sonnet form which exemplifies every possible combination of scud in English in a sequence of fourteen lines; or that . Nabokov's mention of a revised Russian script of the future, which would join consonantal prepositions to the mother word, is illustrated by v-dushe, "in the soul"; and finally, that his comment on Pushkin translating English poems with the original "en regard" refers to the French paraphrasts who were the source of all English poetry in Russia at Pushkin's time. There is more, but as Nabokov says of rhymes, "all cannot be listed."

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