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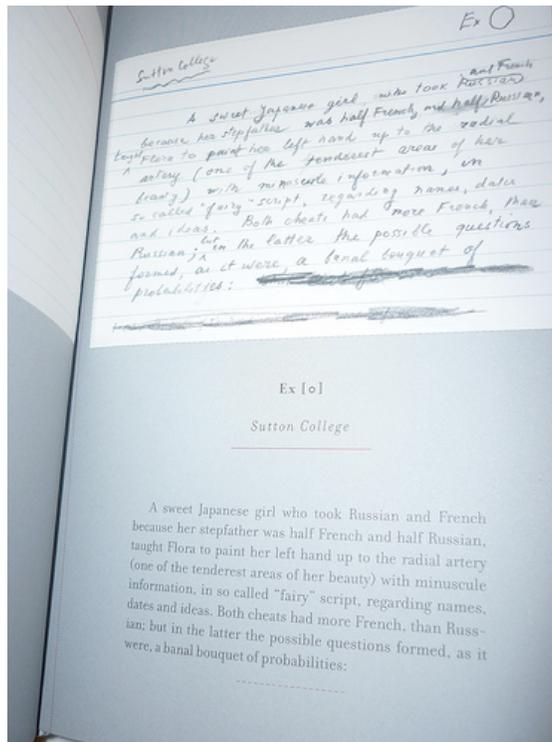
## HOW TO TEACH YOUR COMPUTER TO WRITE IN NABOKOV'S HAND

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“VladimirNabokov” is a new specially devised computer font based on the analysis of the writer’s handwriting from the facsimile edition of *The Original of Laura* (Knopf, 2009).

Check this out:

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*Vladimir Nabokov*

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The “VladimirNabokov” font can be downloaded for free, courtesy of its creator, Denis Kiearans.

The installation is quick and simple. Once the font is installed in Windows, it will be available to your Office programs.

### Installing your new *VladimirNabokov* font

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1. Close any open Windows applications, such as Microsoft Word or Microsoft Outlook.

2. In Control Panel, click on **Appearance and Themes**.

**NOTE** If you are using Control Panel Classic view or Microsoft Windows 2000, double-click **Fonts**, and then go to step 4.

3. In the task pane, under **See Also**, click on **Fonts**.

**NOTE** If a folder tree appears instead of the task pane, click on **Folders** and then under **See Also**, click on **Fonts**.

4. On the **File** menu, click on **Install New Font**.

5. In the **Drives** list, click on the drive you wish to use.

6. In the **Folders** list, double-click on the folder that contains the fonts you want to add.

7. Under **List of Fonts**, click on the font you wish to add, and then click on **OK**.
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Remember that the “VladimirNabokov” font will only work on the computer you install it on. If you share Office documents with other people or plan to use or view your document on a different computer, the new font you have installed might not be displayed on the other computer. It might be displayed in Times New Roman or the default font.

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If you are ready to install the “Vladimir Nabokov” font, go back to the previous html page and click on the *free download* button.

Continue to read the essay below.

Denis Kiearans

## CREATING THE NABOKOV FONT

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*The decision to create a font modeled off of Nabokov's handwriting was easier to imagine than to realize. The procedure was laborious and time consuming. I began by punching the perforated index cards out of "The Original of Laura" - a noisy and monotonous task that warranted several complaints at my University library.*

*After moving the operation to my bedroom, I began to acquaint myself with Nabokov's script. While my friends were enjoying a rambunctious Friday night, I was flipping through these cards in search of the truly Nabokovian upper-case "D" or lower case "g." Then, with my precious samples in tow, I tiptoed back to the library and started scanning the relevant index cards at a very high resolution. From these scans, the letters could each be digitally cut out and inserted into an exclusive digital workspace. Here, I could zoom to groups of ten or fifteen pixels in order to edit and manipulate each letter for the overall aesthetic. At this focus, the steely grey of Nabokov's pencil against the soft matte and blue lines of the cards would assume, in their*

interplay, a wide spectrum of colors and shades. I struggled to drag my cursor along this vague fissure between letter and page, while keeping an eye out for the script as a whole. When I was satisfied, I would simplify the color scheme to black and white. Sometimes, however, no single letter properly represented what I interpreted as the spirit of the script as a whole. In these cases, three or four examples would, after these edits, be "averaged" to create a hybrid.

At this point, I exported all edited letters from Photoshop as .tiff files, and then imported them into CorelDrawX4. In Corel, I took advantage of the "quick trace" feature, which helped to smooth out the edges. I then separated the character from the .tiff format and background, leaving only a vector, a single curve. After re-editing the tendencies of each curve against their originals in Laura, the relative size and slant of the font and other fonts such as Ariel, I was ready to export these curves to a true type file.

Meanwhile, my friends had given up on me - during the three months that I dedicated to this creation, I was indeed a lost cause.

One by one I began saving each curve into a "Basic Latin" true type schema. Finally! After importing all of the letters, I began to re-evaluate and re-edit my earlier choices. Sometimes the space after a letter was too great, other

*times a punctuation mark was too strangely positioned relative to the baseline, and the list goes on and on...*

*After dozens of these edits, always going back to the word processing program to write notes as if from beyond the grave – read, “Denis, keep on going, I like our style. See you soon, VN” – I began to arrive at a decent final product.*

*This project accompanied my honours thesis for a BA in Russian Studies at Dalhousie University which I completed under the guidance of Dr. Yuri Leving. I imagined the font as contributing to my thesis not just aesthetically, as an arts and crafts project, but as tangible proof, a physical affirmation of what my thesis is about: the role of the Nabokovian reader. I feel that the process of reading and interpreting Nabokov’s works involves, to a certain extent, a dialogue between the manipulating reader and the manipulative author.*

*This font embodies such a dialogue, which can be extended by you, if you wish. Feel free to re-edit this font by following the steps outlined above and, most of all, enjoy!*

Although you have certainly enjoyed reading the text in Nabokov’s handwriting, the editorial board offers to your attention the same text in standard Times New Roman version:

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After moving the operation to my bedroom, I began to acquaint myself with Nabokov's script. While my friends were enjoying a rambunctious Friday night, I was flipping through these cards in search of the truly Nabokovian upper-case “D” or lower case “q.” Then, with my precious samples in tow, I tiptoed back to the library and started scanning the relevant index cards at a very high resolution. From these scans, the letters could each be digitally cut out and inserted into an exclusive digital workspace. Here, I could zoom to groups of ten or fifteen pixels in order to edit and manipulate each letter for the overall aesthetic. At this focus, the steely grey of Nabokov's pencil against the soft matte and blue lines of the cards would assume, in their interplay, a wide spectrum of colors and shades. I struggled to drag my cursor along this vague fissure between letter and page, while keeping an eye out for the script as a whole. When I was satisfied, I would simplify the color scheme to black and white. Sometimes, however, no single letter properly represented what I interpreted as the spirit of the script as a whole. In these cases, three or four examples would, after these edits, be “averaged” to create a hybrid.

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