

A68

The Original of Laura (Dying Is Fun)

The first recorded mention of Nabokov's last, though uncompleted, novel, *The Original of Laura* was in a letter to an editor at McGraw-Hill in May 1974 in which he said he had "a new novel mapped out rather clearly for next year" (VNTAY 643). For a while he tentatively titled it *A Passing Fashion*. But by February 1976 he had changed it to *The Original of Laura*.

In letters in January, April, and October 1976 (VNSL 553, 554, 560, 562) and diary entries Nabokov reported on his progress in transferring the novel from his imagination onto index cards. To *The New York Times Book Review* in October, he wrote on what he had read during the summer of 1976 while hospitalized:

The Original of Laura, the not quite finished manuscript of a novel I had begun writing and reworking before my illness and which was completed in my mind: I must have gone through it some fifty times and in my diurnal [sic] delirium kept reading it aloud to a small dream audience in a walled garden. My audience consisted of peacocks, pigeons, my long dead parents, two cypresses, several young nurses crouching around, and a family doctor so old as to be almost invisible. Perhaps because of my stumblings and fits of coughing the story of my poor Laura had less success with my listeners than it will have, I hope, with intelligent reviewers when properly published.

Through the early months of 1977 Nabokov kept trying to finish on paper what was complete in his mind. Unfortunately, he wasn't able to do so before illness weakened him. He died on 2 July.

Nabokov had given explicit instructions to his wife that the index cards of the uncompleted novel be burned. But neither Véra, until she died fourteen years later, nor Dmitri could destroy the last work. After years of consideration, Dmitri finally, in April 2008, announced that he would offer the uncompleted work as is to the world. Two-and-a-half years later the 138 index cards were reproduced within the pages of a book and issued to the world as *The Original of Laura (Dying Is Fun)*.

Excerpts were published in *Die Zeit* (Hamburg) on 14-Aug-2008, *The Sunday Times Magazine* (London) on 11-Nov-2009, and in the December 2009 issue of *Playboy*.

Edition Summary

- A68.1** *The Original of Laura (Dying Is Fun)* FIRST EDITION (ALFRED A. KNOPF), 17-Nov-2009, 2 issues
- A68.2** *The Original of Laura (Dying Is Fun)* FIRST BRITISH EDITION (PENGUIN), 17-Nov-2009, 1 issue
- A68.3** *The Original of Laura (Dying Is Fun)* FIRST BRITISH WRAPPERS EDITION (PENGUIN), 6-Dec-2012, 1 issue
- A68.4** *The Original of Laura (Dying is Fun)* FIRST WRAPPERS EDITION (VINTAGE), 8-Jan-2013, 1 issue

Vladimir Nabokov: A Descriptive Bibliography, Revised

The Original of Laura (Dying Is Fun)

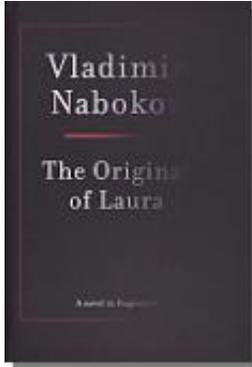
A68.1

FIRST EDITION (ALFRED A. KNOPF)

¶ First printing, variant a, 17-Nov-2009

POINTS

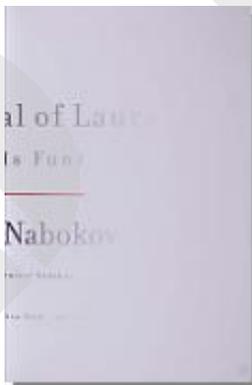
Variant a, the trade version, has perforations around the reproduced cards. Variant b, the library version, does not have the perforations.



A68.1 First printing, variant a, 2009, cover, front



A68.1 First printing, variant a, 2009, binding, front



A68.1 First printing, variant a, 2009, title page

Collation: (23.5 X 15.8 cm), [1–19]⁸, 152 leaves, pp. [i–x] xi–xix [xx] xxi [xxii–xxiv] 1–276 \versos numbered, rectos unnumbered\ 277–278 [279–280]

Title page: \across two pages\ \all elements fade, from right to left, from full color to the barely legible\ The Original of Laura | (Dying Is Fun) | \red rule\ | Vladimir Nabokov | Edited by Dmitri Nabokov | \publisher's device\ Alfred A. Knopf New York 2008 [sic]

Copyright page: \within a red ruled border\ This Is a Borzoi Book | Published by Alfred A. Knopf | Copyright © 2009 by Dmitri Nabokov | All rights reserved. Published in the United States by Alfred A. | Knopf, a division of Random House, Inc., New York, and in Canada | by Random House of Canada Limited, Toronto. | www.aaknopf.com | Knopf, Borzoi Books, and the colophon are registered trademarks | of Random House, Inc. | This work includes previously unpublished material by Vladimir | Nabokov. | Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data | Nabokov, Vladimir Vladimirovich, 1899-1977. | The original of Laura (Dying is fun) / by Vladimir Nabokov ; edited | by Dmitri Nabokov.—1st ed. | p. cm. | ISBN 978-0-307-27189-1 (alk. paper) | I. Nabokov, Dmitri. II. Title. | PS3527.A15O75 2009 | 813'.54—dc22 | 2009026357 | This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents | either are the product of the author's imagination or are used ficti- | tiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, or locales is entirely coincidental. | Manufactured in China | First Edition

Colophon: A Note on the Type | \red rule\ | \description of the type used in the book\ | BOOK DESIGN BY CHIP KIDD | Composition and preparation of art by | North Market Street Graphics | Lancaster, Pennsylvania | Printed and bound by | SNP Leefung Printers | China

Binding: Natural-colored cloth over boards with white headband. Black endpapers fading to white with “(DYING IS FUN)” in fading white. All edges trimmed. **Front cover:** \over-sized reproduction of the front of the final card\ **Back cover:** \over-sized reproduction of the front of the first card\ **Spine:** \over-sized reproduction of the top of the front of the first card showing the title and overlaid typeset text\ \running down\ VLADIMIR | NABOKOV | \running across\ \publisher's device\ | KNOPF

Covering: White dust jacket, coated inside. **Front cover:** \black background with thin red border and white type inside; all elements fade, from right to left, from full color to the barely-legible\ Vladimir | Nabokov | \thick red rule\ | The Original | of Laura | A novel in fragments. **Back cover:** \author photo by Jerry Bauer within a thin red border\ | \barcode block\ ISBN 978-0-307-27189-1. **Spine:** \black background with white type; the author, rule, and title fade, from top to bottom, from full color to the barely-legible\ \publisher's device in red\ | Knopf | Vladimir Nabokov | \red rule\ | The Original of Laura. **Front flap:** \black background fading from left to right into white, with white type\ U.S.A. \$35.00 | Canada \$42.00 | \description\ | INTRODUCTION BY DMITRI NABOKOV. **Back flap:** \black background fading from right to left into white, with white type\ \about the author\ | \publisher's note about other Nabokov books\ | With 138 color reproductions of the index cards | Jacket design by Chip Kidd | Alfred A. Knopf, Publisher, New York | www.aaknopf.com | 11/2009

Contents: [i–ii] list of books by author, [iii] portrait of author, [iv–v] title page, [vi] copyright page, [vii] reproduction of the front of the final card, [viii] fly-title on red background, [ix] table of contents, [x] author, red rule, title fading to right within red border, xi–xviii introduction, xix



A68.1 First printing, variant a, 2009, title page, facing



A68.1 First printing, variant a, 2009, copyright page

acknowledgments, [xx] reproduction of back of a card, xxi note, [xxii] solid black, [xxiii] black background with author in white, red rule, title in white fading to right, [xxiv] as [x], 1–276 text, each recto with a color photographic reproduction of the front of a card and typeset text below on gray background and each verso with a reproduction of the back of the card on gray background, each card perforated, 277–278 note about author, 279 note on type, [280] author’s initials on a red and black diagonally divided background as if the back of a playing card

ISBN/ISBN-13/SBN: 978-0-307-27189-1

Price: \$35.00

Description: The text of the novel is presented as 138 holograph index cards, one per leaf. The front of each index card is set on a gray background at the top half of the recto of the leaf. Below it is a typesetting of Nabokov’s card designation (a letter, a number, a chapter), if there is one, and the text of the card. The verso reproduces the blank or “X”ed out back of the card lined up with its recto front. Perforations outline each reproduced card.

The title page gives the incorrect publication year as 2008 instead of 2009.

Additional Works: “Introduction” by Dmitri Nabokov, “Acknowledgments”, “A Note on the Text”, “A Note About the Author”.

Works:

- 1) The Original of Laura (Dying Is Fun)

¶ First printing, variant b, 17-Nov-2009

As variant a, except

Covering: Back cover: ISBN 978-0-307-59275-0

Contents: The reproductions of the index cards are not perforated.

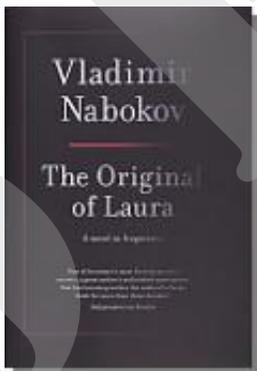
ISBN/ISBN-13/SBN: 978-0-307-59275-0

Description: This variant, without perforations around the reproduced cards, was intended for libraries.

A68.2 FIRST BRITISH EDITION (PENGUIN)

¶ First printing, 17-Nov-2009

As first edition, except



A68.2 First printing, 2009, cover, front

Title page: \across two pages\ \all elements fade, from right to left, from full color to the barely legible\ The Original of Laura | (Dying Is Fun) | \red rule\ | Vladimir Nabokov | Edited by Dmitri Nabokov | Penguin Classics | *an imprint of* | PENGUIN BOOKS

Copyright page: \within a red ruled border\ PENGUIN CLASSICS | Published by the Penguin Group | ... | First published in the United States of America by Alfred A. Knopf, a division of | Random House, Inc., New York 2009 | First published in Great Britain by Penguin Classics 2009 | 1 | Copyright (c) Dmitri Nabokov, 2009 | ... | Printed in China by SNP Leefung | ... | 978-0-141-19115-7

Binding: Spine: \over-sized reproduction of the top of the front of the first card showing the title and overlaid typeset text\ \running down\ VLADIMIR | NABOKOV | \running across\ PENGUIN \rule\ CLASSICS

Covering: White dust jacket, coated inside. **Front cover:** \black background with thin red border and white type inside; all elements fade, from right to left, from full color to the barely-legible\ Vladimir | Nabokov | \thick red rule\ | The Original | of Laura | A novel in fragments | \four-line blurb from *Independent on Sunday*\. **Back cover:** \black background, white lettering\ \quotation from cards Z2 and Z3\ | \author photo within a thin red border\ | \white barcode block with black lettering\ ISBN 978-0-141-19115-7.



A68.2 First printing, 2009, binding, front



A68.2 First printing, 2009, title page



A68.2 First printing, 2009, title page, facing



A68.2 First printing, 2009, copyright page

Spine: \black background with white type; the author, rule, and title fade, running down, from full color to the barely-legible\ Vladimir Nabokov | \red rule\ | The Original of Laura | \running across, fade from right to left, white lettering\ PENGUIN | \rule\ CLASSICS. **Front flap:** \black background fading from left to right into white, with white type\ The masterwork that was nearly destroyed, | from one of the greatest authors of | the twentieth century | \two paragraph description\ | INTRODUCTION BY DMITRI NABOKOV | U.K. £25.00. **Back flap:** \black background fading from right to left into white, with white type\ \paragraph about the author and paragraph about the editor\ | With 138 colour reproductions of | the index cards on which the novel | was originally written | Jacket design by Chip Kidd | Author photograph by Jerry Bauer

ISBN/ISBN-13/SBN: 978-0-141-19115-7

Price: £25.00

A68.3

FIRST BRITISH WRAPPERS EDITION (PENGUIN)

¶ First printing, 6-Dec-2012

Unexamined

Binding: Wrappers

ISBN/ISBN-13/SBN: 978-0-141-19116-4

Additional Works: “Introduction” by Dmitri Nabokov, “Acknowledgments”, and “A Note on the Text”

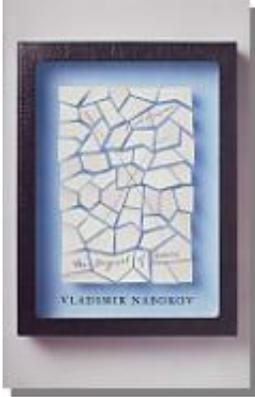
Works:

- 1) The Original of Laura (Dying Is Fun)

A68.4

FIRST WRAPPERS EDITION (VINTAGE, IMPRINT OF RANDOM HOUSE, USA)

¶ First printing, 8-Jan-2013



A68.4 First printing, 2013,
cover, front

Collation: (20.3 X 13.0 cm), 302 pages

Title page: The Original of Laura | (Dying is Fun) | \rule\ | Vladimir Nabokov | Edited by Dmitri Nabokov | Vintage International | Vintage Books | A Division of Random House, Inc. | New York

Copyright page: \publisher's device\ | FIRST VINTAGE INTERNATIONAL EDITION, JANUARY 2013 | ... | Vintage ISBN: 978-0-307-47285-4 | ... | 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Binding: White wrappers. **Front cover:** part of a specimen box filled with a gridded index card cut into many pieces, the subtitle penciled across three pieces near the top, the title penciled across four pieces near the bottom, and the author's name imprinted on the light blue background, by Cardon Webb, cover photograph by Matt Conte\.

ISBN/ISBN-13/SBN: 978-0-307-47285-4

Series and Number: Vintage International

Price: \$16.00

Additional Works: “Introduction” by Dmitri Nabokov, “Acknowledgments”, and “A Note on the Text”.

Works:

- 1) The Original of Laura (Dying Is Fun)