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Zvinyatskovsky Vladimir

доктор філологічних наук, професор кафедри прикладної філології

**RODNAYA ZEMBLA:
NABOKOV'S RUSSIAN DISCOURSE IN *PALE FIRE***

Отвяжись, я тебя умоляю!

(В. Набоков, *К России*)

Stranger always rhymes with *danger*.

(Nabokov 1982, 372)

Vladimir Nabokov's novel *Pale Fire* (Nabokov 1962) is not very popular among the scholars. The reason is very simple: it's almost impossible to read *Pale Fire* as a normal novel. An irritated normal reader must be anxious to rebuild it's composition in a normal way, and *that* is sure possible – but leaves too little for the scholars, namely – the story of a mad professor Charles Kinbote who'd stealed a manuscript of the last poem by John Shade and published it with his mad *Foreword, Commentary* and *Index*. So *that* reading of the novel is absolutely wrong.

Charles Kinbote himself, in his *Foreword*, proposes another kind of the reading of *Poem* itself (pp. 31 – 69) and *Commentary* (pp. 71 – 301): “Although those notes, in conformity with custom, come after the poem, the reader is advised to consult them first and then study the poem with their help, rereading them of course as he goes through the text” etc. (Nabokov 1962, 28). But this way of reading of course is incorrect too.

I guess a proper way of reading *Pale Fire* is to read the book from the very end, i. e. from the last but not the least – and very laconic! – article in the *Index*: “**Zembla**, a distant northern land” (Nabokov 1962, 315).

I can prove the correctness of such way of reading with help of the *Index* itself: there is no any page number in article **Zembla**! Doesn't it mean that **every** page in the book is about Zembla, which prof. Kinbote calls (with tenderness not understandable to any non-Russian speaker) *Rodnaya Zembla* (Nabokov 1962, 97)?

An interesting question is: if Zembla = Russia, so what is a difference between Prof. Kinbote and Prof. Pnin (a hero of a previous Nabokov's novel, 1957)?

John Shade's answer (sure false) is: “<...> speaking of the Head of<...> Russian Department, Prof. Pnin: “How odd that Russian intellectuals should lack all sense of humor when they have such marvelous humorists as Gogol, Dostoevski, Chekhov, Zoshchenko, and those joint authors of genius Ilf and Petrov” (Nabokov 1962, 155).

Of course there is no any difference between Prof. Kinbote (to whom John Shade addresses a previous note) and Prof. Pnin: both lack all sense of humor and **think that everybody in the world must care about their Zembla / Russia**.

The fact is that **nobody cares**, and Charles Kinbote is the only person in *Pale Fire* (novel) who's “hysterically, intensely, uncontrollably curious to know what portion exactly of the Zemblan king's adventures he (John Shade) had completed” (Nabokov 1962, 169) in *Pale Fire* (poem). In fact he had completed nothing.

Literature:

1. Nabokov Vladimir (1982). Lectures on Literature. San Diego etc.
2. Nabokov Vladimir (1962). *Pale Fire*. New York.