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Among the presuppositions of structuralist theories of literature to have come into question in recent years are textual immanence and the closure of the text. This questioning, whose epistemological and historical origins are extremely diverse, has produced an ever-expanding corpus of critical and theoretical writings that have rendered the status of the literary text problematic. At the same time, however, this "new 'new criticism' " (Lafon 12) has enabled critics and theoreticians to gain insights into previously unsuspected dimensions of texts as well as of authors that formerly appeared resistant to, or even beyond, the scope of systematic approaches to literary analysis.

The object of this paper is not to investigate these complex matters in a direct way, but rather to examine a particular aspect of literary discourse that, since the discovery in the West of Mikhail Bakhtin's "dialogism," has come to be known under the generic expression of "intertextuality." More specifically, we shall be working with Gérard Genette's notion of "transtextuality," a term defined as: "everything which puts [the text] into an obvious or secret relation with other texts" (*Palimpsestes* 7). Probably the greatest originality of Genette's contribution in relation to other innovations in this area of literary research is that transtextuality, in seeking to define the different aspects or degrees of textuality included within texts, offers a broadly based and rigorously thought-out typology of the relations that can obtain between two or more texts. Hence, intertextuality concerns the effective presence of one text within another (as in quotation, allusion, and plagiarism), while "hypertextuality" designates the various practices by means of which a given text can be either transformed or imitated by another. Further, "metatextuality" is the critical relation between texts (as in commentary), whereas "architextuality"—the most "abstract" form of transtextuality—relates to the taxonomy of texts, including both those features that have traditionally been studied by theorists of genre and problems relating to the "horizon of expectations."[1] In this study, we shall

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be concerned primarily with "paratextuality": the "undecided zone" lying between the text and that which remains external to the text (*hors-texte*) and which is revealed, firstly, through the "peritext" (titles, subtitles, chapter headings, prefaces, postscripts, etc.) and, secondly, through the "epitext" (interviews, correspondence, etc., bearing on the text but that are not actually part of it, although subsequent editions of some works may append this material, thereby transforming it into a peritext).[2]

It is notable that transtextuality, like other theories of intertextuality and theories of reception, is characterized by the importance it grants to the intervention of the reader and to other factors related to meaning that, at first sight, may appear to be marginal to the particular text in question. For this reason, it can be affirmed that a significant link exists between transtextuality and the pragmatics of literary discourse. Of particular interest in this regard is paratextuality, given the fact that this feature—more than any of the other transtextual practices enumerated by Genette—is often displayed in an explicit manner. As an illustration of the pragmatic dimension of paratextuality, we might consider a simple example based on the principles of speech-act theory. An utterance such as "I will come tomorrow" possesses the illocutionary force of a promise, even though the explicit performative verb "I promise" is not appended to it. In simplifying matters somewhat, we can consider (at least on a provisional basis) that a paratext functions in the same fashion: it serves to underscore the nature of the text to which it is attached. Hence, the peritextual sign *novel*, placed below a title such as *The Unnamable*, is an indication on the margin of the text that is comparable to a performative verb insofar as (1) the author "states" that *The Unnamable* is to be taken as a particular type of text and (2) he "shows" the reader that the object lying before him is the text in question ("*This* is a novel.").[3]

In the following pages devoted to an analysis of Nabokov's *Pale Fire* (1962), the principle of paratextuality will prove to be of fundamental importance. This work consists of a text entitled "Pale Fire," a partially fictionalized autobiographical poem reminiscent of the style of Pope and of the meandering reflections of Wordsworth, which has been written by a certain John Shade, plus—at a level of fictionality that is even more tortuous—a critical apparatus ("Foreword," "Commentary," "Index") coming from the hand of Charles Kinbote. Kinbote is a commentator-character whose status in relation to the facts contained both in the poem and in his own text proves to be highly ambiguous, for, in commenting on Shade's work, he does not hesitate to take fanciful liberties, resulting in a narrative on an imaginary kingdom called Zembla of which he—Kinbote—is king, living in exile. As one of the fundamental traits of this original and subtle work is to render the relations between text and paratext perpetually undecidable, the task of analyzing these relations therefore consists, at a minimum, in an examination of the following points:

(1) the system of narrative levels resulting from the fact that both Shade's and Kinbote's texts are printed in the same volume;

(2) the paratextual resources put into play by this system, as well as those that are activated on the pages preceding the "Foreword" through the appearance of the "Contents," epigraph, and so forth. (As will become clear in the course of the analysis, the relations between Kinbote's metatext and "Pale Fire" are so tightly wrought that the critical apparatus functions as a paratext of the poem and the poem as a paratext of the critical apparatus.);

(3) the complex ordering of the text resulting from the unusual demands made on the reader.

These questions (and many others) have been dealt with in a variety of theoretical contexts by previously published studies of *Pale Fire*. To my knowledge, however, no study has sought to examine these issues in their totality or to specify the various ways in which they are interrelated. In the present paper, my main purpose will be to identify those discursive elements which are pertinent to the points indicated above as well as to demonstrate their principal modes of interaction. The fact is that little more can be attempted in this work so thoroughly imbued with "combinational delight" (line 973) without running the risk either of accumulating an excess of detail or of resorting to abusively reductive formulations, an exercise hardly compatible with this inexhaustible text of which Mary McCarthy has quite aptly said: "Each plane of its [*Pale Fire*'s] shadow box proves to be an infinite perspective regression, for the book is a book of mirrors" (9).

In conjunction with the first question, mention must be made of Pekka Tammi's excellent narratological study of Nabokov's works, in which the various narrative levels included in *Pale Fire* have been delineated with admirable clarity (197-221). As Tammi's observations agree with my own on a number of basic issues, it will be necessary to recapitulate her analysis here. (I shall then state my reservations and introduce a certain number of modifications and additions to be made to this model.)

According to Tammi, Kinbote's discourse can be resolved into four levels and that of Shade into three. At level K_1, Kinbote writes as the editor of Shade's poem, as the individual through whom this work is communicated to the public; but it is also at this level that Kinbote intervenes as the narrating agent of the embedding discourse, since it is through this discourse that levels K_2, K_3, and K_4 are transmitted as well as level S_1, where the events relating to the poet's daily life in "New Wye, Appalachia, U.S.A." are situated. Level K_2 includes Kinbote as narrator of his own experiences in New Wye and as witness-narrator of Shade's story, but it also includes Kinbote as the narrator of the story concerning Zembla, a story whose events are inscribed within level K_3. The strategy of Kinbote as narrator (level K_2) is to prove that it is in fact he who is the protagonist of the story situated at level K_3: "Charles Xavier the Beloved," the exiled king of Zembla. In spite of the use of the third-person

pronoun to designate the king, the story whose events take place at level K_3 is intended (by Kinbote) to be an autobiography, and it is with the aim of bolstering the link between himself and the king that Kinbote communicates to Shade (at level K_2) the various details relating to Zembla. Level K_4, which consists of "artefacts" embedded in the previous level, contains details bearing on the *Historia Zemblica* which were studied by King Charles in his youth, a translation into the Zemblan language of *Timon of Athens*, and various other documents related to Zembla.

As already mentioned, level S_1 includes the events of Shade's daily life. However, likewise at this level, the poet's accidental death at the hands of Jack Grey takes place (just before the composition of the last line of the poem), after which the story line is taken over by Kinbote-as-editor (at level K_1) with the theft of Shade's manuscript. Situated at level S_2 is Shade's "Pale Fire," while level S_3, embedded within the previous level, consists of references in the poem to newspaper articles and other such artefacts. There is yet another level of this kind: the "other artefacts" contained within level K_2 (Kinbote-as-narrator), where such details as a newspaper article about Shade's death are mentioned. And finally, Tammi makes reference to an additional level, but without granting it any particular importance in the textual scheme of *Pale Fire* (even though, from a narratological perspective, all of the previously mentioned levels are subordinated to it): the level at which Botkin intervenes.[4]

The interest of Tammi's contribution stands out clearly to anyone who is familiar with the body of criticism devoted to *Pale Fire*. However, from my own point of view, at least two aspects of her model are in need of revision. The first concerns the proliferation of nine "fictive" levels (at one point, we can even read "level of reality" [199]) of which Nabokov's text is supposedly constituted. It would be more in keeping with the principles of verbal discourse to replace this vaguely conceived notion of level (be it either "fictive" or "real"[5]) with the properly narratological principle of "diegetic level." Diegetic level (a term derived from film theory) concerns "the spatio-temporal universe designated by the story" within which the series of events making up that story are situated (Genette, "Discours" 280; my translation).[6] It is, moreover, a relational concept in that it includes a phenomenon known in linguistics as the "embedding" of one clause in another. This is the case, most notably, of the so-called "frame story" technique. The relational character of the diegetic level of a given discourse can be illustrated with examples taken from quotation, such as the following: "John said, 'Yesterday, I went to the cinema.' " In this example, two spatiotemporal universes must be delineated, each of which is further divided into two spatiotemporal universes: that in which the subject of the utterance-as-object is said to have carried out a certain action and that in which the subject of the utterance-as-act states that this action has been carried out. (Note that, under this conception, the two "subjects"—one of the *énoncé* ("utterance-as-object"), the other of the *énonciation* ("utterance-

as-act")—are not identical, and this remains true even in an example such as the one above, where both subjects are designated as "I.") This distinction between subjects, which is applicable to the subordinate as well as to the main clause and which results in the interweaving of four (essentially distinct) spatiotemporal universes, can also be extended to include the third level of the example cited above, despite the fact that this level is not, in any strict sense, textually marked, but is, rather, logically entailed: the discourse within which the global utterance as we have it is embedded. If we were to suppose now that our minitext is entitled "Story," this paratextual indication would serve to supply us with information concerning the "undecided zone" lying between the text and what is external to the text (we would be left, however, with such possibly unanswerable questions as: "For whom is this text a story?"; "Why has it been so entitled?"; etc.).

In the following pages, then, we shall be examining the fundamental traits of *Pale Fire* in light of the principle of diegetic level. We shall also be introducing a number of considerations on the work's paratextual dimension. The latter aspect of this analysis is related to a passing comment by Tammi, who observes that Nabokov's text is a work in which the footnote acquires the dominant role and in which a biographical discourse is transformed into an autobiographical one (198). Although this observation is in keeping with my own understanding of the work, it nonetheless remains that Tammi fails to provide an adequate mechanism for the analysis of the division of the text into four units (each of which is constituted differently from the others) or for the syntactic and semantic fragmentation of the poem resulting from the intrusion of the "Commentary."[7]

Taking into account the first point, we note that level K_2 (Kinbote in New Wye) and level S_1 (Shade in New Wye) do not form two distinct levels (be they either "real" or "fictive"), but only one—a single diegetic level in which the principal actors are Kinbote, Shade, and Grey and within which a series of events leading from the inception of the poem to Shade's death are recounted. From this point on, Kinbote's "Foreword" (level K_1) takes up the story line even though, as a presentation of "Pale Fire," it is placed before both the poem and the "Commentary." To this temporal anticipation (or "completing prolepsis"), which the "Foreword" represents in terms of the text's chronology, must be added the fact that these pages constitute the primary narrative: that is to say, they are the embedding discourse within which the remaining utterances of the book are contained. Hence, Kinbote's "Commentary" which, on the one hand, functions as a metatext of the poem "Pale Fire" is, on the other, also a "metadiegetic" narrative in that the discourse that constitutes this "Commentary" is subordinated to the discourse of the "Foreword," with Kinbote-as-editor in effect "quoting" Kinbote-as-narrator.[8] There is yet another factor to be borne in mind, however, for in addition to being a metatext of the poem, the "Commentary" is a "footnote" that pro-

gressively takes on a life of its own, transforming the poem into a second-level metadiegetic narrative in relation to the "Foreword," while the "Commentary" continues to remain, paradoxically, a (first-level) metadiegetic narrative in relation to the poem. We can see, then, that one of the fundamental characteristics of *Pale Fire* is that each of its various discourses is invested with a dual (or even multiple) status and that, moreover, this status is characterized differently according to which of the other discourses it is set in relation. A further look at the labyrinthine character of the relations between these discourses is thus in order.

The "Foreword," which proves to be an integral part of the fiction that, in principle, it is supposed to introduce, does not come from the hand of the author (i.e., it is not Nabokov writing in his own name who introduces the work). Neither can this section of the book be attributed to Shade or to King Charles (whom Kinbote later pretends to be), but it is written, rather, by Kinbote in his capacity as editor of "Pale Fire." For this reason, the "Foreword" is a fictional *allograph*: that is, it is a text written by someone who is neither the author of the book nor present within the spatiotemporal universe of the book's fiction and who, in this particular case, is himself a fictional entity. Advancing further into the text, however, we find that the "Foreword," which ultimately merges with the "Commentary," is not only fictional and allographic, but also figural, insofar as Kinbote (identified in the "Index" as "an intimate friend of *S*, his literary advisor, editor and commentator" [242]) begins to retrace the story of his relations with Shade, thus becoming a part of the narrative world in which—in his role as editor of the poem—he does not take part.[9]

In turning now to the "Commentary," one might be tempted, in consideration of the extent of the narrative information that this section contains as well as of the reader's impression that the "main story" in *Pale Fire* is related in these pages, to conclude that the "Commentary" constitutes the primary narrative level of the book. We must remember, however, that this "Commentary" in fact remains a metadiegetic (or second-degree) narrative: that is, that it is subordinated to those parts of the "Foreword" in which Kinbote expresses himself as editor. As the subordinating discourse of the "Foreword" fades progressively out of the reader's view, the "Commentary" is transformed into a "pseudodiegetic" narrative: it appears to be located at the primary narrative level despite the fact that, within the system of the work's narrative levels, this is not the case.[10]

Another important factor to be taken into account concerning the narrative instance of the "Commentary" is the following: not only is Kinbote Shade's biographer, but he is also King Charles's. The latter role, however, is carried out on an entirely different basis from that of the former, for rather than being a witness-narrator, Kinbote now intervenes as an autobiographer writing under a pseudonym, while his strategy consists of trying to convince

the reader that, although he is writing about King Charles in the third person, it is in fact he—Kinbote—who is the King of Zembla. In the elaborate narrative edifice built up in *Pale Fire*, the story of King Charles of Zembla consequently represents a second second-level metadiegetic narrative embedded within the primary level: being situated at two removes from the discourse of Kinbote-as-editor in the "Foreword," it now becomes a counterbalance to, or refraction of, the poem.

It was observed earlier that the "Commentary" represents a metatext of the poem, while each of these texts functions as the metadiegetic narrative of the other. In examining "Pale Fire" more closely, we shall now see that the discursive status of the poem proves to obey two sets of criteria concurrently.

(1) The poem, in relation to the discourse of Kinbote-as-narrator, is a quotation much as in the case of a letter reproduced in an epistolary novel or of a dialogue reported in direct speech. (Appended to the poem is a certain amount of epitextual material, much of which is apocryphal: variants of the poem, references to a number of conversations between Kinbote and Shade, a reference to *Timon of Athens* [to which we shall return below].) In a sense, then, the relation between the "Commentary" and the poem conforms to the standard practice of the quotation of a character's discourse by the narrator.

(2) At the level of the relation between the poem and the story of King Charles, however, the situation is more complex. While each of these second-level metadiegetic narratives is to a large extent autobiographical (or at least intended as such) and thus fundamentally distinct from the other in terms of content and diegetic level, Kinbote-as-narrator nevertheless goes to great lengths to transform the "Popean" world of John Shade into the "Shakespearean" world of King Charles. Numerous indications of this transformation can be found: through a metonymic shift in meaning, for example, a reference made in the poem to "that crystal land" (line 12) becomes, in Kinbote's "Commentary," "Perhaps an allusion to Zembla, my dear country" (62); a mention by the poet of his parents (line 71) gives rise to a long digression on the parents of King Charles (83-88); and even the fact that Zembla is alluded to only once in the poem (line 937) and that this mention occurs with reference to Pope's *An Essay on Man* seems in no way to discourage Kinbote (cf. 213-14), who persists in seeing the poem as a biography of King Charles, the exiled sovereign of Zembla. As a result of this transformation, the story of King Charles reproduces the biographical instance of the "Commentary," but with a radical reversal: Shade's autobiography becomes the biography of King Charles by Shade! If, then, as suggested in the previous paragraph, the poem "Pale Fire" is a discourse that is quoted by the "Commentary," it is also true that, to the extent that the "Commentary" transforms this poem (i.e., Shade's autobiography) into a biography of King Charles, the relation between the poem and the story of King Charles falls within the scope of hypertextuality.

The hypertextual status of the story of King Charles in relation to the story of Shade can be confirmed by the use of a variety of devices in the discourse of Kinbote-as-narrator. Not only are there the metonymic shifts of meaning alluded to above of various items contained in the poem itself, but there is also the intrusion into the "Commentary" of deformed reflections of certain elements originally coming from Shade's biography. The most notable example of this feature is the anagrammatic (and actantial) transformation of Shade's real-life assassin, Jack Grey (an escapee from the Institute for the Criminal Insane come to kill Judge Goldsworth, who is Shade's neighbor and Kinbote's landlord), into Jakob Gradus, a secret agent sent to New Wye by a group of Zemblan extremists, called the "Shadows," with orders to assassinate King Charles. This example of hypertextuality (among others) leads us to conclude that the presence of Zembla in *Pale Fire* is richly illustrative of the mirror effect, of which this work is such an eminent example. For while Zembla is presented in *An Essay on Man* as a land of "vice," it is identified in the "Index" of Nabokov's work as "a distant northern land" (248) and, at a moment when Kinbote fears that he will be unmasked by his colleagues at Wordsmith College, as "a corruption not of the Russian *zemlya*, but of Semberland, a land of reflections, of 'resemblers' " (208).[11]

Up to the present point, our analysis has sought to bring out two fundamental movements in Nabokov's text. On the one hand is the paratextualization of the text through the disruptive introduction into the narrative of *Pale Fire* of certain forms—most notably the "Preface" and its discursive instances—that, in the tradition of Western narrative, have tended to be relegated to a minor, or even insignificant, status. On the other hand is the textualization of the paratext, a process through which a fiction becomes indissociable from its paratext but without this paratext losing its character as such. This double movement, a feature frequently encountered in Nabokov's works, is particularly striking in the case of *Pale Fire*, where, as Robert Alter has perceptively noted, the appearance (in line 137 of Shade's poem) of the word "lemniscate," a term designating a continuous curve in the shape of the number 8, can be taken to represent an "ideogram" of the entire work: "it neatly diagrams the circular reflective relation of Commentary to Poem and Poem to Commentary" (189).

In order to complete our analysis of the relations between text and paratext in *Pale Fire*, we must turn now to certain aspects of paratextuality that are directly incorporated neither into the narrative itself nor into the "Foreword" but that, as we shall see, cannot be dissociated from the work in its entirety: the author's name, the title, the dedication, the epigraph, the contents and the section headings. In this connection, however, it is necessary first of all to look at Botkin, the character from whose name the anagram "Kinbote" is drawn.

There is in *Pale Fire* no character named Botkin, unless it be "Prof. Botkin," one of Kinbote's colleagues at Wordsmith College. This individual is mentioned once in the "Commentary" (125), and one entry is devoted to him in the "Index" (240); but in no case can it be determined that he participates in the events or in the discourses contained in the work.[12] The most substantial indication of his status in relation to Kinbote is to be found in the following passage, taken from a conversation at the Wordsmith College Faculty Club:

> Professor Pardon now spoke to me: "I was under the impression that you were born in Russia, and that your name was a kind of anagram of Botkin or Botkine?"
> Kinbote: "You are confusing me with some refugee from Nova Zembla" [sarcastically stressing the 'Nova'].
> "Didn't you tell me, Charles, that *kinbote* means regicide in your language?" asked my dear Shade.
> "Yes, a king's destroyer," I said (longing to explain that a king who sinks his identity in the mirror of exile is in a sense just that). (210)

An examination of this dialogue as reported by Kinbote reveals that there are in fact four levels of affirmation and denial:

(1) Kinbote-as-character addresses the other characters present in this scene with the aim of denying any identity between himself and Botkin, although he does not deny the possible anagrammatic link between the two names (the stress laid on "Nova" is significant in this regard);

(2) Kinbote-as-character affirms, by no means without irony, that he is "a king's destroyer," thereby suggesting (to those of his listeners who are capable of decrypting his statement) both that he is wearing the mask of King Charles and that his role consists of covering up the King's traces;

(3) Kinbote-as-narrator is affirming indirectly to the extradiegetic narratee that it is in fact he who is King Charles, protagonist of the second-level metadiegetic narrative of which he is the (third-person) narrator (the transgression of boundaries between diegetic levels that this statement implies explains the use of square brackets);

(4) Kinbote-King Charles, a syncretic product of the fusion of the pseudodiegetic "Commentary" and the second-level metadiegetic narrative concerning the King, states (in conjunction with paragraph 3) that a king who hides in exile ("who sinks his identity in the mirror of exile") destroys himself.

The argument of this passage leads us to observe that Kinbote's identity, which is also plunged into a mirror (the mirror of narrative artifices) is dispelled as a result of its anagrammatic association with Botkin. Such a conclusion is no doubt disconcerting, especially when seen from a mimetic point of view, but one that is nevertheless compatible with the overall scheme of *Pale Fire*, growing out of the intricacy of its system of narrative levels, its numerous anagrams, its "mirror words," its "word golf," its imaginary language (Zemblan), and so forth.[13]

There is yet a second conclusion to be drawn from the passage examined above, one that has direct bearing on the work's paratextual dimension. If Kinbote is an anagram for Botkin, then it follows that the characters and events referred to in the "Foreword," in the "Commentary," and in the "Index" to *Pale Fire*—all under Kinbote's signature—are in fact figural apocrypha: under the name of Kinbote, the paranoid Botkin (an American professor of Russian origin, who teaches at Wordsmith College) edits and comments on the poem "Pale Fire," at the same time transforming himself into the witness-narrator biographer of the poem's author and, in a further projection, into a character of yet another level of fiction: the exiled King Charles, pursued by Gradus. (Note that it is, then, Botkin who, along with Grey and Shade, comes closest to "reality," Kinbote being in the final analysis a fabrication of Botkin.) Given the anagrammatic link between Botkin and Kinbote, however, Botkin's figural apocrypha must be doubly qualified as:

(1) pseudofigural (Botkin is acting and writing under a false name); and

(2) crypto-"authorial" (although a limited number of textual signs do permit us to postulate the apparently unobtrusive presence of Botkin behind Kinbote's discourse, the authentic authorial scriptor can be none other than Vladimir Nabokov, so that Botkin's discourse must be qualified as "authorial").

Taken together, these various observations on the role of Botkin in *Pale Fire* point to the conclusion (as yet largely unexplored in Nabokov criticism) that the author of "Pale Fire" is Shade, whereas it is Botkin who, behind Kinbote's mask, writes the "Foreword," the "Commentary," and the "Index."[14] Consequently, the discursive mechanisms in *Pale Fire* are based not only on the dialectic between the poem and its paratext, but they are also the result of the game of masks within the paratext itself.

Let us now step back progressively from the "text" of *Pale Fire* in order to determine the functions of the "Contents," of the epigraph, of the dedication, of the title, and of the author's name. The two basic questions to be answered for each of these elements of the paratext are the following:

(1) By whom is the utterance addressed?

(2) What are the consequences of each of these elements for the succeeding pages?

The page on which the "Contents" is printed lies between the text of the work (i.e., the poem plus its critical apparatus) and what lies outside the text. If the immediate function of the "Contents" leaves little room for doubt (to designate the four parts of the critical edition of the poem "Pale Fire"), the identity of its addresser remains somewhat enigmatic. This is due not only to the anagrammatic link between Kinbote and Botkin, but also to the quasi-homonymic resemblance between the first syllables of the names *Botkin* and *Boswell*. James Boswell, friend and biographer of Samuel Johnson, is the author of the passage from the *Life of Samuel Johnson* that is quoted in the epigraph

of *Pale Fire* two pages before the "Contents."[15] The importance of this easily overlooked passage for the overall scheme of the work exceeds what its brief length might imply, for it announces, in an abbreviated and simplified form, the principal relations (examined above) among the work's various narrative levels:

(1) the narrative instance of a biography related by a witness-narrator (both Boswell and Botkin-Kinbote are present as characters in the biographies of which they are the narrators);

(2) the narrative instance of a metadiegetic narrative in which the protagonist becomes an intradiegetic narrator (Johnson narrating the deplorable state into which a young man from a good family has fallen; Kinbote narrating the flight of King Charles).

No less significant than the pattern of relations established by the epigraph at the level of the work's narrative instance is the striking parallel between the events related in this passage and those that take place at New Wye, making up the work's most visible story line. Whereas Johnson tells of a young man who runs about town shooting cats, saying that his own cat shall not be shot, Kinbote in effect tells about how Shade, killed by a pistol shot, dies in place of Judge Goldsworth, Grey's true target, or (from another point of view) in place of King Charles alias Kinbote, target of the Zemblan assassin Gradus.[16]

Another important feature of the epigraph is that, having been taken from the biography of Johnson and being consequently allographic (Boswell is neither the author of *Pale Fire* nor a character in it), it is quoted. The problem is to know by whom the passage is quoted: by Kinbote, by Botkin, or by Nabokov? On the basis of a number of references to Johnson in the "Commentary" (125 and 209), one might infer, for example, that Kinbote (or possibly Botkin) is quoting. It could also be argued that it is Nabokov who quotes the passage in order to give some indication as to the meaning of the title of the book. Other arguments, both for and against each of these candidates, could also be advanced, but in the end it seems that the identity of whoever quotes the Boswell passage can only remain indeterminate and significantly so. However, what is certain is that, as a result of being quoted, the passage acquires a new function: as the epigraph to *Pale Fire*, it gives a number of indications concerning the following work, thereby serving as an allographic preface. This statement is confirmed once we recall that the "Foreword" written by Kinbote is not, properly speaking, either a preface or an introduction, inasmuch as it merges with the "Commentary" and is thus ultimately indissociable from the fictional world of *Pale Fire* itself. All in all, then, the parallels and the relations between the epigraph and the work's critical apparatus (including narrative levels and content, the uncertain identity of the various narrators and speakers, and the preface-like function filled by the epigraph) render this short extract one of the work's key hypotexts and leads to its occupying a curiously eminent position in the crossroads between the text and what lies outside the text.

In moving yet further away from the "text" of the work (two pages before the epigraph), we read the dedication: "*To Véra.*" Véra is the name of Nabokov's wife, but as this person has no identifiable role in the fiction of *Pale Fire*, the name "Véra" is the most "real" detail to be found in the entire book, more "real," strangely enough, than the name "Vladimir Nabokov," the peritextual element that is farthest removed from the "text" of the work and that serves only to designate the author of the book (and not a person in the full sense of the word).

It is interesting to note that the most clearly authorial trace in the entire work, the sign most closely associated with the name of the author, is the book's title. The title of the poem ("Pale Fire") is taken by Shade from *Timon of Athens*, although the bibliographical reference is not given (line 962). Kinbote, who has before his eyes not the original of Shakespeare's play, but only a retranslation of it from the apparently already deformed translation into Zemblan, is unable to identify the source of the expression "pale fire" (even though he is aware that it comes from Shakespeare) (223-24).[17] It is thus left to the reader to make this connection and, more importantly, to determine the significance of the poem's title for the thematic and the structural dimensions of Kinbote's discourse. More generally speaking, Kinbote's imperfect understanding of the expression "pale fire" reveals his particular fashion of (mis)perceiving the relations between his own discourse and that of Shade, another example of this being his denunciation of the word *lemniscate* in Shade's poem ("I . . . suspect that Shade's phrase has no real meaning" [110]), which is in contradiction with the fact that (as observed above) this expression conveniently serves as an ideogram to summarize the relations between the poem and its critical apparatus. It thus appears quite unlikely that the title *Pale Fire* comes from the hand of Kinbote (or even from that of Botkin, given the paucity of textual evidence relating to this figure). The only remaining candidate is Nabokov who, through the gesture of entitling this book of mirrors, supplies the only sign of an intervention by an author in the book, and this choice of title reveals, more than anything else, the presence of an authorial voice.[18]

It can be seen, then, that the title of this work occupies a position in the paratext that is comparable in certain regards to that of the epigraph. The epigraph, taken from Boswell, with its internal links to the critical apparatus provided by Kinbote, throws light on the title, which in turn evokes the world of Shakespeare; as for the title *Pale Fire*, derived indirectly from *Timon of Athens*, it is more closely linked to the poem by Shade although, paradoxically, it is in Kinbote's "Commentary" that the Shakespearean vision is elaborated. It consequently appears that the import of the book's title is fourfold:

(1) the title identifies the work's Shakespearean epitext (*Timon of Athens*);

(2) it evokes the Shakespearean world growing out of Kinbote's discourse;

(3) through its virtual coincidence with the title of Shade's poem, it confirms once again the complexly interwoven relations that bind the poem to its paratext, suggesting that the poem is the book's principal *mise en abyme*;

(4) it stresses the various links between Kinbote and Shade, most notably the idea that the "Commentary" represents a "pale fire" of the poem and vice versa, but also the fact Shade's manuscript has been stolen by Kinbote (cf. the lines from *Timon of Athens* which go: "The sun's a thief, . . . the moon's an arrant thief").[19]

It can thus be observed that, much as in the case of the poem and its critical apparatus, the title and the epigraph of Nabokov's work complete each other, while at the same time they occupy contradictory positions, positions which underscore the "combinational delight" of a work whose complexity has achieved an unusual degree of subtlety.

This perusal of *Pale Fire*, going backward from the text of the work in a return to the name of its author, cannot but lead us to a questioning of the status of the spatiality of Nabokov's book as an object. Such a questioning becomes all the more compelling once we take into account the work's ordering of the text, which runs counter to the principles of textual linearity as they conventionally appear in works of literature. By examining *Pale Fire*'s paratextual elements in the reverse order of their appearance, we have sought to emphasize their importance in the process of the paratextualization of the work, which proves to be one of its fundamental features: the "natural" order—that followed by the casual reader of most books—can only serve to obscure the functioning of these elements such as they enter into the dialectical play between the poem and its critical apparatus. The system of narrative levels resulting from the contact between the text and its paratext (the analysis of which already occupies a number of pages in this essay) is rendered considerably more complex by the violence done to the linearity of the text resulting from the unusual demands made on the reader relative to the ordering of the text. As noted earlier, the longest part of the work (i.e., the "Commentary") represents a sort of overinflated footnote: by granting such prominence to a discourse that normally remains marginal in a critical edition, the principle of the linearity of the text (not to speak of the notion of textual coherence) is noticeably weakened. The problem of deciding what order to adopt in reading the four parts of the book further contributes to an undermining of the linearity, which is so often taken for granted in written texts especially since, in this case, the linear order for the entire text is the least natural and, no doubt, the least frequently opted for by actual readers.[20] In the absence of empirical data on the practices of readers of *Pale Fire* and in order to keep within manageable limits the incalculable number of possible orders of reading, we shall adopt the suggestion advanced by Kinbote at the end of the "Foreword" (25).

(1) The reader is advised, firstly, to read the "notes, arranged in a running order." The effect of this operation is to invert the position of the "Commen-

tary" in relation to that of the poem as these two parts actually appear in the book, transforming the "Commentary" (or, more precisely, those parts of the poem that are not directly dependent on the poem for their sense) into the continuation of the "Foreword." With this reading, the "Foreword" and the "Commentary" come to represent the core of the work, reducing the poem to an allographic epitext annexed to Kinbote's narrative as a kind of epigraph.

(2) The reader is thereupon directed to study the poem while at the same time rereading the "Commentary." As an example of the juxtaposition of the two texts as well as of the embedding of their narrative levels that this suggested order entails, let us suppose (to take but one of many possible examples) that the reader, in coming across the phrase "that crystal land" in the poem, refers to the "Commentary," where he finds an explanation that begins as follows:

> *Line 12*: that crystal land
> Perhaps an allusion to Zembla, my dear country. (62)

The next two pages of the "Commentary" bear no relation to Shade's poem but are devoted, rather, to a number of introductory remarks on Zembla and King Charles. The phrase "that crystal land" extracted from the poem is thus transformed into the title of a chapter in Kinbote's narrative. More generally speaking, it can be observed that this process of the paratextualization of the poem is repeated throughout the entire procedure of reading the poem and the "Commentary" simultaneously: the portion of the poem singled out for commentary becomes in effect a chapter heading to the text that it precedes (cataphoric function) while, concurrently, it preserves its relation to the poem that precedes it (anaphoric function) in spite of the fact that there remains a greater or lesser degree of semantic disparity between the referential aspects of these two functions.

It is clear then that, through the introduction into the text of a bidirectional movement, the second step in the proposed method of reading *Pale Fire* contributes to the fragmentation of the work's syntax and semantics, whereas the proposal to read the "Commentary" as the continuation of the "Foreword" results in the breaking up of the linearity of the text at the macrotextual level.

It is equally important to observe how this process of fragmentation is carried yet a step further with the reconfiguration of the "Commentary" by the "Index." Organized in alphabetical order, the "Index" (where, according to Kinbote, "*The italicized numerals refer to the lines in the poem and the comments thereon*" [239]) is in fact overwhelmingly devoted to the characters and the geographical places appearing in the narrative on Zembla: of the 86 entries, more than 60 are mentioned only in the "Commentary," while a mere six are referred to explicitly in the poem; the other entries concern primarily the events that take place at New Wye. Not unlike the movement discussed above between the poem and the "Commentary," a striking number of the

words from the "Commentary" appearing in the "Index" function as chapter headings to "ministories," which summarize in chronological order (and in a telegraphic style) certain facts and events mentioned in the "Commentary." However, the order established in the "Index" represents a significant distortion of the order upon which the "Commentary" is based:

(a) the "chapters" (i.e., the entries) contained in the "Index" are arranged in alphabetical order with no regard for the chronological and causal order followed in the "Commentary" (for example, the first entry in the "Index" is "*A., Baron,*" whereas it is not until the twenty-fourth page of the "Commentary" that Baron A. appears);[21]

(b) although the chronology of the facts and events as they are presented in the "Commentary" is respected within each of the "chapters" making up the "Index," the fact that these "chapters" must select information from the "Commentary" according to a given subject can result in two or more alternative orderings of the source material. (For example, under the heading "*Kinbote, Charles, Dr,*" we read: "[Kinbote's] interest in Appalachian birds" [242], in reference to the comments on the first line of the poem ["I was the shadow of the waxwing slain"]; the reference to the comments on the very same line, which appear under the heading "*Shade, John Francis,*" bears not only on a distinctly separate element at the level of content, but also on a radically different position in the chronology: "[Shade's] first brush with death as visualized by *K*, and his beginning the poem while *K* plays chess at the Students' Club" [245].)

On the basis of this evidence, it can be concluded that, if the ordering of elements in the "Commentary" represents a fragmentation and reorganization of that which is followed in the poem, then the "Index," through the alphabetical and the chronological reordering of the material to which it refers, reveals a similar function in relation to the "Commentary." It thus appears that the "Index," which may seem to many readers to be nothing more than a few pages to thumb through and to which Kinbote, in his recommendations for the reading of the critical edition of "Pale Fire," does not even refer, turns out to be of considerable importance to the "combinational delight" that figures so prominently in the overall strategy of *Pale Fire.*

In this regard, note should be taken of the link between the alphabetical organization of the material contained in the "Index" and the anagrammatic relation between Botkin and Kinbote. As we have already had occasion to note, Botkin is not present as a character in Kinbote's "Commentary," but is, rather, the creator of Kinbote, whose discourse is ultimately embedded within that of Botkin. He does appear prominently, however, in the "Index" (240), where the entry devoted to him is all but explicit in establishing Kinbote as an anagram of Botkin and where, moreover, the references to the "Commentary" (in an exception to the rule, which is in itself a significant fact) are presented in the reverse order of their appearance in the "Commentary." Con-

sequently, not only is Kinbote a "reversal" of Botkin, but also the "ministory" told in the "chapter" entitled "*Botkin, V.*" is (contrary to the other "chapters" making up the "Index") a reversal of the chronology followed in the "Commentary." Taken together, these seemingly minor details both confirm and complement our earlier observations concerning the relations between the various narrative levels that we have identified in *Pale Fire* and notably the suggestion that the material contained in the "Foreword," in the "Commentary," and in the "Index" constitutes the figural apocrypha of Botkin's discourse. Moreover, the "Index" entry on Botkin is further evidence in favor of the argument developed above according to which the narrator of *Pale Fire* is to be characterized as crypto-"authorial," with the ultimate authorial presence in the work—the act of entitling the book—being ascribed to Vladimir Nabokov. A noteworthy corroboration of this analysis can be found in Johnson's study of the refractionary effect of the "Index" on the entire work. Johnson observes that, not only is Kinbote an anagram of Botkin, but also V. Botkin is a partial anagram of Vladimir Nabokov, with Botkin standing both as Kinbote's creator and as "Nabokov's semi-anagrammatic surrogate" (46). It can thus be concluded that, in the second step of the proposed reading of the critical edition of "Pale Fire," the superimposition of the poem and its critical apparatus follows the same logic as that upon which the work's system of narrative levels is based, adding a new dimension to the variables already present in this system. Furthermore, the violation of the textual linearity of the book resulting from this operation both reflects and is reflected by the anagrammatic dimension of the book as well as the redistribution of the "Index" in alphabetical order of the elements contained in the "Commentary."

(3) The final stage in the reading of the work consists of "perhaps, having done with the poem, consulting [the notes] a third time so as to complete the picture" (25). Although this reading may strike one as being thoroughly optional, it is actually in harmony with the work's overall design, for it serves as the *coup de grâce* to "Pale Fire": it is an attempt to marginalize, once and for all, the text, which has supposedly served as the *raison d'être* of Kinbote's critical edition but which is now transformed into a paratext of the "Commentary."

In consequence of these three divergent methods of reading *Pale Fire*, the book bursts into three "texts" (not to speak of a multitude of subtexts). These three "texts" overlap without converging and, through their fragmenting and refracting influence, they reintroduce into the book its third dimension, that "volume" that is passed over or even evaded because of the linear reading that most books so easily accommodate. This third dimension of *Pale Fire* as a book, so strikingly brought to the fore, is indissociable from the fact that the name Kinbote, being the alias of King Charles, is also an anagram of Botkin and from the fact that the transposition of letters that lies at the origin of the name Kinbote is but another expression for the multiform existence of the

work's most visible narrator-character. The anagrammatic constitution of Kinbote is consequently revealed to be a feature fully as important for the three dimensionality of *Pale Fire* as a number of other features we have examined: the macrotextual transposition that constitutes the first of the three proposed readings; the bidirectional movement set in motion by the superimposition of the poem and the "Commentary"; and, finally, that gesture to the very building blocks of written language: the alphabetical (re)ordering of the "Commentary" by the "Index."

Ironically, it appears to be Shade who, though dead before Kinbote has even conceived of writing a critical apparatus to the poem, best penetrates the paradoxes of the third dimension of the book:

> But all at once it dawned on me that *this*
> Was the real point, the contrapuntal theme;
> Just this: not text, but texture; not the dream
> But topsy-turvical coincidence,
> Not flimsy nonsense, but a web of sense. (lines 806-10)

In any case, Kinbote (i.e., Botkin) has shown that he knows how to draw the maximum number of consequences from "the contrapuntal theme" that opposes texture to text and a web of sense to nonsense. This is evident in a metaphor that we might well consider to be a summary of the textual devices that we have been attempting to describe throughout this paper:

> I can only do what a true artist can do—pounce upon the forgotten butterfly of revelation, wean myself abruptly from the habit of things, see the web of the world, and the warp and the weft of that web. (227)

When we recall that the central fact recounted in *Pale Fire*, the one "real" incident in this book of mirrors that sets in motion the work's discursive machinery, is the transmission of the manuscript of "Pale Fire" at the moment of the poet's death, we can appreciate the import of Botkin's statement all the more. The succession of events leading up to the death of Shade and the theft of his (incomplete) manuscript, all inscribed within the pseudodiegetic level of the text, represents nothing other than an explanation "after the fact," a fabulation whose aim is to reconstruct, through the most circumstantial of evidence, the events that end with the work's central narrative fact and into which is woven, so to speak, a variety of other stories that threaten the very textual coherence of *Pale Fire.* This process of fabulation, aptly metaphorized in Botkin's elaborate attempt to "see the web of the world, and the warp and the weft of that web," results in a movement from the text to its texture, in the fragmentation of textual structures into units that are but imperfectly reassimilable into the "text" of *Pale Fire.*

With the passage from the text to its texture, however, we also leave the domain of the paratext to enter that of the word, an aspect of *Pale Fire* that

we have merely glimpsed in our examination of one of the work's uses of the anagram. I shall conclude with the observation that the word *novel*, conspicuously absent from the pages of the book that mark the transition between the text and what lies outside the text, pops up in a curiously parenthetical remark by Kinbote: "I have no desire to twist and batter an unambiguous *apparatus criticus* into the monstrous semblance of a novel" (71). Rendered eminently "writerly" by the spectacular use it makes of the resources of the paratext (Kinbote claims that "it is the commentator who has the last word" [25]), *Pale Fire* serves as a prodigious reminder that the literary work depends, finally, on the "discursivity" of its reader, on the transtextual space that surrounds every text.

Notes

[1] For Genette's critique of genre theory, see his *Introduction à l'architexte.*

[2] A detailed study of hypertextuality is undertaken in *Palimpsestes*, while paratextuality is examined in *Seuils.* Genette's theory of transtextuality is sometimes considered to be overly taxonomic; although the classification of transtextual practices is clearly a fundamental aspect of this theory, an understanding of how transtextuality functions in individual texts will easily reveal the shortsightedness of this criticism.

[3] This illustration is based on the distinction between "saying" and "showing" in analytical philosophy. For an interesting account of this aspect of language, one which is also relevant to present purposes, see François Récanati's *La transparence et l'énonciation*, especially the chapter entitled "Le texte et la marge" (132-52).

[4] Although Tammi hypothesizes that Botkin may be the "[primary] narrative agent, who has only left some incidental markers of this identity on the discourse," she ultimately rejects this possibility on the grounds that so little information is given concerning Botkin's background and personality and concludes that it is Kinbote who represents "the primary narrative voice in the novel" (201). Further on, however, we shall see that the limited number of references to Botkin does not cancel his importance in the hierarchy of narrative levels.

[5] "You can get nearer and nearer, so to speak, to reality," Nabokov once said, "but you can never get near enough because reality is an infinite succession of levels, levels of perception, of false bottoms, and hence unquenchable, unattainable" (*Strong Opinions* 11).

[6] Curiously, this definition of diegetic level does not appear in the English translation of "Discours du récit." For a discussion of the misleading tendency to equate "diegesis" and "story," see Genette's *Palimpsestes* (342) and *Nouveau Discours du récit* (13), as well as Gerald Prince (20) and my "Diegesis."

[7] In her study of *The Real Life of Sebastien Knight* (the novel by Nabokov whose structures most resemble those in *Pale Fire*), Shlomith Rimmon has made an excellent analysis of the work's system of narrative levels, but with no mention of its transtextual and paratextual dimensions. (It is true, however, that at the time of the article's publication, narratology was little concerned with these questions.)

[8] These two functions of Kinbote cannot, however, be rigorously separated from one another, for although in the "Foreword" Kinbote acts principally as an editor and in the "Commentary" principally as a narrator, his editorial role is never completely abandoned. We should also stress that a "primary" narrative is not necessarily one in which the main events of a story are related, but rather a discourse whose status is analogous to that of the main clause of the sentence, while a "metadiegetic" (or second-degree) narrative—which may very well correspond to the (near) totality of a work's content—is comparable to that of the subordinate clause. This point constitutes an important divergence between the present analysis of *Pale Fire* and that of Tammi (cf. note 4 above).

[9] According to Genette (*Seuils* 267), the "Foreword" to *Pale Fire*, a pseudoallographic discourse, gives way bit by bit to the pseudofigural, which implies that this section of the book is neither completely allographic nor completely figural. Although this characterization is true, a closer examination of the work reveals that the situation is considerably more complex. For further discussion of the allographic preface, see *Seuils* 242ff.

[10] The pseudodiegetic narrative is defined as a narrative "where the metadiegetic crossover point, mentioned or not, is immediately ousted in favor of the primary narrator, resulting in a kind of economy of one (or sometimes several) narrative levels" ("Discours" 246; my translation).

[11] Hypertextual transformations in *Pale Fire* are thus of two kinds: internal (as in the transformation of Shade's autobiography into King Charles's) and external. An important hypotext of *Pale Fire* is Nabokov's four-part edition of *Eugene Onegin*, much criticized for its overly elaborate and not always relevant critical apparatus. In one sense, then, Nabokov is parodying his own work.

[12] Other occurrences of the word *botkin* are linked to Kinbote in an even more indirect manner (cf. 83, 138, 175). Tammi attests to the historical existence of an American folklorist named B. A. Botkin; but as "Botkin" plays no role "*inside the novel*" (her emphasis) and is endowed with an "unspecified identity," she excludes him from the textual scheme of *Pale Fire*, qualifying him as "the apocryphal Botkin" (201).

[13] In this connection, it might be useful to refer to Beckett, whose works are inhabited by voices that are almost totally stripped of novelistic features and that are no less devoid of character traits than Botkin. It is also noteworthy that McCarthy's important essay on *Pale Fire* speaks of Botkin rather than of Kinbote.

[14] According to Tammi (202-03), critics have advanced three proposals relative to the "authorship" of *Pale Fire*: (1) the "author" of both the poem and the critical apparatus is Kinbote (a variant of this thesis is that Botkin has written both parts); (2) the "author" is Shade, Kinbote's discourse being an invention of Shade; (3) "the straightforward reading" (adopted by Tammi), in which Shade is the author of the poem and Kinbote is the author of the critical apparatus. The solution I am proposing here is derived from McCarthy. She, however, in spite of her brilliant insights, does not investigate the relations between the poem and the critical apparatus. D. Barton Johnson's article "The Index of Refraction in Nabokov's *Pale Fire*," which will be discussed later, points in the same direction.

[15]

> This reminds me of the ludicrous account he gave Mr Langston, of the despicable state of a young gentleman of good family. "Sir, when I heard of him last, he was running about town shooting cats." And then in a sort of kindly reverie, he bethought himself of his own favorite cat, and said, "But Hodge shan't be shot: no, no, Hodge shall not be shot."

[16] Needless to say, the story that takes place at New Wye is considerably more complex than this summary might lead one to believe; my aim here is simply to identify an aspect of the work relevant to the present context.

[17] The original passage is from *Timon of Athens* 4.3.439-43:

> The sun's a thief, and with his great attraction
> Robs the vast sea; the moon's an arrant thief,
> And her pale fire she snatches from the sun;
> The sea's a thief, whose liquid surge resolves
> The moon into salt tears.

These lines—an epitext to *Pale Fire*—are deformed practically beyond recognition by Kinbote:

> The sun is a thief: she lures the sea
> and robs it. The moon is a thief:
> he steals his silvery light from the sun.
> The sea is a thief: it dissolves the moon. (66)

I will not undertake to comment on the disparities between these two passages (others have already done so) except to point out the telling absence of the expression "pale fire" in Kinbote's translation, a translation which is indeed but pale fire compared to the original.

[18] One might be tempted to speak at this point of the work's "implied author." But if there is indeed such an entity to be found in *Pale Fire*, its usefulness seems questionable, for the function here of the implied author remains so highly circumscribed as to eliminate most (if not all) of the features that are typically associated with it. More appropriate to a work such as *Pale Fire* is the *homme de lettres* sought by the critics of Tlön, as described by Borges in his story "Tlön, Uqbar, Tertius Orbis": "Criticism is accustomed to inventing authors: it chooses two dissimilar works—let us say, the *Tao Te King* and *The 1001 Nights*—attributes to them a same author and then determines with probity the psychology of this interesting *homme de lettres*" (27; my translation).

[19] The title of Nabokov's book is a superb example of a text ("Pale Fire") referring to its paratext, a little-known device of literary discourse that has been perceptively studied by Randa Sabry.

[20] These observations are in no way meant to deny the existence of textual linearity in *Pale Fire* or of its importance in the reading of many literary works. However, they do seek to emphasize the fact that the linearity of the text is a multifaceted feature of discourse and that, as Michel Picard has demonstrated in his *Lire le temps*, literary texts are invested with a "multiplicity of times." In this connection, reference might also be made to Nabokov's method of composition: "I don't write consecutively from the beginning to the next chapter and so on to the end. I just fill in the gaps of the picture, of this jigsaw puzzle which is quite clear in my mind, picking out a piece here and there and filling out part of the sky and part of the landscape and part of the—I don't know, the carousing hunters" (*Strong Opinions* 16-17).

[21] The alphabetical reordering of the "Commentary" set up by the "Index" is not the ultimate order to which *Pale Fire* is subject in the matter of linearity, as we can see in the entry "*Word Golf*": this entry refers us to "*Lass*," which in turn refers to "*Mass*," where we are referred to "*Male*," where we read: "see *Word Golf*."

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