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EMULATION, ANTI-PARODY, INTERTEXTUALITY, AND ANNOTATION

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Abstract. *The main purpose in this paper is to offer some marginal notes having to do with the intertextual plane of Nabokov's prose and poetry so as to test whether the proper place of such entries ought indeed to be in the commentaries or remain in research papers.*

Key Words: *Intertextuality, Parody, Anti-parody, Nabokov*

There is an old mystical tradition, stemming from Isaac the Syrian in the east and Scotus Erigena in the west, according to which afterlife is the same for all, but the sinners perceive the higher presence as hell and the righteous as paradise.

In our lay field, too, in the face of a work of genius grateful admiration or an invidious proclamation of the author's death are a choice that depends on the moral character of the reader, or on the constructive (substantially monistic) or deconstructive (that is, dualistic, Manichaean and "Bogumil") attitude of the philosophically minded critic, or, finally, on the purpose of the scholar.

If the scholar's purpose is a commentary, the presence of the creator's design in the creation is a necessary presupposition, and the task of the commentator is to provide the reader with the wherewithal required for the understanding of this design. The question that has a less certain answer, at least, in the case of those writers whose poetics is contingent to a significant extent on enigmatic devices, is this: how far should the interpreter's assistance extend so as not to interfere with the riddle-solving delights of the reader? Such a contingency is sometimes acknowledged by movie thriller producers when they beg the gentle public not to disclose the ending to those friends who have not yet seen the picture. At a more serious plane of analysis, it should be conceded, moreover, that the author's intent may be to create an enigmatic effect per se, an aura of mystery. As Evgenii Toddes (1968: 93) suggested in regard to Pushkin's "Bronze Horseman," enigmatic mysteriousness may be perceived as an objective property of certain artistic structures, a means of author's aesthetic influence upon the reader, and insofar as this

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quality is a full-fledged component of style, there is no need to "decipher" the poem and "solve its puzzle."

Yet there are certain operations that any enigmatic or simply "difficult," that is, intellectually challenging text demands from the annotator. For example, even if the solution of the text's presumed enigma may be considered redundant or contrary to the author's design, the reader will usually benefit when certain presuppositions necessary for his most basic comprehension of the text and the terms of its puzzles are laid out before him.

Presuppositions which are most commonly, and rightly, in the opinion of any honest philologist, perceived as necessary for minimum understanding and therefore pertinent to commentaries have to do with the semiotic environment of the text, with what we now call the intertextual aspect of the work. Names, quotations, literary, historical, cultural references and allusions are expected to be identified and briefly explained. One might even say that the entire field of intertextual research as it was originally envisaged in the early sixties emerged out of the immediate exigencies of annotating such enigmatic texts as Akhmatova's "Poem without a Hero" or Mandelstam's "Na kamennykh otrogakh Pierii." Even though Shakespeare scholars, especially among the New Critics, knew this all along, because they were not concerned with theoretical conceptualization of the problem, it had to be formulated from the scratch, as it were, and the choice of 20th century material for this kind of theoretical inquiry was natural, because in 20th century poetics the device of intertextual reference and distanced reiteration is foregrounded.

The result is that today we have more comprehensive "intertextual" commentaries to Mandelstam than to Pushkin. After all, as Vladimir Markov has mordantly pointed out, even the source of the quotation "s tekh por, kak etim zanimaius'" ("since I began to ply this trade") in "The Station Master" remains unknown. It is because of this urgent need that the younger Pushkin scholars, among them Dolinin, Ospovat and Kats, have, with renewed intensity of effort and breadth of vision, begun to fill the enormous gaps remaining in our knowledge of Pushkin's intertextuality even after the extensive research by such great pioneers of the field as Vinogradov, Tomashevsky, Alekseev, and, more recently, Vladimir Nabokov and Iurii Lotman.

Yet there is important difference between research and commentary. One wonders whether the commentaries to Pushkin should not only include, in the case of "Anchar," for example, the relevant information on Coleridge's "Remorse," but, in order to explain Pushkin's rejection of the original Upas, also identify the anagrammatic cognate of anchar in the famous "sarancha" (locust) episode of Pushkin's civil service in the south. Another instance: we know from his drafts that Pushkin had much trouble with a certain line in "Moia rodoslovnaia," which used to read "Moi predok Racha sluzhboi brannoi" or "vitiaz' brannyi" until finally, after the celebration of the Feast of St. Alexander Nevsky on 23 November 1830, the line took its final shape: Moi predok Racha myshtsei brannoi / Sviatomu Nevskomu sluzhil. Should the commentator refer to the phrase in the kondak read on the occasion of the feast of St. Aleksandr Nevskii, "pritekaiushchi k ratse moshchei," as the phonic model of Pushkin's "predok Racha myshtsei"?

My main purpose in this paper is to offer some marginal notes having to do with the intertextual plane of Nabokov's prose and poetry so as to test whether the proper place of such entries ought indeed to be in the commentaries or remain in research papers.

For the sake of convenience, the material is roughly divided, according to its intertextual function, by such main categories as: emulation, that is, an artistic endeavor to equal or excel a certain model by selective imitation that intensifies its virtues and gently

corrects its shortcomings (see Smirnov 1994: 42-66); parody in the narrow sense, when a style is represented in such a way as to foreground and exaggerate its characteristic features, especially faults; and the anti-parody, which Irena Ronen and I tried to define in an earlier study (1981: 371-386) and which Nabokov himself (1981: 105) had described as follows:

> Let me refer to one more method of dealing with literature-and this is the simplest and perhaps the most important one. If you hate a book, you still may derive artistic delight from imagining other and better ways of looking at things, or, what is the same, expressing things, than the author you hate does.

These various ways of using already existing works of art as material had been succinctly juxtaposed in one of Schiller's "Tabulae Votivae":

> Gutes aus Gutem, das kann jedweder Verstaendige bilden,
> Aber der Genius ruft Gutes aus Schlechtem hervor.
> An Gebildetem nur darfst du, Nachahmer, dich ueben?
> Selbst das Gebildete ist Stoff nur dem bildenden Geist.

Before proceeding any further with these categories of text within text, let us briefly consider a special type of intertextual reference, as a rule, historical or biographical, which comprises "meaningful names" of characters (usually minor), place names, titles of imaginary works of art, invented trademarks, and the like. Essentially, these names function in the same way as other allusive material, but with a greater share of multilingual blending and punning that has to be taken into account: in *Look at the Harlequins*, Iablokov and Morozov (Vnov' pakhnet iablokom moroz!) are simple, translated "emulations," without any hint of caricature, of the names of Appel and Frost; Prostakov-Skotinin and Suknovalov (the author of *A Hero of Our Era*, "an honest nonentity") are more complex "parodies" of Orville Prescott and Roy Fuller (concerning Fuller, one has to consult VN's letter to The New Statesman of 22 December 1972); Audace is an "anti-parody" of Auden, whom Nabokov detested, unexpectedly redeemed through an association with Khodasevich; Alden Landover, a blend of Aldanov (Landau) and Grigorii Landau, and so forth; in *Sebastian Knight*, Alexis Pan is a punning parody of Aleksei Kruchenykh by way of "kruchenyi panych," a South Russian variety of petunia; Dilanov-Tomski, a "fashionable poet" in *Speak, Memory!,* is a russified parody of Dylan Thomas, similar to Pushkin's russification of Bulwer's Pelham in the name of Pelymov; in *Bend Sinister*, Fradrik Skotoma, a parody of both Chernyshevsky (skotos Gk. 'dark') and Friedrich Engels (by way of the traditional contrast between angel and beast: Lish' angel, Bogu predstoiashchii, / Da Boga ne uzrevshii skot).

One imaginary place name is of especial significance, being as valuable from the scholarly point of view as it is lovely artistically: Gray Star, which Nabokov had called "the capital town of the book," Seraia Zvezda of the Russian *Lolita*. Beside its obvious association with Lolita-like name of Charlie Chaplin's girl-wife and starlet Lita Grey, at the plane of the popular American reading matter, the name owes its aura of high romance to the catchword deriving from the novel by George B. McCutcheon: Graustark. At another plane, however, inaccessible not only to Lolita, but also to Humbert, this is an abbreviated quotation from Anna Akhmatova's early poem, which, when juxtaposed with the quotations from Poe (And the stars never rise, but I feel the bright eyes / Of the beau-

tiful Annabel Lee, I zazzhetsia l' zvezda, vizhu ochi vsegda / Obol'stitel'noi Annabel'-Li, in Balmont's translation) that reverberate throughout the novel, functions as a thematic clue to Humbert Humbert's quest:

> Dolgo shel cherez polia i sela,
> Shel i sprashival liudei:
> "Gde ona, gde svet veselyi
> Serykh zvezd - ee ochei?"
>
> [He walked for a long time across the fields and villages,
> He walked and asked the people:
> "Where is she? where is the merry light
> Of the gray stars, her eyes?"]

As a commentator, one would use this subtext to justify one's identification of Gray Star with the gray eyes of Lolita shining, like the bright eyes of Annabel Lee, from heaven after her death, rather than with the gray matter of Humbert's brain, as Alexander Dolinin does. A student of intertextuality, on the other hand, might find this instance interesting because it adds a new dimension to Nabokov's literary treatment of Akhmatova, which Akhmatova herself was inclined to interpret adversely on the basis of Lisa Wind's poems in Pnin. This is, however, a subject quite different from full-fledged emulation, anti-parody, and parody, typical examples of which shall now be considered.

There is a magnificent, funny, moving, and, apparently, still undescribed instance of Nabokov emulating Pushkin in *The Gift*. It is the scene in the beginning of the second chapter when Fedor Konstantinovich looks at an irritating man in the streetcar and concentrates upon him all of his "sinful hatred" of the degenerating German nation, with its Vollmilch and extrastark, its cruelty, vulgarity, penny-pinching, fat behinds, and so forth. The man then unfolds the Russian newspaper and clears his throat "with a Russian intonation."

The object of emulation is Pushkin's famous record of his meeting Kuechelbecker, with Germans replacing Jews as an object of scornful hatred: "[...] vdrug pod"ekhali 4 troiki s fel'd"egerem. - Veroiatno, poliaki? skazal ia khoziaike. - Da, otvechala ona [...] Odin iz arestantov stoial opershis' u kolonny. K nemu podoshel vysokii, blednyi i khudoi molodoi chelovek s chernoiu borodoiu, v frizovoi shinele, i s vidu nastoiashchii zhid - ia i prinial ego za zhida, i nerazluchnye poniatiia zhida i shpiona proizveli vo mne obyknovennoe deistvie; ia povorotilsia im spinoiu [...] Uvidev menia, on s zhivostiiu na menia vzglianul. Ia nevol'no obratilsia k nemu. My pristal'no smotrim drug na druga - i ia uznaiu K. My kinulis' drug drugu v ob"iatiia. Zhandarmy nas rastashchili." [Pushkin, traveling in an irritable mood after playing cards and losing heavily, saw a group of Poles being transported from Shlisselburg to some other place of incarceration. Among them there was "a tall, pale, thin young man with a black beard, in a baize greatcoat, a real jew by appearance, so I took him for a jew, and the inseparable notions of a jew and a spy produced in me their usual effect; I showed them my back [...] As he noticed me, he gave me an animated glance. Involuntarily I turned round toward him. We looked at each other closely-and I recognized K.," that is, Wilhelm von Kuechelbecker, Pushkin's school friend, a poet who had been convicted for his participation in the December uprising. "We embraced each other. The gendarmes pulled us apart."]

A specimen of more clear-cut polemic with the emulated antecedent, Chekhov's unsympathetic account of the weather in Abbazia on the Adriatic Riviera in his letters and in "Ariadna," is Nabokov's evocation of the magical, vernal, "moist, grey, greenhouse essence of Fialta" (Yalta blended with Fiume and Rialto), which serves as the background of his most lyric love story.

The special variety of emulation that any future editor of bilingual editions of Nabokov will have to point out and explain is the one that he had defined, but not named, in his introduction to the English translation of *Invitation to a Beheading*:

> If some day I make a dictionary of definitions wanting single words to head them, a cherished entry would be "To abridge, expand, or otherwise alter or cause to be altered, for the sake of belated improvement, one's own writings in translation."

One might call this variety "self-emulation."

In the beginning of the original Russian *Korol', Dama, Valet* the fruit vendor at the railroad station is selling plums, and the town cathedral is described as zemlianichno-temnyi, "strawberry-dark." The 1968 English-language version has, instead of plums, "nice, plump, lumpy, glossy red strawberries positively crying to be bitten into, all their achenes [small dry indehiscent one-seeded fruits etc., according to Webster, the word is etymologically related to the Gk. chainein 'to yawn'] proclaiming their affinity with one's own tongue's papillae," and the cathedral is simply "dark."

This "belated improvement" is begging to be explicated intertextually, with the help of Hieronymus Bosch, whose presence here has been noticed by Leona Toker (1989: 56 n. 13), and an excerpt out of *Ada* (Part 2, ch. 10), on which Nabokov was still working when he revised Dmitri Nabokov's translation of *King, Queen, Knave*. In the relevant passage, Nabokov mentioned "the joy of the eye, the feel and the taste of the woman-sized strawberry that you embrace with him," as well as the original name of Bosch: "Jeroen Anthniszoon van Äken" - "and the molti aspetti affascinati of his enigmatica arte..."

One of the most vivid specimens of Nabokov's "antiparody," "imagining other and better way of looking at things" than one finds in the author one dislikes, likewise is found in *King, Queen, Knave*. There exists an unfinished Russian novel about a provincial nephew, a young boy who comes to an enormous metropolis in some distant future after a great cataclysm to find his uncle, who turns out to be the richest man in the world. The uncle gives a job to the nephew, and the uncle's wife seduces the boy. The title is "Sem' zemnykh soblaznov" ("Seven Earthly Temptations"). Valerii Briusov published it in the fifth volume of *Severnye tsvety*, in 1911. Elsewhere (*Zvezda* 1999/4) I have recently described Nabokov's treatment of Shklovsky, of Conrad's *Lord Jim*, and of its Soviet imitation, *Prestuplenie Martyna*, as the object of Nabokov's antiparody in *Podvig*. Antiparody is also the attitude that Nabokov manifests in his great and mysterious "Parizhskaia poema" toward the work of his archenemy Georgii Ivanov, whose *Raspad atoma* is itself subjected to fission in Nabokov's poem by being bombarded with references to the utmost stage of Russian poetry's and Russian soul's decay: the graphomaniac poet and assassin Gorgulov, decapitated in Paris for killing the French president Doumer in 1932.

There are very few parodies in Nabokov that remain unidentified. One of these is the poem by yet another killer, Hermann of *Despair*: Khokhocha, otvechaia nakhodchivo /

(otluchit'sia ty ochen' neproch'!) / ot luchei, ot otchaian'ia otchego, / otchego ty otchalila v noch'? (In the English version: Bold and scoffing but inwardly tortured / O, my soul, will your torch not ignite?), / From the porch of your God and His orchard / Why take off for the Earth and the night?). At a first glance, this appears to be a parody of Pasternak, perhaps, of "Zamestitel'nitsa" (Ia zhivu s tvoei kartochkoi, s toi chto khokhochet, etc.) in the Russian original, and of "Opredelenie dushi" in the English version, but the approach to Pasternak's persistent paronomasia is actually achieved by using as a springboard for parody a poem of Sofia Parnok composed during her "Pasternakian" period: Otchego ot otchego poroga / ty menia v kanuny rokovye / pod chuzhoe nebo uvodila, / povodyrka strashnaia, liubov'? //...// Otchego pod mertvym nebom City, / v popugainom zvuke chuzhdoi rechi / ia uslyshala s polei rodimykh / golovokruzhitel'nuiu vest'? etc.. (*Loza*, Moscow, 1923). In a similar manner, Nabokov's parodies of Akhmatova's mannerisms in Pnin make use of the handiwork of her imitators, especially Odoevtseva.

We began this survey of Nabokov's challenges to his commentators by discussing genuine quotations and allusions to existing texts. Let us conclude with imaginary quotations (or "parodies of a possible quotation," as Nabokov puts it in *Speak, Memory!*) and invented books. These are functionally different from texts by Nabokov's fictional characters such as Godunov-Cherdyntsev or John Shade. They do not serve to characterize a creative personage, or to achieve a dissociation between the author and a literary experiment in the thematic area with which he does not completely identify and for the artistic execution of which he does not take full responsibility, an auctorial alibi, as it were. The imaginary quotations are different. They perform, as a rule, a literary-historical function of representing a tradition or a poetics that has not been achieved but remained a stunted growth, an unfulfilled promise in a particular province of world literature.

Thus, in *The Gift*, the references to Stolz the antiquarian or to Albrecht Koch dreaming, like Cincinnatus, of golden logic in the land of the insane, pinpoint the unrealized promise of late 19th century German literature, while the prose of Segelkranz (Udo Konrad) in *Camera obscura*, with its subtle affinity to Rilke, speaks of the artistic opportunities missed by German verbal art in the 20th century.

The poetry of Konstantin Perov, "a forgotten poet" of Nabokov's English short story about Russian literature, appears to represent a nonexistent trend in the Russian poetry during the second part of the 19th century, a lyric strain that is neither Nekrasov's prosaized populism, nor Fet's deliberate aestheticism, but rather a synthesis between the sublime flight of detached lyric inspiration, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the pity for "the poor, the blind, the foolish, / the round backs slaving for the round bellies, / all those whose eyes dulled by care or lust do not see / the holes in the snow, the blue horse, the miraculous puddle," the tradition, in short, of Baudelaire or Rimbaud, which had no counterpart in 19th century Russia. To create some of the quotations from Perov's imaginary poetry, Nabokov had addressed the great unachieved masterpiece by Aleksandr Blok, "The Retribution." The only quotation from Perov's verse that Nabokov gave in Russian rather than in English, "Sibirskikh pikht oogrewmyi shorokh s podzemnoy snositsa roodoy," is an emulation of Blok's rough draft referring to lines 596-614 of "Vozmezdie," about Russia's young nestlings torn to pieces by a hawk. This draft was first published in the notes to Volume 2 of Blok's diaries (*Dnevnik Al.Bloka 1917-1921*. Pod red. P.N. Medvedeva. Leningrad, 1928. P.264): Sibirskikh rek polnochnyi khod, / Podzemnykh rud glukhoe pen'e, / Sviataia khmurost' vecherov. Both Blok's and

Nabokov-Perov's lines, of course, evoke the memory of Pushkin's "Poslanie v Sibir'": Vo glubine sibirskikh rud...

Sirin the poet was himself, in some respects, not unlike Perov: a creator of a mature poetics unique in 20th century Russian poetry, a lonely artist only a fraction of whose potential has been realized and who only now is beginning to be appreciated by the lovers of poetry. There is comfort, however, for those who mourn the early demise of the poet Sirin. It lies in the sublime attainment of Nabokov, who had sacrificed, as a great chess player would, this aspect of his genius in order to reach a new shore, the Amerussian shore of the new world literature.

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EMULACIJA, ANTIPARODIJA, INTERTEKSTUALNOST I ANOTACIJA

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Glavni cilj ovog rada je da pruži marginalije koje se odnose na intertekstualni aspekt Nabokovljeve proze i poezije kako bi se ispitalo da li je pravo mesto tih odrednica zaista u komentarima ili one treba da ostanu u istraživačkim beleškama.

Ključne reči: *Intertekstualnost, parodija, antiparodija, nabokov*