

TWO NOTES ON HAZEL SHADE

I Jasmine, girls' feet, first loves and Hazel Shade.

In the first chapter of *Ada*, the heroine already displays her deep knowledge of flowers. As a botanist she is greatly interested in the nomenclature of vegetation. While elaborating on “the early-spring sanicle” *Ada* mentions the “Stabian flower girl,” a mural that introduces some major themes in this novel. The Stabian flower girl is a famous mural painting found in one of the villas of Stabiae where it was buried for ages after the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 AD. It has gained fame because of the girl’s posture, showing a vivacity that required an imagination from the artist that took European painting many centuries to re-attain. But along with these artistic considerations Nabokov had more reasons to refer to this fresco. The girl picking flowers suggests not only the mythical Proserpine, the goddess Flora and Shakespeare’s Ophelia, but the girl’s bare feet also emphasize the eroticism that dominates *Ada*’s life (see my “Three Notes on *Ada*.” *The Nabokovian* 77 [2018]).

Given this context it is most surprising that *Ada* offers no speculations about the specific flowers the Stabian girl is gathering. The plant’s size, its leaves and whitish flowers suggest that it would be possible to eliminate all flowers that do not match its depiction, thus leaving a number of flowers as possible candidates. The natural history of Pompeii has been researched thoroughly, starting with the pioneering work of Wilhelmina Feemstra Jashemski, a garden archaeologist. Unfortunately, in her *The Natural History of Pompeii* (published posthumously, ed. Frederick G. Meyer, Cambridge University Press, 2002), the sites of Stabiae are not included. Nor have I been able to find literature with references to the plant on this mural. A generous member of the staff of the Hortus Botanicus of Leyden University informed me that the representation is too vague to allow a proper identification. Another botanist from her circle who happened to know the Pompeii sites, its flora and the Stabian mural, suggested that while the vague depiction of the plant prevents a precise determination, and although the flowers’ size do not support this, the plant might possibly represent a jasmine.

The jasmine was a familiar shrub in the ancient world as “Roman perfumes were made from flowers such as violets and rose, lavender or jasmine” (Alex Butterworth, Ray Laurence and Paul Roberto, “Pompeii Exhibition: Beauty, Fashion and Jewellery – Roman Style.” *The Telegraph*, 23 October 2018). It might be that, because of Nabokov’s great interest in the natural world and his wide erudition, he too might have surmised that the Stabian flower could represent a jasmine. What is so interesting is that the combination of jasmine, female feet and first loves are not unprecedented in Nabokov’s novels; this combination is also a recurrent motif in European literature.

The story of Nabokov’s first love, recounted in *Speak, Memory*, belongs to history rather than fiction. It is adorned with a symmetrical frame of echoed images. Although his first love, Tamara, “was fond of weaving” and donning “crowns of flowers,” only a few flowers are actually specified (240). Apart from some “dahlias” and a “racemosa branch,” it is the jasmine that witnesses the rise and fall of this love affair (232; 239). For his first meetings with Tamara, Nabokov had to ascend, after having dismounted his bicycle, a steep footpath lined with “jasmine bushes” while after their final encounter Tamara is seen “descending” “the jasmine-scented” steps of a small station (233; 241). In his poem “*Zovut vliublennago gvozdiki*” written

in the second year of his love affair, 1916, Nabokov describes the splendor of jasmine, pinks and orchids in anticipation of the arrival of his love, a splendor that, however, appears to be no match for his love's beauty (the poem is quoted by Priscilla Meyer, "Carmencita: Blok's Del'mas and Nabokov's Shulgina: The Evolution of Eros in Nabokov's Work," *Festschrift for Alexander Dolinin*. Ed. David Bethea, Lazar Fleishman and Alexander Ospovat, *Stanford Slavic Studies* 34 (2007), 521-538).

In *Pnin* the protagonist's first love affair with his sweetheart Mira Belochkin is recalled concisely but movingly. The first recollection shows Pnin waiting in the dusk of a summer evening for Mira, who is "coming toward him among tall tobacco flowers" (133). The *Encyclopædia Britannica* (1964. 16, 430) specifies two tobacco plants cultivated for gardens, the first being the "jasmine tobacco" and this might well be the one Mira is emerging from because of the "dull white" of its flowers. (Along with its fragrance and color, it also shares the star-like shape of its flowers with the jasmine).

In the story "Cloud, Castle, Lake" Vasily Ivanovich, a bachelor who "had hopelessly loved for seven years" a lady, catches the "odor of jasmine" in the dark of the night, and this reminds him of his "beloved" (420; 430).

Martin Edelweiss is also hopelessly in love; he is named after the alpine flower that has also a stellate form and whitish color. For some five years Martin tries to win the heart of Sonia, who, apart from an accidental kiss, is not inclined to bear his companionship but intermittently. Once Sonia greets Martin by saying "Hello, flower" without giving him any further attention (105). It is a rare exception that Sonia seeks some sort of intimacy with Martin, as happened during the night she cannot sleep when the news of her sister's death abroad has shrouded her in misery. Sonia, on bare feet and wearing pajamas, turns to Martin, who is lodged in that sister's former bedroom, for consolation. Martin offers his bed to shelter her from the cold. Instead of commiserating with Sonia, Martin is unable to master his feelings and starts embracing and kissing her. Sonia is horrified. When, a year later, Martin recalls this night, he remembers her "shivering, barefoot" as well as her "pajamas" (on an earlier occasion he saw Sonia "wearing a kimono...and heelless bedroom slippers") (106; 81).

The most memorable podophilic passage in Russian letters can be found in Alexander Pushkin's novel in verse, *Eugene Onegin*. The stanzas XXX-XXXIV of its first chapter contain, in Nabokov's words, "the famous pedal regression" (*EO* 2, 115). Here Pushkin describes how he envies the sea as it kisses a girl's feet so freely.

A likely owner of these feet is Ekaterina Raevski, whom Pushkin met at Gurfuz on the Crimean coast in August 1820. In the years before they left Bolshevik Russia, Martin and his mother stayed in the Crimean town Yalta, from where he enjoyed the nearby beaches. There he meets a girl, who after a dip in the sea retires "towards some rocks which she called Ayvazovskian" (17). The seascape painter Ivan Ayvazovski (1817-1900) lived mostly in Feodosia and it was in this town that Nabokov's mother met the artist, who told her about his memorable meeting with Pushkin in 1836. In later life, Ayvazovski painted about twenty canvasses featuring Pushkin. One of them is titled *Pushkin and Countess Raevskaya by the Sea near Gurfuz* (1886); it shows the countess bathing her feet and a scrutinizing Pushkin attending her. That these Ayvazovskian rocks may contain a hint at Pushkin's adoration of female feet is made more plausible by another podophilic allusion to the poem "*Le Lac*" by Alphonse Lamartine (*Glory* [63]).

In his discussion of Pushkin's "wave-wooded feet" Nabokov notes that "[r]eferences to feet kissing waves abound in English poetry" (2, 122; 2, 136). He quotes lines from Byron's *Childe Harold* which, however, refer to male feet. He also quotes Lamartine's "*Le Lac*" (1817):

*Ainsi le vent jetait l'écume de tes ondes
Sur ses pieds adorés*

(2, 136. "Thus the wind threw the foam from your waves on her adorable feet." Prose trans. by Anthony Hartley. *The Penguin Book of French Verse*. Vol. 3. Penguin Books, 1957, 11.)

Nabokov also quotes from Victor Hugo's "*Tristesse d'Olympia*" (1837):

*D'autres femmes viendront, baigneuses indèscrites,
Troubler le flot sacré qu'ont touché tes pieds nus!*

(2, 136. "And other bathers indiscreet/ Will stir the sacred pool thy feet have known." Trans. Alan Condor, *Cassell's Anthology of French Poetry*. London: Cassell, 1950, 199.)

Hugo's lines, however, do not match the parallel with Pushkin's feet found in Lamartine's lines.

Victor Hugo wrote also verse in which feet are welcomed not by waves, but by jasmine:

*Lys, chèvrefeuille et jasmin
J'en veux faire le chemin
Où ton pied se pose
("Nouvelle chanson sur un vieil air." < poésie.webnet.fr. >)*

(These lines can be rendered as:

With lily, honeysuckle and jasmine
I wish to make the path
Where your foot will rest)

Jasmine and feet also cooperate in stories by Leo Tolstoy and Ivan Turgenev. In Tolstoy's "Two Hussars" Count Turbin is detained in a provincial town, where he becomes so besotted with a lady, Anna Fedorovna, that he wishes to kiss her most ardently. To this end he hides in her carriage. After a while "a woman's dress rustled, and the close atmosphere of the carriage was impregnated by the odor of jasmine, a woman's dainty feet hurried up the steps." (Trans. Nathan Haskell Dole. *A Russian Proprietor and Other Stories*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, ca. 1887. Gutenberg EBook # 41119).

In Turgenev's *Song of Triumphant Love* a young wife is hypnotized to visit a former admirer, who stays in a garden house, whither she goes on "bare feet" along "an arbour of jasmines" (Trans. Richard Freeborn. *First Love and Other Stories*. Oxford: OUP, 2008, 284.)

Female feet as an emblem of feminine attractiveness, enhanced by their bareness and mingled with the sweet fragrance and frail beauty of jasmine, is often accompanied by

references to the lightness of their steps. To illustrate this, Nabokov quotes lines from Pushkin's short poem "Autumn Morning" (1816):

...upon the green meads,
I did not find the scarcely visible
Prints left by her fair feet ... (EO. 2, 117)

These lines are preceded by verses in two poems alluded to in *Pale Fire: The Lady of the Lake* (1810), by Walter Scott, and *Comus* (1634), by John Milton. In Milton's verse, the nymph Sabrina sings how

... I set my printless feet
O'r the cowslip's velvet head,
That bends not as I tread

(Cambridge: CUP, 1953, lines 897-99).

Scott spends stanza XVIII of Canto I to describe the beauty of his lady of the lake, Ellen Douglas; the exquisiteness of her form, complexion, breast and voice, but more of its lines are devoted to her feet:

What though no rule of courtly grace
To measured mood had trained her pace;
A foot more light, a step more true,
Ne'er from the heath-flower dashed the dew;
E'en the slight harebell raised its head,
Elastic from her airy tread:

(*The Poetical Works*. London: Henry Froude, 1904, 212)

It is with these pedestrian emblems, or "clichés" as Michael Wood calls them, that John Shade accentuates his daughter Hazel's physical unattractiveness in *Pale Fire (The Magician's Doubts)*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1994, 195):

..., she'd never go,
A dream of gauze and jasmine, to that dance. (lines 334-35)

Instead of having slender and sprightly feet, Hazel suffers from "swollen feet" (l. 354). Swollen feet might have been a common suffering in Russia; Pushkin's friend Pyotr Vyazemski mentions it in his poem *Russian God* that contains a long list of everything wrong in Russia (EO, 3, 321). And in his story *Queen of Spades* Pushkin gives the old countess "swollen feet" to add to her revolting physique (Trans. Gillon R. Aitken, *Complete Prose Tales*. London: Vintage, 1993, 292). Nor have Hazel's feet been kissed by rolling ripples on a shore: as soon as she "stepped

off the reedy bank” into the “gulping swamp,” she “sank” (l. 499-500). She knew how fateful that step would be because she had learned what “grimpen” means: “On the edge of a grimpen, where is no secure foothold” (“Pale Fire” l. 368. T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*. London: Faber and Faber, 1959, 26. “Grimpen Mire” is the name of a dangerous marsh in *The Hound of Baskervilles* by Arthur Conan Doyle: “A false footstep yonder means death to man” [New York: Airmont, 1965, 56]).

Literary allusions also help explain why Hazel “took her poor young life” (l. 493). The poems about girls’ destinies, referred to in *Pale Fire*, are more revealing than John Shade’s slick story about Hazel’s unattractive looks. The key references are to Milton’s *Comus*; Andrew Marvell, *The Nymph Complaining for the Death of the Fawn*; Alexander Pope, *The Rape of the Lock*; Jonathan Swift, *Cadenus and Vanessa*; Scott’s *Lady of the Lake*; and Robert Browning’s “My Last Duchess.”

Pope’s and Marvell’s poems contain some similarities with Hazel’s life that suggest that the harmony in the Shade family was not without dissonances.

The problems facing the heroines in some of the poems mentioned are quite serious: Marvell’s nymph expects to die soon, Browning’s duchess has been murdered, and the Vanessa of Swift’s autobiographical poem, Esther Vanhomrigh, died soon after their troublesome relationship deteriorated into a crisis in 1723. In *Cadenus and Vanessa*, written at a time (1713) when their relationship was somewhat less frictional, Swift complains about women who have “Grown...corrupted in their Taste” and insists that Vanessa should regard him primarily as her “Tutor” and should give due attention to his “Lessons” (*Selected Poems*. London: Heinemann, 1967, lines 66, 605, 651, and 727).

This last censure reappears in Browning’s duke’s reproach of his former wife: that she did not “let/ Herself be lessoned” according to his wishes (*Selected Poems*. Oxford: OUP, 1949, 318).

Milton’s *Comus* is dominated by comparable strictures concerning the erotic advances the heroines (might) fancy. According to Verity, it “is overweighted with the moralising element,” related to the “religious and social conditions of his age” (Ed., *Comus*. Cambridge: CUP, 1953, xxxiv). This might be compared to Hazel’s fate, as “she was surely more a victim of the manners of her time than one has to be or should be” (Wood, *op. cit.* 195).

II Hazel Shade and Greek tragedies.

A different reading of Hazel’s swollen feet is given by Matthew Roth. He discusses how post-war America stimulated that an adolescent girl regarded “her father as the first and most appropriate object of fantasy” (“A Small Mad Hope.” *Nabokov’s Women*. Ed. Elena Rakhimova-Sommers. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2017 [37-56] 41). Instead of viewing such cultural assumptions with suspicion, the Oedipus complex was embraced in popular culture. As “swollen feet” is the literal translation of the name “*Oedipus*,” Hazel’s feet provide “the key to unlocking the secrets hiding behind John Shade’s surface narrative” (45). Eventually, the bond between John and Hazel “may have resulted in a father-daughter relationship that blurred the boundaries of propriety” (51). Although more “evidence” is provided, it looks as if the “swollen

feet” as a translation of “*Oedipus*” is the sine qua non for Roth’s claim that “*Pale Fire* functions as an incest narrative” (51; 38).

However, as the Oedipus complex is Freud’s most famous construct and because Oedipus’ disfigured feet is in Sophocles’ play the central and sole proof of his true identity, Roth has opened a promising line of inquiry and an incentive as well to give *Timon of Athens* a fresh look (see *King Oedipus. The Theban Plays*. Trans. E.F. Watling, Penguin Books, 1947, 57).

Timon of Athens is the alpha and omega of *Pale Fire*: it appears in a closet, and from there it is taken by King Charles into exile as his sole possession. Famously, it provides John Shade with the title for his poem whose manuscript disappeared into another closet as Kinbote’s most cherished piece of property. In *Pale Fire* about ten of Shakespeare’s plays are mentioned or alluded to: seven tragedies and three comedies, which include most of his best-known work. Why did Shade select *Timon of Athens*, a play that ranks high among Shakespeare’s lesser known works, and with a hero whose forte it is to let his fortune generate misfortunes? Kinbote, who, inspired by his uncle Conmal, “the great translator of Shakespeare,” became “passionately addicted to the study of literature,” found for his journey into exile a play of England’s greatest author about a Greek who lived in the fourth century BC. It is the only Greek play by Shakespeare, out of six, that is based on Greek sources: Plutarch and Lucian of Samosata. Is it selected because Nabokov wishes to amplify the vast significance of the culture, literature and mythology of ancient Greece for Shakespeare’s oeuvre? In Ben Jonson’s famous tribute, printed in the First Folio, Shakespeare has been favourably compared to “Aeschylus,/ Euripides and Sophocles” (*English Verse*. Ed. W. Peacock, vol. II, London: OUP, 1940, 50). With *Timon of Athens* Kinbote carried Western literature’s foundation--the literature of ancient Greece, and summit, Shakespeare’s art--in “a thirty-two volume edition” into exile (125).

In *Pale Fire* Nabokov seems to acknowledge Shakespeare’s indebtedness to ancient Greece and Rome, because most references to Shakespeare’s plays ultimately end in references to the classical world.

- When *Hamlet* and *King Lear* are mentioned, Kinbote draws attention to their “purple passages,” using a well-known phrase from Horace, *Ars Poetica* (155).
- Kinbote’s “a bare botkin” refers to “a bare bodkin” from Hamlet’s soliloquy (220; Shakespeare, *Complete Works*. London: OUP, 1955, 3,1,76). A bodkin is a needle or a (hair)pin, which makes its use for a dagger conspicuous. *Hamlet* was written shortly after *Julius Caesar*, and in his notes A. W. Verity writes that “Chaucer, *The Monk’s Tale* and several of our old writers, e. g. Lydgate, say that Caesar was slain with ‘bodkins’” (“Notes.” *Hamlet*. Cambridge: CUP, 1950, 172. Cf. “And stiked him with bodykins anoon” [Chaucer, “De Julio Cesare.” *Complete Works*. London: OUP, 1976, 541]).
- Shade resembles one of the women who serve in the faculty cafeteria, “the third in the witch row,” a reference to the three witches who hailed Macbeth (1, 3, 1-78). This woman looks also like “Judge Goldsworth” who in turn resembles “a Medusa-locked hag” (267; 83). After Medusa was decapitated, Pegasus, the poets’ muse, sprang from her body.
- Uncle Conmal’s translations of Shakespeare’s works are discussed at some length in the comments to line 962, and ends with comparing their merits with an “acanthus” and an “architrave,” words both having Greek roots, and deriving from Greek architectural terminology.

- The “famous avenue of all the trees mentioned by Shakespeare” appears to end near the “Roman-tiered football field” (92). The first tree mentioned is “Jove’s stout oak” (291). The oak was sacred to Zeus, the Greek god called Jove or Jupiter by Romans. “Jupiter’s great oak” is mentioned by Ovid together with some twenty more trees, all beautifully described (*Metamorphoses*. Trans. Mary M. Innes. Penguin Books, 1971, 227. The Calypso chapter in Homer’s *Odyssey* too has many different trees, used for heating, making tools and building a boat for Odysseus [Trans. E.V. Rieu. Penguin Books, 1952]).

- Two of Shakespeare’s (1564-1616) contemporaries are mentioned: Paul Hentzner (1558-1623) and George Chapman (1559-1634) (36; 116; 185). Hentzner wrote “the most evocative tourist account of Shakespeare’s London” in Latin (Jonathan Bate, *How the Classics Made Shakespeare*. Princeton: PUP, 2019, 102). Chapman, a poet and playwright, was the first translator of Homer’s *Illiad* and *Odyssey* in English.

- As mentioned, *Timon of Athens* fits in this pattern.

The references in *Pale Fire* to Shakespeare’s plays and coevals can also be considered as if they are primarily meant to be instrumental for pointing to the literature of Greco-Roman antiquity. Nabokov was well aware of the strong ties between Shakespeare and the classics, especially the Greek dramatists: “Better scholars than I have discussed the influence of Greek tragedy on Shakespeare,” he writes in “The Tragedy of Tragedy” and proceeds by noting: “In my time I have read the Greeks in English translation and found them very much weaker than Shakespeare though disclosing his influence here and there” (*MUSSR*, 327-8). It is not known yet what scholars and tragedians he read; the two images he mentions come from Aeschylus (Cf. *Agamemnon. The Orestian Trilogy*. Trans. Philip Vellacott, Penguin Books, 1959, 50; 53).

Nabokov wrote his essay in 1941, so the phrase “in my time” might refer to his Cambridge years, 1919-1922. In 1914 the *Annual Shakespeare Lecture* for the British Academy was delivered by Gilbert Murray, the eminent Hellenist from Oxford. Murray writes that Orestes is “the most central and tragic hero on the Greek stage, and he occurs in no less than seven out of our extant tragedies,” written by Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. Murray compares Hamlet not only with Orestes but also with Scandinavian origins of Hamlet, such as “Amlóði” mentioned in the “Prose Edda ... in a song by the poet Snaebjörn” (*Hamlet and Orestes*. New York: OUP, 1914, 4; 6. [<https://archive.org>]).

The basic features of Orestes’ life can be found in Homer, but many variants exist (see Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths*. Penguin Books, 1960, 418-432).

The story begins with Agamemnon who sails at the head of an army to Troy to claim Helen, his brother’s wife, who had eloped with Paris. Orestes and Electra are the son and eldest daughter of Agamemnon and his wife Clytaemnestra. During Agamemnon’s long absence Aegisthus usurps his kingdom and becomes Clytaemnestra’s lover. When Agamemnon returns, he is killed by Aegisthus and Clytaemnestra. Orestes, with Electra’s help, avenges his father’s murder and kills Aegisthus. The great tragedy in Orestes’ and Electra’s life is now how to deal with Clytaemnestra, as the obligations customarily felt for a mother are not compatible with the filial devotion for a father.

The similarities with Hamlet are threefold: the murder of the father, the betrayal by the mother, and the burden to avenge the father’s death. In *Pale Fire* Charles faces a similar predicament. Charles’ father, King Alfin, died when his plane, built by Peter Gusev, crashed.

The catastrophe is witnessed by Peter Gusev and Queen Blenda, Charles' mother, from another plane, navigating a safer course. "The fatal accident," writes D. Barton Johnson, "was, in all probability, engineered by ... Colonel Gusev and, perhaps, Queen Blenda" ("A Field Guide to Nabokov's *Pale Fire*: Waxwings and the Red Admiral." *The Real Life of Pierre Delalande*. Eds. David M. Bethea, Lazar Fleishman, Alexander Ospovat. Part. 2. *Stanford Slavic Studies* 34 [2007] 652-673, 660). Seven years later, Charles, then eight years of age, discovers "photographs depicting the entire catastrophe." He "had hideous dreams after that but his mother never found out that he had seen those infernal records" (104). How is it that a young boy can have hideous dreams and at the same time is relieved that his mother has never learned their cause?

None of the pictures were horrifying themselves as none were taken after the crash: they show Charles' father still flying "unconcerned" and even raising "one arm in triumph" (104). Nevertheless, that Charles senses that Queen Blenda wishes to leave these pictures unseen most likely evidences her complicity, as D. Barton Johnson suggests.

Peter Gusev, born in 1885, and "still spry" in 1959, married Sylvia O'Donnell about 1915, probably as a cover for his love affair with Queen Blenda, and I concur with Mary Ross' suggestion that Gusev's son Oleg is Charles' half-brother ("Kinbote and Oleg – Half Brothers?" Posting to *NABOKV-L discussion*, 2/27/2020). There are however no feelings of animosity towards his mother, unless there is some truth in Countess de Fyler's reproach that Charles had "subconsciously killed his mother" (109).

If one parent wrongs or even kills the other, then of course a child is challenged to turn his or her feelings of deference towards this parent into hatred and this might ruin one's life as it does in Hamlet's and Orestes' cases. In the Shade family no discords between the parents surface; on the contrary, their marriage of forty years' standing seems a blissful affair. But Hazel might have seen frictions Shade has not, or wishes to leave unrecorded.

Roth has observed that Hazel in Shade's verse becomes three times "my darling" and not "our darling" (51). But what is Hazel's point of view? She is seldom heard; the conversation in the haunted barn seems a rare exception. (It has been observed that because the report of Hazel's visits to the barn is partly stylized, its contents might be to some degree imagined. But if everything not witnessed by Kinbote [Gradus' journey; his conversations with Bretwit, Gordon and Izumrudov; the performances of the poltergeist; the conversation in the WUL] is deemed unreliable, much of the worlds of *Pale Fire* vanishes). There are three sessions in the barn, initiated by Hazel with spirited zeal. The first one ends due to a heavy storm. The second one, "after a row with her parents," when Hazel goes to the barn on her own, begins successfully but could not be finished properly because an inexplicable violence drove her out the barn. During the third session Hazel is accompanied by her parents. This one is terminated after three quarters of an hour when it becomes clear that Sybil's ostensibly jocular remarks are hurtful to Hazel and prevent her from doing what she came to do. After the session is broken off, Hazel, 22 years old, is seen weeping quietly, while Sybil finds relief in smoking a cigarette.

And it is John Shade alone who is waiting, in a "bathrobe" despite the cold night, for Hazel's return from her second visit to the barn (190). The absence of Sybil is emphasized because Shade's ghostly appearance echoes the third apparition of the ghost of Hamlet's father. Both fathers wear "patches" which turn out to be a "bathrobe" in Shade's case, and a "night gown (i.e. dressing gown)" for the ghost in *Hamlet* (*Pale Fire* 190. *Hamlet* 3, 4, 101. The "night gown" is the "1st Quarto ... stage direction" for line 101 [Verity 187]). While Sybil does

not partake in Shade's vigil, Hamlet's mother is much present as he is having a long conversation with her (*Hamlet* 3, 4, 8-217).

Hazel commits suicide after the arrangement made by her friend Jane for a date at a bar had failed. After the tragedy Jane "had tried to talk to the Shades...and later had written Sybil a long letter that was never acknowledged" (196). That the letter was sent to Sybil and not to John as well, suggests that it was Sybil who had declined Jane's request to talk. As Jane could hardly be blamed for an arrangement whose risks for Hazel were obvious to her parents, and as Jane must have suffered a great deal from her friend's death, it is difficult to fathom why the letter remained unanswered. Perhaps Sybil's evasion of a meeting echoes Queen Blenda's wish to avoid the sight of the photographs of the crash.

Sybil had Aunt Maud's dog "destroyed" thus "incurring the wrath of Hazel who was beside herself with distress..." and Hazel might have this incident in mind, among others, when accusing her mother of "*always* spoil[ing] everything" (165; 192).

Although Shade presents his marriage with Sybil as a cloudless love affair, Kinbote has a different opinion: he freely ventilates the idea that Shade was "mortally afraid of his wife" (228). Actually, there seems to be only one single discord that is mentioned explicitly and that might have divided the Shades: that Sybil "had weaned her husband ... from the Episcopal Church of his fathers" (224). It is hard to conceive why this much respected Church should give offense, and one has to go back to the English Civil War, when episcopal hierarchy was fiercely opposed, to find a possible explanation. "The abolition of Episcopacy," writes Verity, "was the great rallying-cry of Puritanism" ("Introduction." *Comus*. xiv). Bloody religious conflicts raged already in Shakespeare's times and may have played a role in his family, as his mother came from a Catholic house, while his father-in-law was "a staunchly Protestant farmer" with "Puritan" leanings (Stephen Greenblatt, *Will of the World*. New York: Norton, 2004, Chapter 3, "The Great Fear" and 116-7). Allusions to Puritanism abound in *Pale Fire*, and I have argued that some of the rudiments of the doctrines of the Puritans might have survived in Sybil with dire consequences for her daughter (see i.e. "Twice Removed: Cousins and Puritans in *Pale Fire*." and "Puritans in *Pale Fire*." Postings to *NABOKV-L discussion*, 08/27/2019 and 09/11/2019). The Episcopal Church as a building is also mentioned in the comments on line 49: it is connected with, as has been discussed above, the oak sacred to Zeus, a reference to Greek mythology, the source for many Greek tragedies of which the best known have an irresolvable, and often lethal, child-parent conflict at its core.

I would like to acknowledge the much appreciated comments I have received from Stephen Blackwell that stimulated me to extend the first note with the second one, and I would also like to thank Priscilla Meyer for her literal translation of the poem "*Zovut vliublennogo gvozdi*" that enabled me to read its content in English.

--Gerard de Vries, Voorschoten