INDEXERS IN FICTION

Charles Kinbote, presented in Vladimir Nabokov’s *Pale fire* as the editor and indexer of John Shade’s poem of that name, defies brief or simple description. We will merely quote here, as the fifth in our series presenting indexers in fiction, extracts from the poem’s *soi-disant* index, and urge our readers to go on to enjoy and marvel at the whole book. Our thanks to Weidenfeld (Publishers) Ltd for permission to quote.

A., Baron, Oswin Affenpin, last Baron of Aff, a puny traitor, 286.

Acht, Iris, celebrated actress, d. 1888, a passionate and powerful woman, favorite of Thurgus the Third (*q.v.*), 130. She died officially by her own hand; unofficially, strangled in her dressing room by a fellow actor, a jealous young Gothlander, now, at ninety, the oldest, and least important, member of the Shadows (*q.v.*) group.

Alfin, King, surnamed The Vague, 1873-1918, reigned from 1900; K.’s father; a kind, gentle, absent-minded monarch, mainly interested in automobiles, flying machines, motorboats and, at one time, sea shells; killed in an airplane accident, 71.

Boscobel, site of the Royal Summerhouse, a beautiful, piny and duny spot in W. Zembla, soft hollows imbued with the writer’s most amorous recollections; now (1959) a “nudist colony”—whatever that is, 149, 596.

Disa, Duchess of Payn, of Great Payn and Mone; my lovely, pale, melancholy Queen, haunting my dreams, and haunted by dreams of me, b. 1928; her album on ethereal paper with a watermark I cannot make out, her image torturing me in my sleep, 433.

Embla, a small old town with a wooden church surrounded by sphagnum bogs at the saddest, loneliest, northmost point of the misty peninsula, 149, 433.

Garh, a farmer’s daughter, 149, 433. Also a rosy-cheeked gooseboy found in a country lane, north of Troth, in 1936, only now distinctly recalled by the writer.

Glitterntin, Mt., a splendid mountain in the Bera Range (*q.v.*); pity I may never climb it again, 149.

Igor II, reigned 1800-1845, a wise and benevolent king, son of Queen Yaruga (*q.v.*) and father of Thurgus III (*q.v.*); a very private section of the picture gallery in the Palace, accessible only to the reigning monarch, but easily broken into through Bower P by an inquisitive pubescent, contained the statues of Igor’s four hundred favorite catamites, in pink marble, with inset glass eyes and various touched up details, an outstanding exhibition of verisimilitude and bad art, later presented by K. to an Asiatic potentate.

Kalixhaven, a colorful seaport on the western coast, a few miles north of Blawick (*q.v.*), 171; many pleasant memories.

Kobaliana, a once fashionable mountain resort near the ruins of some old barracks now a cold and desolate spot of difficult access and no importance but still remembered in military families and forest castles, not in the text.

Marcel, the fussy, unpleasant, and not always plausible central character, pampered by everybody in Proust’s *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*, 181, 691.

O’Donnell, Sylvia, nee O’Connell, born 1895? 1890?, the much-traveled, much-married mother of Odon (*q.v.*), 149, 691; after marrying and divorcing college president Leopold O’Donnell in 1915, father of Odon, she married Peter Gusev, first Duke of Rahl, and graced Zembla till about 1925 when she married an Oriental prince met in Chamonix; after a number of other more or less glamorous marriages, she was in the act of divorcing Lionel Lavender, cousin of Joseph, when last seen in this Index.

Shade, Sybil, *passim.*

Shadows, *the*, a regicidal organization which commissioned Gradus (*q.v.*) to assassinate the self-banished king; its leader’s terrible name cannot be mentioned, even in the Index to the obscure work of a scholar; his maternal grandfather, a well-known and very courageous master builder, was hired by Thurgus the Turgid, around 1885, to make certain repairs in his quarters, and soon after that perished, poisoned in the royal kitchens, under mysterious circumstances, together with his three young apprentices whose pretty first names Yan, Yonny, and Angeling, are preserved in a ballad still to be heard in some of our wilder valleys.

Thurgus the Third, surnamed The Turgid, K’s grandfather, d. 1900 at seventy-five, after a long dull reign; sponge-bag-capped, and with only one medal on his Jaeger jacket, he liked to bicycle in the park; stout and bald, his nose like a congested plum, his martial mustache bristling with obsolete passion, garbed in a dressing gown of green silk, and carrying a flambeau in his raised hand, he used to meet, every night, during a short period in the middle-Eighties, his hooded mistress, Iris Acht (*q.v.*) midway between palace and theater in the secret passage later to be rediscovered by his grandson, 130.

Uran the Last, Emperor of Zembla, reigned 1798-1799; an incredibly brilliant, luxurious, and cruel monarch whose whistling whip made Zembla spin like a rainbow top; dispatched one night by a group of his sister’s united favorites, 681.

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