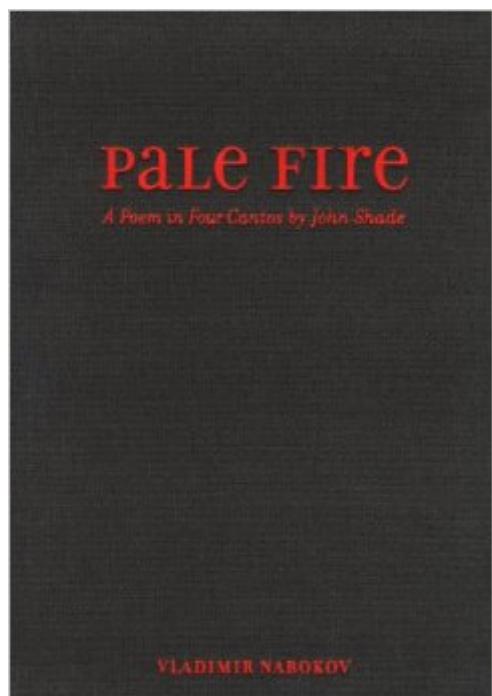


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Pale Fire: A Poem In Four Cantos By John Shade



Synopsis

Many think Pale Fire Vladimir Nabokov's greatest novel. At its heart beats the 999-line poem, Pale Fire, penned by the distinguished American poet John Shade. This first-ever facsimile edition of the poem shows it to be not just a fictional device but a masterpiece of American poetry, albeit by an invented persona -- the greatest of invented poets, according to Nabokov's own accurate evaluation. In the novel Shade's mad neighbor, Charles Kinbote, absconds with the index-card manuscript of the poem, compiling an ostensible line-by-line commentary that largely ignores Shade's text and heeds only his own egotism. Kinbote's commentary, the bulk of the novel, is an insane comic triumph of would-be romantic self-celebration that cannot quite mute its undertones of desperation. But here we rescue Pale Fire from the madman's hand to show the magician's sleight of hand, and the enchantment, in Nabokov's most ambitious poem. Renowned Nabokov authority Brian Boyd brilliantly explains Pale Fire on its and Shade's own terms, showing how its texture compares with Shakespeare's sonnets at their best. Poet R.S. Gwynn sets it in the context of American poetry of its time. Artist Jean Holabird, who conceived the project, illustrates key details of the poem's pattern and pathos. Now readers can see the text for themselves, fresh from Shade's hands, before Kinbote commandeered it so shamelessly. This attractive box contains two booklets the poem Pale Fire in a handsome pocket edition and the book of essays by Boyd and Gwynn as well as facsimiles of the index cards that John Shade (like his maker, Nabokov) used for composing his poem, printed exactly as Vladimir Nabokov described them.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This version of "Pale Fire" is a truly attractive and interesting concept in the production of one of Nabokov's greatest masterpieces. The original book is based on a 999 line poem of extraordinary wonder in 4 Cantos. In addition, there is an extensive interpretive statement also written by Nabokov, under the guise of a 'Professor Kinbote.' The publishers of this version of the book had a wonderful concept. They rendered the 999 line poem on index cards, as Nabokov would have utilized in his creation of this great masterpiece. Aesthetically, the rendering of this version is truly exceptional. However, the premise of the production is aberrant in one serious respect. The publisher seeks to emphasize the beauty and wonder of Nabokov's poem, and does this along with two wonderful interpretive commentaries never before published. However, they completely eliminate the commentary by 'Prof. Kinbote,' writing him off as a crazy lunatic with an obscure and absurd interpretive commentary on the poem. The odd thing about this choice is that 'Kinbote' is not a real person, who is a crazy lunatic. Rather, Kinbote is also a creation of Nabokov himself and the true and full meaning of the poem's underlying amazement is ONLY revealed through the comments of 'Kinbote.' To exclude his commentary from the publication is truly to rob the reader of some of the most intricate and important aspects of the book as Nabokov originally rendered his work. Even more surprising is that one of the commentators in this edition is Brian Boyd, who wrote a biography of Nabokov and of all people, should have been one of the most illuminated people with respect to Nabokov's multi-tiered levels of meaning in virtually everything he wrote.

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