

ON CONFUSIONS AND COUNTERFEITERS

The Editor's Note

We thank Michael Maar for raising the issue and would like to take this opportunity to address the rare but important problem of double titling in Nabokov's legacy.

Vladimir Nabokov never wrote a story under the title, "The New Neighbour," and the only credible bibliographic source of Mr. Maar's information is the edition of Nabokov's works in German (Vladimir Nabokov. *Erzählungen 2. 1935-1951. Gesammelte Werke*, vol. XIV, ed. by Dieter E. Zimmer, Rowohlt Verlag, Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1989, p. 607) published after the author's death.

It is the scholar's responsibility, especially in the English-language edition like the one by Mr. Maar, to adhere to the English original titles in order to avoid any ambiguity. The same confusion happens, for example, in the recent Russian translation of Karl Schlögel's monograph, *Berlin Ostbahnhof Europas. Russen and Deutsche in ihrem Jahrhundert* (published in Russian translation as *Берлин, Восточный вокзал*, Moscow, 2004). A not very meticulous translator, L. Lisiutkina translates "Der neue Nachbar" back to Russian as "Новый сосед" (p. 302). Without any proper comment or even mention of the original title, the Russian reader once again remains puzzled by Nabokov's "newly discovered story."

The ultimate authority on this issue would be naturally Dieter Zimmer himself, the German translator of Nabokov, whom I would like to thank for the provided clarification. I hope that this explanation will settle the matter of the title once and for all:

It was I who came up with the German title ‘Der neue Nachbar’ (The New Neighbor), and Nabokov (or Véra, or both) approved it after I had explained that I had been unable to find a suitably opaque (!) German word for ‘counterfeiter’. (It seems Nabokov himself had not found one until Stephen Parker suggested ‘leonardo’.) After my failure to find such a word, I wanted the German title to be as opaquely matter-of-fact as possible. Perhaps at the time I was too much impressed by Nabokov’s assertion that ‘leonardo’ was an existing “underground slang term for counterfeiter.” If it was, it must have been an extremely rare one, for it still is listed in none of my American and English slang dictionaries. If I had been more courageous, I might have just made up the German term ‘Der Leonardo’.

Respectfully yours,

Dieter Zimmer

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