This thesis explores the correspondences and interactions between the role played by the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Thomas Pynchon's novel *Against the Day* (2007) and the role that it has been or is in the process of being construed to have played in "factual" cultural-historical context.

In some ways, this project grows out of Pynchon's demand that his reader, confronted with multiple-level and conflicting "realities" in the text of his novels, attempt to juxtapose that narrative with historical and/or scientific narratives of the critical historical/cultural situations in which Pynchon habitually embeds his fiction and on knowledge of which his dramatic irony frequently depends.

While such an understanding is required for any informed reading of Pynchon, the use of it as a basis for a master's thesis has, in this case, resulted in a problem. Ms. Letalova lovingly explores the cultural/historical text/context in detail, but when it comes to the literary text, we are presented primarily with insightful generalities about *Against the Day* and about Pynchon's poetic prose in general, with very little detailed, text-based analysis. Where quotations are provided, they tend to be overlong, and the presumption appears to exist that they speak for themselves—which they do, to a certain (but only to a certain) extent.

What Ms. Letalova has to say about both her "historical" and her "literary" text is both insightful and generally accurate in placing those texts in relation to the origins and substance of "modernity" and to each other. Her characterization of *Against the Day* as "a postmodern text about the modern era" (p. 7) typifies the accuracy and eloquence of her general descriptions. In support of her generalizations regarding the "historical" World's Columbian Exposition, however, we are presented with detailed and analytic exposition based on a number of sources contemporary with and subsequent to the Exposition. Her equally valid general statements about the significance of the role of the Exposition in *Against the Day*, however, are much less supported with detailed analysis based on her own or her secondary sources' interpretation of this "text." It is also probably fair to say that there is a great deal more in *Against the Day* than Ms. Letalova's decision to treat the World's Columbian Exposition as its "master metaphor" might imply.

As with all Pynchon studies, this thesis necessarily undertakes an expedition into cultural studies in order to illuminate more knowledgeably Pynchon's own extra-textual (one might even say hyper-textual) expeditions. Unfortunately, in this case, that expedition has distracted Ms. Letalova too much from giving attention to one of the two primary
Thesis evaluation: “2, velmi dobre”

Signed:

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