"In a princedom by the sea": Revisiting the double topos in Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*

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Abstract

Over the past three decades considerable scholarly attention has been paid to the works of Vladimir Nabokov, who has become one of the most widely disputed figures of twentieth-century American and Russian literature (partially) due to his verbal pyrotechnics and stylistic extravaganzas. For a long time, these attributes of his fiction were somewhat misguidedly viewed as the quintessence of the Nabokovian universe. In his fiction, Vladimir Nabokov has made extensive use of the double topos. While he is known to have used the double for parodic purposes, the present paper diverts from the traditional mode of interpretation by attempting to answer what motivated the author to develop a particular liking for the doppelganger, which he stoutly labelled as a "frightful bore." It will be claimed that Nabokov's force of circumstances and his conviction in a metaphysical and textual "otherworld" propelled him to revivify the double as a literary theme. It will be demonstrated that Lolita abounds in various forms of doubling; most importantly, Nabokov repeatedly alludes to Edgar Allan Poe, whose "Annabel Lee" recurs in the novel as a central rhetorical, framing, ordering, and fictionalizing device, illuminating the all-pervasive nature of the "otherworld" that moves the novel's earlier interpretations to yet another dimension.

Keywords: doppelgänger, literary tradition, displacement, parody, repetition, "otherworld"

Introduction

It is trotting out a hoary old literary chestnut that Vladimir Nabokov harbored a strong animus against the traditional topos of the doppelgänger in his fiction. Despite the Russian master's continued rejection and affirmed aversion to the notion of duality, there is no denying that "his art grows out of Romanticism in the Platonic tradition [because] he sees this world as a pale reflection of another" (1985: 85). Humbert Humbert's revelation of that "anagramtailed entry in the register of Chestnut Lodge" (*L* 195) is baffling for the sheer fact that Clare Quilty, who drolly alludes to a series of literary figures in motel ledgers, is one among a multitude of Nabokov's characters to bundle the doppelgänger topos in a distinctively postmodern garb. The present paper claims that Nabokov stands the convention of the literary double on its head by delegating it a predominant role in *Lolita*,[1] where the ghostly recurrence of the theme partially stems from Nabokov's constant urge to consciously burlesque the overused topos of the doppelgänger in literature. In demonstrating how the topos functions in novel ways in the Nabokovian oeuvre, I shall assert that the theme is brought to the forefront of scrutiny in the allusively Poe-etic love triangle of Humbert, Lolita, and Annabel Leigh. However, instead of subjecting *Lolita* to further critical assessment by too heavily relying on timeworn (and perhaps too pronounced) literary allusions to Edgar Allan Poe, the paper will conclude that the Annabel-Lolita doubling is part of a broader narrative pattern, through which Nabokov subtly emphasizes repetition and the elusive nature of reality in art and life. In order to emphasize the prevalence of the double topos in his

works, my paper will engage in the literary discourse of recent Nabokov studies, which argue that aside from disrupting our deeply entrenched faith in adopted cultural formations by dint of parody, the recurrence of the doppelgänger in Nabokov was motivated by a force of circumstances in the author's life, who had developed an acute sense of loss and displacement during a lifetime punctuated by peregrinations between worlds and exiles. One cannot be wide of the mark to see an inextricable link between Nabokov's use of the double topos and his conviction in the existence of what scholars have designated the "otherworld."[2]

The double in literary tradition

To better comprehend the enigmatic omnipresence of the double topos, manifested in all forms of doublings, mirrorings, and inversions in both Nabokov's long and short fiction, it would be worth our while to begin casting a cursory glimpse at the history of the double in literature. The theme of the doppelgänger is an enormous and tempting subject of Western literary and cultural tradition, which carries a plethora of interpretations in literature, philosophy, psychology, anthropology, and other related fields. The critical and theoretical equipment used to interpret the notion of the double across centuries is the amassed knowledge of minds shaped by diverse cultural traditions, religions, and systems of personal conviction in different periods from antiquity up to our current postmodern era. In the broadest sense of the word, a doppelgänger is often portrayed as an invisible wraith or an apparition of a living person, whose actions border on the preternatural and, quite often, the demonic. Its manifold variations in literature arise from the psychological effect of the double: it stands both for contrast or opposition, likeness, and complementarity.[3] Jean-Paul Richter's definition of the term, commodiously compressed into a one-sentence footnote in *Siebenkäs* (1796), offers little to no help for scholars in pursuit of the precise conceptualization of the double.[4] In the novel, the eponymous hero, a sensitive husband, is unhappily married and brings himself to borrow the wisdom of his alter ego, who suggests that he should terminate his marriage by feigning death and burial. The slightly supernatural elements of the doppelgänger and the pseudocide indicate humanity's ancient desire to comprehend the duality of man's personality and his ceaseless struggle for a balance between good and evil. In the Genesis, for example, Man was originally a single being until God resolved to divide him in two. In ancient Nordic and Germanic legends, the alter ego is "sometimes represented in the form of a restless soul that leaves a person's body during sleep and takes on the appearance of an animal or a shadow, while the double is also a person *Shutzgeist*, or guardian spirit" (Bravo 1996: 344).

Arriving at a conclusive definition of the double is a precarious enterprise, as one reason for the deficiencies of classification comes from the fact that "the fictional double is not a literary motif but a construction of traditional culture, including myth, legend, and religion" (Živković 2000: 121). Although it has survived as a perennial motif in all literary styles, periods, and genres, it can be safely stated that the double has established its presence outside time and is always produced and determined by its social context. In most traditional interpretations, the double is seen as being in a dependent relation to the original: it is the shadow, the mirror reflection, or the duplication of the subject that it imitates and appears as the original's second self, simultaneously pretending to be himself and the other.

Attitudes toward the concept of the double vary from culture and religious beliefs that humankind has progressively developed over the centuries. Anthropological findings reveal that the pagan belief in the primacy of duality is reflected in ancient myths and legends, which illustrates the inequity of nature and how the balance of forces keep shifting from one end to the other. While primitive peoples unhesitatingly believed in the mysterious power of dreams, the magical nature of twins, shadows, and reflections, the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries stood witness to a fundamental paradigm shift in the interpretation of the demonic. Instead of denoting homogeneity and identicalness, the notion of the double was redefined and refined to make it rational phenomenon, hence more palatable for the modern mind. Milica Živković is in the right to perceive it as "the externalization of part of the self" (2000: 125) as opposed to the earlier ruminations pointing toward the realm of the supernatural. Secularizing the double and rebuffing its earlier associations with the otherworldly have placed the topos on an anthropomorphic level, where the externalization of the self also came to symbolize "the triumph of reason over obscurity" (Bravo 1996: 354). Nineteenth-century Anglo-American literature saw an upsurge of interest in the double topos, which enabled several illustrious writers, including Edgar Allan Poe, Robert Louis Stevenson, Oscar Wilde, and Joseph Conrad, to experiment with the double as a useful literary device highlighting a split of the personality or the parting of the selves.[5] In his extensive analysis of the double in postmodern American fiction, Gordon Slethaug goes so far as to disapprove of the humanistic characterization of the double only to claim that "[it is] not a spirit, thing, or person but an ever-elusive, constantly changing mode of conceptualization through language" (1993: 25).

In his seminal book, *The Literature of the Second Self*, Carl Francis Keppler portrays the double as an unrealized part of the personality, or one excluded by the ego's self-image. In his comprehensive treatment of the subject, Keppler (1972) approaches the problem of the double by resorting to a Jungian assessment of the psychic need to create a second self, which he defines as "cluster of rejected or inadmissible mental states" (6). Jung defines the double as a manifestation of desire, in which one must compensate for a lack stemming from cultural constraints. It can be said that humanity's desire for unity with the lost center of personality, the double in modern literature expresses itself as a violent transgression of human limitations and social taboos, which would prevent these desires from being realized. As a manifestation of a hidden desire, of everything that is lost, it points to the basis upon which cultural order rests, for it focuses on the possibility of disorder, that which lies outside the law, that which is outside the dominant value system. It is in this way that the double traces the unsaid and unseen of culture: that which has been silenced, made invisible, made "absent". Jung's psychoanalytic theory also highlights that the double focuses on the repressed and the subordinated, which have been forcefully made imperceptible, and consequently absent.

It has been shown through a variety of perspectives that doubling is a pivotal motif in literature. Its continued and widespread use well into the late twentieth century amply justifies that, contrary to John Barth's hurried prediction (1982), the traditional modes of literary representation, including that of the double, have not ebbed away or been consumed through overuse. In *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Fredric Jameson concludes that postmodern intellectual activity often implies the "new work […] of rewriting all the familiar things in new terms and thus proposing modifications, new ideal perspectives, a

reshuffling of canonical feelings values" (1991: xiv). Instances of the double topos prevail throughout literature, assuming diverse shapes and propelled by psychological, religious, and cultural factors. Its development from the earliest German Romantic texts until the onset of postmodernism strongly buttress the argument that the theme is "inexhaustible, capable of being renewed an infinite number of times (Slethaug 1993: 194). While there is no denying that Nabokov had a strong predilection to manifestly incorporate the double topos in his fiction (including *Despair*, *Glory*, *Lolita*, *Ada*, and several short stories), it remains an open question as to why he had chosen to employ a mode of expression that he openly held up to ridicule.

Nabokov's frightful bore

Nabokov was known to be a man of vagaries with scores of likes and dislikes pertaining to literature, art, music, and public life, which he pretentiously declared during his interviews and university lectures. He once concluded that "[i]f we consider *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* as an allegory – the struggle between Good and Evil within every man – then this allegory is tasteless and childish" (Nabokov 1982: 251). The one thing that Nabokov seemed to scorn as much as Sigmund Freud's "charlatanic and satanic" (Nabokov 1973: 47) interpretation of dreams and Dostoyevsky's "claptrap journalism" (Nabokov 1973: 42) was the allegorical oversimplification of the double topos in literature. Early Nabokov scholars (Andrew Field, Douglas Fowler, John Burt Foster, G. M. Hyde et al.) bigotedly argued that Nabokov's stylistic extravaganza and linguistic pyrotechnics represent the quintessence of his fictional universe, where the doppelgängers all have "cotton-padded bodies" (Appel 2000: xxxi) and belong to the puppet show invented by an omnipotent author. Indeed, one of the many irresistible appeals of Nabokov's novels is how he populates his aesthetically self-conscious artifice with authorial alter egos (Fyodor in *The Gift*), faintly recognizable, obscure anagrams (Van Bock in *Strong Opinions*, Adam von Librikov in *Transparent Things*, Baron Klim Avidov in *Ada*), or doppelgängers who represent the spiteful face of humanity (Quilty in *Lolita* or Hermann in *Despair*). Others, at the same time, such as Cincinnatus C. in *Invitation to a Beheading*, manage to reflect on the individual's radiant internal life during incarceration. Well-versed readers in Nabokov's life and art identify the author's main characters as his alter egos, most of whom are eccentric, polylingual, highly erudite, narcistic, and make ends meet by being writers.[6] Indeed, it can be concluded that the gulf between the author and his characters – threadlike as it – remains unbridgeable, and however striking the resemblance between the author and his look-alikes might be, it remains merely a replica, the author's mimicry, a mask or the object of his parody.

Instead of considering the double topos as the hobbyhorse of an authoritarian puppeteer, who deprives his characters of their intrinsically human qualities, it is vital to see them as entities equipped with the psychological roundness and moral seriousness which are necessary to align with the works in the novel's great tradition (used less restrictively than F. R. Leavis). Despite the fact that Nabokov noticeably departs from the conventions of character-portrayal found in earlier literary works, his use of the fictional double as a "constant mode of conceptualizing through language" (Slethaug 1993: 25) to caricature a traditional literary theme is restrictive and highly debatable. Ellen Pifer correctly claims that Nabokov's frequent application of the theme grows out of "[h]is impulse to parody and undermine the conventions of old novels" (1981: 121),

but pertinently adds that doubling illuminates the unique source of human consciousness and points towards the existence of an otherworldly realm.

Over the last three decades, Nabokov scholars have established that the use of double characters and authorial alter egos is one amongst many important hallmarks of the Nabokovian universe. His writings, patterned ingeniously and with scientific precision, present us with insoluble mysteries and a secret knowledge that the author was reluctant to share openly with his readers. One commentator points out that his "[s]tyle was […] Nabokov's *linguistic personhood*: because it allowed him to join within one created structure the natural world of precise scientific observation and the abstract world of metaphysics and consciousness, it was his pledge of immortality, his active participation in the patterns of divine mimicry" (Bethea 1995: 696; emphasis in the original). It is within the context of what the author mysteriously alluded to as the involuted nature of the "otherworld" that one can better understand the role of the double topos, which was partially influenced by Nabokov's sorely lamented loss of his parent culture.

Otherworldly echoes: loss and displacement

Born into an affluent aristocratic family with large estates, French and English governesses, and long summer vacations in Western Europe, the young Nabokov was only twenty when the Bolshevik Revolution forced him to leave his native Russia for good. Later in his life he always wrote touchingly of his homeland and cherished the fond memories of his childhood. Even long years after his first displacement, Nabokov confidently stated: "I will never go back, for the simple reason that all the Russia I need is always with me: literature, language, and my own Russian childhood. I will never return. I will never surrender. And anyway, the grotesque shadow of a police state will not be dispelled in my lifetime" (Nabokov 1973: 10). And it happened in the way as Nabokov had anticipated: he never returned to Russia. Western Europe helped him to establish his reputation as an émigré writer publishing in Russian and to bask in the admiration of his readers and contemporaries alike. Jane Grayson notes:

> Writing in Russian never made Nabokov's fortune, but it did make him famous. It may have been a small pond, but Nabokov was a very big fish in it. His reading public was not large, but it was very well read, highly discriminating and passionately devoted to literature. When "Sirin" [Nabokov's *nom de plume* at the time] gave a reading in Berlin or Paris, he spoke to packed halls.
>
> (2002: 5)

Nabokov's sense of loss was further heightened when in 1922 his father was accidentally killed at a public meeting by two royalist assassins. Toward the end of the 1930s the lot of Russian émigré writers was becoming miserable. The closing down of the publishing houses and the Nazi advance on Paris all weakened the relative stability of Nabokov and his family. He had already married Véra Slonim and had a son Dmitri, who later became a celebrated bass opera singer and the translator of some of his father's works. In an interview Nabokov laments:

> The era of expatriation can be said to have ended during World War II. Old writers died, Russian publishers also vanished, and worst of all, the general atmosphere of exile

> culture, with its splendor, and vigor, and purity, and reverberative force, dwindled to a sprinkle of Russian language periodicals, anemic in talent and provincial in tone.
>
> (Nabokov 1973: 37)

Nabokov's move to America – the second displacement – was also propelled by force of circumstances. And, oddly enough, leaving Western Europe with all he had accomplished in two decades affected Nabokov more gravely than the loss of his native land. In her introduction to *Nabokov's World*, Jane Grayson claims that the author's loss was threefold: "the loss, firstly, of his native Russian language, secondly, of his reputation as a Russian writer and, thirdly, of cultural identity" (2002: 4), the latter being the one "that Nabokov felt most keenly" (6). He poignantly expressed his loss in an interview 1962 he gave in America: "My private tragedy, which cannot, indeed should not, be anybody's concern, is that I had to abandon my natural language, my natural idiom, my rich, infinitely rich and docile Russian tongue, for a second-rate brand of English" (Nabokov 1973: 15). Distressed at his removal to the New World, he finally found his happiness in America, where the publication of *Lolita* launched him to world renown. He liked to think of himself as an American writer, who had once been Russian (Nabokov 1973: 63), or more fittingly as John Updike put it, Nabokov was "the best writer of English prose [...] holding American passport" (qtd. in Appel 2000: xix). Should one concur with Nabokov in that the "nationality of a worthwhile writer is of secondary importance" (Nabokov 1973: 63), then one should only take into account his disconnection from the parent culture and his removal into a different social and intellectual milieu.

The loss of the parent culture and the author's forced circumstances to write in a foreign language are a rare yet not unparalleled phenomenon in literature. Critics often mention the Polish-born writer Joseph Conrad alongside Nabokov; the only reason, however, why this contrast is partially inadequate rests on the fact that Conrad had never used his native tongue creatively before venturing upon his career as a writer of English at the age of thirty. "It is more appropriate to compare him to [...] Samuel Beckett: Beckett wrote in English and French, and like Nabokov, he also became a self-translator" (Juhász 2004: 3). In "Doubles in Conrad and Nabokov," Ludmilla Voitkovska (n.d.) notes that both Conrad's and Nabokov's loss of the parent culture and their displacement from one world into another are often seen as the energizing force behind their frequent treatment of the double topos. In her critical view, both writers use narrative doubles to represent the process of reading an expatriate text. She goes on to claim that

> the change of the language, which happens with the change of culture in case of expatriation, results in doubling of the self, caused by the simultaneous existence of the two cultural and linguistic archetypes in the expatriate's psyche. In expatriate fiction, doubles particularly strongly demonstrate how major political structures and ideological constructs translate into the formation of an individual psyche and character, reflect in actions, emotions, and relationships.
>
> (Voitkovska n.d.)

Nabokov's disconnection from his parent culture and his partial failure to connect with his new, adopted culture resulted in the self-conscious duplication of his characters and is aptly mirrored

by his constant shifting between two worlds, two cultures, and two languages and quite often by the loss of both cultures. In *Lolita*, for example, Humbert loses his childhood eidolon, Annabel, who is a part of his past in Europe, and loses Lolita too, who is the creation of his adopted culture. The relationship with both cultures reflects Nabokov's nostalgia for Russia that slipped out of his hands as a young writer. Although Nabokov "did not write the kind of thinly disguised transcription of personal experience which too often passes for fiction" (Appel 2000: xxii), it is important to recognize that the worlds so vibrantly depicted in his novels would not have been brought into play had it not been for the author's acute sense of loss and displacement.

In the early days of Nabokov criticism, it was widely believed that Nabokov's "two-world" theme (Johnson 1985) is principally a product of biographical circumstances; however, Grayson points out that the "two-world theory" is an already known literary and philosophical topos "having its origins in Classical philosophy, in Platonism and Gnosticism, and development in the poetry and thought of European Romanticism and French and Russian Symbolism. [...] In the 1980s and 1990s the academic focus of interest in the *tut/tam, here/there* theme shifted from the biographical and the aesthetic to the metaphysical" (2002: 12). Johnson is right in claiming that Nabokov's aesthetic and philosophical views owe much to the Symbolist movement in that "there exists, beyond the scope of the intellect another, more real world, and that what man sees before him is but a shadow and echo of that true reality" (1985: 3). However, Brian Boyd (1991) believes that Johnson's "two-world" terminology is in a way unsatisfactory and too restrictive: it is more pertinent to speak of the plurality of levels and not merely of the binary division of his worlds. Grayson adds that

> [u]nlike them [other émigré writers] Nabokov was not trapped in knowing just Russian. By moving over to English, he could transform the clichéd émigré topos of the lost homeland, the *tut/tam*, the *here* and *there*, into something dynamic: not a see-saw, but a spiral [...] he had an enviable ability to tum negatives into positives.
>
> (2002: 8)

It is also demonstrated by Priscilla Meyer, who sees *Despair* and *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* as doubles or mirror images of one another. I personally believe that, intriguing as the riddles of the Nabokovian text might be, relying too heavily on the dichotomy-triggered "two-world" terminology will make one is unlikely to detect the complexities of Nabokov's worlds. Brian Boyd identifies three fundamental reasons in support of his argument against Johnson's inadequate terminology: "First, because Nabokov stressed in numerous ways that the 'other' world he suspects surrounds the one we see is somehow in as well as beyond this one. Second, because 'two worlds' collapses or ignores several more or less distinct possible levels in the Nabokovian 'beyond' [...] Third, that 'two worlds' overdefines as it undercounts. Nabokov suggests possibilities, and possibilities within possibilities, or, if you like, worlds within worlds: worlds in regression" (1991: 24).

Considering the above arguments, it seems more appropriate to speak of Nabokov's "otherworlds" instead of making a split or a binary branching within his literary universe. This, of course, does not mean that Nabokov's novels do not offer a sense of doubleness. The manifestations of Nabokov's "otherworldly" theme have been subjected to critical attention and

are claimed to be instrumental in highlighting the importance of the double topos, particularly, in our interpretation of the Annabel-Lolita doubling in *Lolita*.

What's in a name? Lo-[Annabel]/ee-ta rediscovered

It is Edgar Allan Poe's significant bearing on *Lolita* (1959) that stands out as one of the novel's most easily recognizable sources of allusions despite the author's adulthood admission to "Edgarpoe" as an obsolescent favorite (Nabokov 1973: 42-43, 64) in a short list of literary kinfolks whom Nabokov did not hold in contempt. Nabokov's commentators readily agree on the fact that parodies of and detectable allusions to Poe recur regularly in the Russian master's texts; however, instead of affixing a mimetic function to parody, Nabokov was always careful to employ it in intricate ways, which do not create the impression of resorting to parody as a mere instrument of satire. In his comprehensive analysis, discussing Poe's ghostly trace in Nabokov's texts, Dale E. Peterson points out that "parodies allowed Nabokov to distance himself from subjection to the 'influence' of Poe while consciously (and ironically) continuing to cultivate Poe's poetic principles in a post-Romantic age" (1995: 463). Nabokov had a penchant for parody as a serious fictionalizing device, which extended beyond the notion of simple entertainment or "grotesque imitation" as he himself liked to refer to it. Far from trying to make an artistic endeavor to claim superiority over Poe's artistic excellence or to rectify his shortcomings, Nabokov considered parody as "a playful collision of tradition with critical talent" (Peterson 1995: 465). It is more than likely that he alluded to Poe, in *Lolita* and elsewhere, to express his appreciation for his genuine poetry and his understanding of the poetic principles formulated in "The Philosophy of Composition" (1846). In my analysis, it will be demonstrated through the Annabel-Lolita doubling Nabokov attempted to accentuate his willful choice to establish a storehouse of Poe-allusions in a visible manner, but never to the extent of pillorying his once admired predecessor.

Lolita is often interpreted as a novel which offers an astounding system of monumental doubling and features a variety of multiple identities, double names, the duplication and inversion of number, dates, and scenes, all of which implicitly emphasize the parodies of Poe and the resonances of the Platonic world, where only faithful imitation was seen as a perfect replica of the original.[7] Some characters in *Lolita* seem to be assigned more than one role at the same time. Andrew Field asserts that Humbert Humbert's double role has been left unnoticed by many commentators: on the one hand, he is the neurotic debaucher, while, on the other hand, he assumes the role as Lolita's father (1967: 330-331). As an early explicator of Nabokov, Field (1967) mistakenly believes that Humbert's only intention is to use their relationship is to present a parody of incest, an idea that distantly echoes Freud, Nabokov's arch enemy, the "Viennese quack" (1973: 47) whose name is omitted from Field's analysis.[8] The clue that is likely to have misled Nabokov's commentator comes from Humbert's admission:

> It had become gradually clear to my conventional Lolita during our singular and bestial cohabitation that even the most miserable of family lives was better than the parody of incest, which, in the long run, was the best I could offer the waif.
>
> (*L* 287)

What becomes evident on the last page of the novel is that Humbert's initial craving for Lolita is transformed into something akin to paternal affection and sensitivity: "That husband of yours, I hope, will always treat you well, because otherwise my specter shall come at him, like black smoke, like a demented giant, and pull him apart nerve by nerve" (*L* 309). In my opinion, Lolita's role diverges into even more directions: first, she is Dolores Haze, the typical American teenager (as opposed to the nymphet possessed by Humbert); second, she is Lolita, Humbert's underage love; and, third, she is the male protagonist's daughter insomuch that she often insists on calling Humbert her father ("You talk like a book, Dad" [*L* 114]; "A great decision has been made. But first buy me a drink, dad" (*L* 207). In one sense, their relationship is a complementary one, in which they act as one another's halves or complementary selves. At face value, Humbert's case presents no interpretive challenges: he needs Lolita to gain bodily pleasures from her and also to fulfill his childhood obsession. Furthermore, he is also adamant on finding due justification for his immorality by attempting to appeal to his audience (to his jury, in fact) through his extraordinary writing style, which he hopes will evoke emotions and sympathy in others.[9] Lolita's need is the financial welfare with which Humbert is able to furnish her. For Humbert, life without Lolita equals madness; however, for Lolita, breaking away from Humbert is the road to absolute corruption. It is this complementation that keeps the two characters counterpoised so that they can both lead a life in accord to the norms dictated by society, which considers Humbert as a wholesome father looking after his wholesome daughter. As soon as this unity is dissolved, Humbert resorts to murder and Lolita takes on a life more deviant than the one she experienced with her first seducer. It seems that the relationship between Humbert and Lolita is by no means based on a healthy symbiosis, or mutualism, where the association is advantageous to both parties, but it should be rather conceived of as a form of two-way parasitism with both parties exploiting one another.

Interestingly, *Lolita* can also be read as a delightful detective story, rife with conundrums, identity theft, elopement, and murder, involving pursuer and pursued with the roles shifting back and forth in vertiginously rapid succession: Humbert pursues Lolita propelled by his desire unfulfilled. Quilty is on the right scent after "father" and "daughter" across the United States. "Humbert the Hound" (*L* 60) relentlessly searches for the absconded nymphet, and eventually Humbert initiates his murderous hunt for eloper-Quilty. The notion of pursuit plays a significant role in *Lolita*, yet it would be erroneous to deprive the novel of its real grandeur by heedlessly rating it as a cheap whodunit story of murder and sexual exploitation – a rather popular error casual readers tended to make at the novel's first publication. In *Lolita*, it is the pursuit behind the pursuit, of a past irretrievable that makes *Lolita* a compelling novel. It will be seen that Humbert's tragic loss of Lolita is preceded by an earlier event, which transforms the novel into a *tour de force* of the loss of one's paradisiacal childhood and a "lyrical commemoration of what has been lost cannot be far removed from the spirit of parody" (Peterson 1995: 470).

Humbert's adolescent past is closely linked with an "initial girl-child" (*L* 9), whom he loved one summer on the French Riviera. Annabel Leigh is a homonymous reconstruction of Poe's Annabel Lee, who died of typhus soon after their "unsuccessful first tryst" (*L* 14). Humbert confesses that "I am convinced [...] that in a certain magic and fateful way Lolita began with Annabel" (*L* 13-14), and adds that "the ache [caused by her death] remained with me, and that little girl with her seaside limbs and ardent tongue haunted me ever since – until at last,

twenty-four years later, I broke her spell by incarnating her in another" (*L* 15). Humbert's description of their burgeoning yet unconsummated love affair was full of passion between two equal partners, involving naturalness and normalcy. Humbert lucidly explains: "When I was a child and she was a child, my little Annabel was no nymphet to me" (*L* 17). It is this tender and requited love affair of the twin-souls that stands in sharp contrast with the violent and unreciprocated relationship between middle-aged Humbert and a soulless prepubescent girl, whose identity as a realistic character can be called into doubt, as Lolita only appears through the vivid and highly subjective first-person narrative of the protagonist.

At a superficial level, it seems plausible that Annabel Leigh's character is woven into the novel by dint of justifying Humbert's deviant sexual love affair with Lolita to eventually exonerate the protagonist from being publicly denounced for pedophilia, or statutory rape, as it was termed in the 1950s. I believe that Annabel is employed in the novel as somewhat of a rhetorical, fictionalizing, and ordering device used by the narrator to exculpate himself from the grisly deeds he has committed. In Humbert's view, his infatuation with Lolita functioned more or less the same way as Petrarch's love for Laura and Dante's love for Beatrice, both of whom were pubescent girls ("Petrarch fell madly in love with his Laureen" [*L* 19] and "Dante fell madly in love with Beatrice" [*L* 19]), but what Humbert fails to add is that Beatrice was almost the same age as Dante and the poet's passion remained unbeknownst to her; as for Laura, her age was never identified by literary historians (Appel 2000b: 342). With all these addenda and rectifications from Humbert's side, his pursuit to retrieve, recreate, and relive his fondly cherished past on the French Riviera with the beloved girl, who has since become a dangerous obsession of his mind, seems somewhat less objectionable for the reader. "Humbert's love for Lolita herself also reflects the theme of the irretrievable past. [...] What he does not know, of course, what he finds out too late, is that [...] the attempt to repeat the past only shows how impossible it is to retrieve it" (Boyd 1991: 238).

In light of this commonly held interpretation of the relationship between Lolita and Annabel, it can be claimed that Lolita is the repetition or double of Humbert's childhood love, whom the protagonist attempts to reconstruct through language. With the help of his memory, which plays an ever-dominant role in Nabokov's oeuvre at large, Humbert strives – in vain – to relive his idyllic past in Lolita, whom he considers as merely a replica of the original, that is to say, the "initial girl-child […] in a princedom by the sea" (*L* 9). In a similar vein to Nabokov's protagonists, Humbert is also equipped with the ability to evoke fragments of the past in a piecemeal fashion, immersing in moments of "aesthetic bliss"[10] as he relies on his mnemonic faculty to reconstruct the faint image of Lolita out of the details (generally those related to his sensory perceptions) that only he is able to faintly recall. Similar moments of aesthetic bliss, through the protagonists' journeying back in time, are discernable in the majority of Nabokov's works.

Carl R. Proffer stoutly asserts that "Lolita is a reincarnation of Annabel Leigh" (1968: 34). It may well be true that the two are inextricably linked through Poe's famous poem "Annabel Lee" or Humbert's past meanderings. It is then unclear what role is delegated to Dolores Haze. To most casual readers this question may sound inane, as Dolores Haze is always synonymous with Lolita, but Humbert gently provides his readers with further thoughts by means of differentiating between the two:

> She was Lo, plain Lo, in the morning, standing four feet ten in one sock. She was Lola in slacks. She was Dolly at school. She was Dolores on the dotted line. But in my arms she was always Lolita.
>
> (*L* 9)

> What I had madly possessed was not she, but my own creation, another, fanciful Lolita – perhaps, more real than Lolita; overlapping, encasing her; floating between me and her, and having no will, no consciousness – indeed, no life of her own.
>
> (*L* 62)

Save for Humbert, nobody else in the novel insists on calling the nymphet Lolita, and if we agree with Daniel Thomieres (1999), we can also conclude that Lolita does not exist in average reality, only in Humbert's neurotic mind. Other characters in the novel refer to her as Lo, Lola, Dolly, and Dolores, but only Humbert resorts to calling her Lolita. It is in this regard that Thomieres believes that "[t]he name Lolita hides a bruised body and a despised intellect who cries at night; Humbert Humbert projects his lust and his cruelty into his narcissistic, mirror-like name" (1999: 166). It is due to this distinction that Thomieres partly rebuffs the Lolita-Annabel doubling as an essential component of an idealized love relationship; instead, he stoutly asserts that Lolita was coercively made to become *that* double by a debauched individual (1999: 168). Still, Lolita's presence is very much in accord with the idea that the deeply troubled artist plumps for every opportunity to transcend his loss by remembering the minutiae of his past, inhabited by spectral figures, like Humbert's Annabel or Poe's "rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore." Such transcendence through art to recapture the image of the woman of desire is a central theme to Nabokov's works and looms large in most of the short stories and almost all the novels. Humbert's nostalgic longing for his childhood love, who died shortly after their first physical encounter, is aligned with Poe's poetic principles by cultivating it in a post-Romantic age, where the death of a beautiful woman is still seen as "the most beautiful poetical topic in the world" (1999: 167). Nabokov indubitably tips his hat to Poe, as he makes Humbert poignantly recall how he had lost Annabel only four months after "possessing [his] darling" (*L* 8) "in a princedom by the sea" (*L* 5). It cannot be merely coincidental that Nabokov had chosen to allude to Poe: his indebtedness to the American Romantic writer and poet is clearly indicated in his acknowledgement of Poe's well-formulated poetic process in "The Philosophy of Composition" (1946), which is likely to have impelled Nabokov to "produce verbal mirages of lost love objects" (Peterson 1995: 463). In my view, with the Annabel-Lolita doubling, the author created a dichotomy that sought to emphasize repetition but, at the same time, also included difference. Humbert's quest to nostalgically recover the idylls of his past, which resulted in a tragic loss, helped him to reproduce both the dark lyricism of Poe's style and lead him to believe that the idealized woman, whom he "safely solipsized" in a "euphoria of release" (*L* 40), represents the identicalness he was hoping to accomplish. The parodic difference Nabokov displays through repetition is in keeping with the idea that the "rhetorical gain Humbert derives his 'nympholepsy' with a literary genealogy, the purpose and tone of Nabokov's conspicuous mimicry of Poe remain very much in dispute" (Peterson 1995: 464).

In the novel, Lolita is often described as Humbert's private creation, while Dolores is exposed as a flesh-and-blood American teenage girl, who remains generally unobserved, as it were, through Humbert's prism of perception. In a broader analytical context, Lolita symbolizes postmodern consumerism and a culture that makes her an object of desire. "[A]lthough part of Humbert's sense of the splendor of his love for Lolita is that she reincarnates Annabel, he also knows that Lolita cannot really fill the place of his first love.[11] With Annabel he could share his passion and his thoughts; with Lolita, he can only secure access to her body" (Boyd, AY 238). It can thus be concluded that Lolita as a realistic and round (to use Forster's term) character of the text might not even exist, as she is nothing but Humbert's objectification of a girl-child, hence her captor's ghostly production of his mind. Instead of displaying anthropomorphic qualities, Lolita becomes a commodity and Humbert the consumer.[12] He calls the reader's attention to the fact, time and again, that possessing Lolita has little in the way of establishing sexual contact with her, but rather to take delight in her ability to regain time lost from his childhood and perpetuate the image of Annabel. He confesses: "I am not concerned with so-called 'sex' at all. Anybody can imagine those elements of animality. A greater endeavor lures me on: to fix once for all the perilous magic of nymphets" (*L* 89).

Annabel's existence is yet another question that has been left unanswered by most early scholars. Lolita occupies only a minor, submissive, and overtly passive role in the novel with short statements, most of which add little to nothing to the novel's action. Since Humbert's narration is written in a confessional tone, where he entirely relies on the workings of memory in legal captivity, it would be a mistake to take his narration at face value. Even though the novel consists of recollections, Humbert most cogently evokes the very particulars of his life in toto. Such lucidity in recalling events and his admission to his ability to flawlessly remember his past makes Humbert (and nearly all of Nabokov's deranged or emotionally fragile protagonists, including Kinbote in *Pale Fire* and Hermann in *Despair*, both of whom are pathological liars and neurotic scoundrels) a quaintly eloquent, yet fiendishly unreliable narrator. Lolita is often recalled with perfect clarity whenever she emerges in the narration. Annabel, on the other hand, remains blurred as far as her physical traits are concerned. Still, Humbert speaks of a snapshot which shows Annabel, but as "she was in the act of bending over her *chocolat glacé*, and her thin bare shoulders and the parting in her hair were about all that could be identified (as I remember that picture) *amid the sunny blur* into which her lost loveliness graded" (*L* 13, italics added).[13] He continues to explain that only he can distantly recreate the image of Annabel "in the laboratory of my mind, with your eyes open (and then I see Annabel in such general terms as: 'honey-colored skin,' 'thin arms,' 'brown bobbed hair,' 'long lashes,' 'big bright mouth')" (*L* 11). Thomieres claims that "[p]erhaps Annabel Leigh is an echo who exists only in language by means of words. To begin with, she is an echo of Annabel Lee, making of H. H. an echo of the *poete maudit* and granting him rights denied to ordinary mortals" (1999: 168). As Annabel Leigh is the reincarnation of Poe's hero (existing only within the boundaries of his poem), Nabokov makes use of his childhood eidolon as a rhetorical device, with which her debaucher seeks to justify his reprehensible desires.

Humbert's search for the repetition or double of Annabel Leigh appears to be less demanding than the "cryptogrammic paper chase" he undertakes at the end of the novel after Lolita elopes with Clare Quilty, Humbert's evil nemesis and purported doppelgänger. Annabel is

first associated with a pair of lost sunglasses on the beach, which Humbert later finds in Chapter Ten of Part One as he catches sight of Lolita for the first time. He describes his unsuccessful attempt to make love to Annabel amidst "avid caresses, with somebody's lost pair of sunglasses for only witness" (*L* 13); he once again finds these glasses as he recollects past images and projects them onto Lolita: "[H]alf-naked, kneeling, turning about on her knees, there was my Riviera love peering at me *over dark glasses*" (L 39; italics added). In Humbert's vision, Lolita is "the same child" (*L* 39), his lost "Riviera romance" (*L* 167), who also has "seaside limbs and ardent tongue" (*L* 15), making the resemblance to Annabel all the more striking.

By finding a plethora of affinities (behavioral, physical, and fatidic) between Annabel and Lolita, it is essential to note that Nabokov's choice of names was not accidental. First, it may seem reasonable that Nabokov, the godlike author, wanted Annabel Leigh to continue her earthly existence at another age and in a different body. Such an assumption would stand to reason, as Nabokov was known to have treated his characters as "galley slaves" (1973: 75) and annihilated them at his will (consider, for example, the well-timed, premeditated, and aptly choreographed knocking-down of Charlotte Haze). Annabel's untimely and tragic death that Humbert bemoans in the first few chapters does not seem irreversible as Lolita makes her debut in Chapter Ten of Part One. What he does not realize is that he can never consummate his love with Lolita, as he was, in a similar fashion, unable to possess Annabel. It may not be erroneous to concur with Thomieres that Annabel is more the "result of a series of hypallages than a real human being with a life of her own" (1999: 169). In this regard, Appel's idea is that the middle syllable of Lolita (Lo-*lee*-ta) alludes to Poe's Annabel *Lee* (2000: 328-329). She was also a poet's private creation, and, according to Nabokov, represented eternal love through her immortality. Also, Annabel Leigh forbidden to fade away so that the omnipotent author can immortalize them both through an eerie chain of reincarnations: Annabel Lee continuing her existence in Annabel Leigh, while the latter being transported into Lolita. In doing so, Humbert remains loyal to his personal credo, which also (farcically) hallmarks of the novel: "[p]oets never kill" (*L* 88).

Second, Proffer's interpretation of the two names is even more stimulating although it raises many a question in light of our earlier (partial) rejection of the exact doubling of the two girls. In his opinion, Lolita is Annabel's exact double or mirror image if the two names are juxtaposed: it shows that the word-initial and the word-final letters in both names are reflections of one another. Hence A[nnabe]L is mirrored as L[olit]A (Proffer 1968: 34) with the reversed distribution of A-L and L-A. Third, the most ingenious analysis of Lolita's name is offered by Thomieres, who claims that in order to make his desire fulfilled, Humbert was to find the *ta*, and this is the very consummation with which Dolores supplies him. He points out that (Do)lo(res) is consecutively "Lo" and "Leigh," hence condemned to this *ta*, which transform render the name Lolita (Lo + Leigh + ta = Lolita). Humbert's struggle to come to terms with Lolita's true identity is a noteworthy aspect of the novel: He dreams of "Annabel Haze, alias Dolores Lee, alias Loleeta" (*L* 167) as the novel draws to an end. Thomieres believes that "Lolita is [...] the object of desire, and young women called Dolores and Leigh (if she ever existed) have to provide their bodies and deny their minds so as to incarnate that fantasy for Humbert Humbert" (1999: 168). The protagonist's quest for Lolita's corporeal existence is the novel's principal conundrum, which is never satisfactorily answered, yet a sensible response can be detected at the point of Lolita's elopement with Quilty and the ensuing paperchase that Humbert undertakes with due

diligence. As he travels from one motel to another, he has no choice but to accept that Lolita's corporeal being is just as elusive as their own relationship, which may have never existed outside the bounds of a well-constructed self-conscious novel of a ludic yet dictatorial author.

In most interpretations of the Annabel-Lolita relationship in terms of the Romantic double topos, commentators were initially preoccupied with doubling at a textual level and made occasional references to "Annabel Lee" and other works of Poe ("William Wilson" and "The Fall of the House of Usher") in relation to the Humbert-Quilty doubling. It is only now that the ethical dimensions of *Lolita* are also subjected to in-depth critical assessment. Contrary to the widely held belief that *Lolita* is a pornographic *succès de scandale*, critics have highlighted that several moral issues are broached in the novel, encompassing themes, such as sexual taboo, victimization, solipsism, moral development, mature adult love, questions of religious and racial discrimination, and other related issues. It is sufficient, for the scope of the present paper, to condemn Humbert on ethical grounds and emphasize that his childhood with Annabel Leigh provides only a jerry-built pretext for the kinship with Lolita. Humbert's most essential psychological features, lust, authority, and narcissism, all dwell deep inside him even after his unconsummated love affair with Annabel ends in a physical sense and spreads over to Lolita. All those qualities that Humbert exhibits at a young age are transported into his adult world, revealing that nothing has mended his ways, and the only conclusion to be made at this juncture is to admit that it is only Humbert repeating Humbert. Indeed, this is what lies behind Nabokov's nasty "double rumble" (1973: 26). Whilst Humbert's recollections of Annabel are vague in terms of her bodily traits, he highlights many of those common features which united their souls during those early years, enveloping the novel in a layer of supernaturalness.

> Long after her death I felt her thoughts floating through mine. Long before we met we had had the same dreams. We compared notes. We found strange affinities. The same June of the same year (1919) a stray canary had fluttered into her house and mine, in two widely separated countries.
>
> (*L* 8)

While the novel abounds in dualities, one the most remarkable ones is how *Lolita* features America as the repetition of Europe, the two worlds merging into one as the male protagonist rediscovers his Riviera love in Lolita in a small New England town. However, despite the many apparent similarities between Annabel and Lolita, the protagonist seems to function as a more glaring example of a double to Annabel than his lascivious nymphet. Some commentators claim that Lolita cannot be seen as a repetition of Annabel. First, Lolita is a nymphet, while Annabel could never correspond to this definition (as mentioned above, they were the same age, just as Dante and Beatrice, and their relationship was absolutely normal under these circumstances). Second, Humbert fell "madly, clumsily, shamelessly, agonizingly in love" (*L* 7) with Annabel, but he only expresses the same feelings for Lolita when she is no longer the "Lolita" he wishes to see anew. Third, he was never able to engage in a sexual intercourse with Annabel, while Lolita was used as an object and an equally interesting case study of American pop culture. Annabel and Lolita are only related as far as Humbert's self-absorption is concerned. His narcissism prevails throughout the novel as he takes pride in his mental powers, invincible intellect, grandiosity, and virility by referring to himself as "Humbert the Terrible" (*L* 29), "Humbert le

Bel" (*L* 41), "Herr Humbert" (*L* 56), "Well-read Humbert" (*L* 70), "handsome Humbert Humbert" (*L* 72), and "crafty Humbert" (*L* 100). As the "Confession of a White Widowed Male" (*L* 3) is a first- person singular narration, very much akin to diary where dialogs and naturally sounding conversational ploys are few and far between, we are not provided with the emotions, thoughts, and desires of the other characters, let alone Lolita's. Humbert does not seem to make the least effort to communicate to his readers what his environment thinks or feels, what their intentions are, and most importantly how they relate to him. In *Lolita*, everyone else is deprived of their fundamental human rights, and the enjoyment of life is reserved exclusively for Humbert in a vast lexical and rhetorical playfield. His indifference toward Annabel is also passed on to Lolita, although time (now and then) and distance (here and there) might as well have changed him. He recounts how he attempted to make Annabel his object through his sexual approach. "I was on my knees, and on the point of possessing my darling" (*L* 13), says Humbert in cold indifference as if Annabel's own desires should be completely ignored. While stigmatizing Humbert as a narcissist can be solidly proven throughout the novel, in my view Humbert's relationship to Lolita is best seen in the context of a love of power, which enables the male protagonist to morbidly make Annabel a perfect reflection of himself.

Conclusion

Over the last six decades several critical perspectives have been offered in various attempts to better understand the Nabokovian text, but it seems that the most recent approach, according to which his fiction gravitates beyond the text toward an otherworldly dimension, has successfully (yet oftentimes irrationally) ruled out the orientations of the purely "esthetic" or the predominantly "ethical" Nabokov. In lieu of unjustly viewing the Nabokovian text in light of its "metaphysical" qualities alone, I have claimed in my paper that the earlier approaches are *not* incommensurable with the freshest scholarly findings. They add to the complexity of Nabokov's writings by allowing us to catch a fleeting glimpse of the meaning of existence through the discussion of the different qualities and variations of the otherworld. My reading is contingent on earlier analyses, findings, misconceptions, and interpretations, which have occupied an important role in Nabokov studies but called for rectification and reevaluation. Choosing the double topos for the *sujet* of my paper seemed pertinent as Nabokov, even today, is still read for its playfulness and the widely employed postmodernist stratagems. Evaluating Nabokov merely as a stylist would lead one to superficial conclusions about the relationship between Nabokov's literary worlds and his creative genius. One must recognize that the complexity of his *oeuvre* reaches far beyond the playful invention of anagrammatic names, labyrinthine narrative structures, amusing instances of paronomasia, cross-linguistic puns, spoonerisms, neologisms, alternating points-of-view, doppelgangers and related forms of doubling, and the other components of his fictional universe.

My paper attempted to offer a fresh reading of the double topos in Nabokov's *Lolita*, which remains as easily discernible feature of the novel through its multiple manifestations. It is only due to the spatial limitations of the written page that the equally relevant role of Clare Quilty as Humbert's double has been left uninterpreted. It has been demonstrated that in Nabokov's erudite parodies of the double also entertains the idea of the "otherworld" in

Nabokov's fiction, which enables the withering shades and shadows of the past (lost loves, idyllic childhood, nostalgia for the lost woman of desire) enter the realm of speciously corporeal existence. While it seems impossible to retrieve people and objects to our present-day reality, Nabokov offers spiritual solace to his reader in a fictional world that had been wrongly associated with depravity, cruelty, and exploitation. Parody, it has been shown, was used to draw attention to Poe's melancholy and gently lilting poetry which permeated the rich and allusory texture of *Lolita*. Through Lolita we have arrived a conclusion: imitating the eidolon of one's past happiness is employed to denote a loss, according to which the original can only be recreated provisionally, in dreams or half-conscious states. Such a recreation is only workable for Nabokov's privileged characters through the supremacy of imagination and one's ability to invoke the arcadian nature of the past and bring into play mnemonic skills which help one to submerge into the otherworld, consisting of a confluence of memory fragments. In closing, I can do no better than to conclude my paper with some pertinent lines of Dale E. Peterson:

> Both writers [Nabokov and Poe] were explicitly aware of that trick of human consciousness that enables the conjuror of world and images to straddle two worlds at once and, as it were, to get away with "two-timing" life. They composed text that deliberately exposed transference and the transport, the genuine otherworldliness. That could be achieved by an inspired and well-regulated manipulation of the sensation ó-creating medium of language.
>
> (1995: 471)

Notes

[1] For the sake of easier readability, all references to Lolita are abbreviated L in parenthetical citations and followed by the page number. All references are to this version: Vladimir Nabokov. *The Annotated Lolita*. Ed. Alfred Appel Jr. London: Penguin Classics. 2000.

[2] In 1979, two years after her husband's death, Mrs. Vera Nabokov was the first to call attention to the pivotal, yet commonly misconstrued notion of the otherworld. Announced in the preface to Nabokov's posthumously published *Stikhi* (Verses 1916), it is this brief and somewhat incomplete rendering of the concept that has assumed a principal position in Nabokov criticism: "I would like to call the reader to a key undercurrent in Nabokov's work, which permeates all that he has written and characterizes it like a kind of watermark. I am speaking of a strange otherworldliness, the "hereafter" (potustoronnost'), as he himself called it in his last poem, 'Being in Love'" (Nabokov 1979: 3).

[3] Complementarity as seen in the Platonic notion of twin souls, which search for one another to unite their sundered halves, is aptly exemplified in Nabokov's short story, "Scenes from the Life of a Double Monster."

[4] Jean-Paul Richter defines it as follows: "So heissen Leute, die sich selbst sehen" (That is the name of people, who see themselves; my translation). Other expressions for the doppelgänger include sosie or ménechme in French, je est un autre by Rimbaut, or el otro by Borges.

[5] Poe's "William Wilson" (1839), Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1885), Conrad's "The Secret Sharer" (1925), and Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) are apposite examples of the prevalence of the double topos in nineteenth-century literature.

[6] On a side note, it might be interesting to observe that the works of Alfred Hitchcock share affinities with those of Nabokov. Similar to Nabokov and Joyce, Hitchcock is also noted for his cameo-like appearances and the use of authorial doppelgangers or alter egos in his films. Nabokov's presence is strongly felt in all

of his novels, although he firmly rejects the idea on numerous occasions that he does not write autobiographies.

[7] Double names and initials abound in *Lolita*. Humbert Humbert is the most obvious case in point, but secondary characters make the duplications even more numerous. Alfred Appel's remarkable and nearly exclusive collection of duplicated items can be found in the introductory chapter to *Lolita*. I refrain from listing them here due to spatial limitations.

[8] Nabokov's lifelong rejection of Freud is well-documented in his writings, an aspect which has been subjected to ample scrutiny by literary commentators. Harold Bloom claims that "[r]ejecting Freud is not a possible option in our time because one cannot be a non-Freudian, only an anti-Freudian." (1992: 3).

[9] David Lodge examines *Lolita* by shedding light on its "fancy prose style" [1992: 94] and several others, on the basis of which Nabokov's works were, for a long time, seen as hermetically closed metaliterary manifestos. Poe's stylistic maneuvering and choice of topic is an especially handy tool for Humbert's apologia.

[10] In his afterword "On a Book Entitled *Lolita*," Nabokov dubs the aforementioned revelatory process as the "aesthetic bliss," which he famously defines as "a sense of being somehow, somewhere, connected with other states of being where art […] is the norm" (*L* 305); or, in simpler terms, as J. B. Sisson puts it: "aesthetic bliss" is "the total effect the writer's works have upon the reader" (qtd. in Shrayer 1999: 18).

[11]In *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (1975) Tzvetan Todorov writes in everyday life the recurrence of some events that appear to happen due to chance. Without any explanation we tend to invent supernatural beings as the incarnation of an imaginary causality for such events, which is similar to the Voltaire aphorism: "If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him." Since we seek causality, even for our own behavior, the way that we have try to explain our darker-thoughts is always through a wide range of motifs.

[12] In her convincing article on the relationship featuring Lolita as a product of destructive postmodern consumerism, Irina Kovačević uses Fredric Jameson's and Walter Benjamin's theories to shed light on the presence of consumerist society in the novel. She argues that Humbert's behavior toward the nymphet can be likened to the act of shopping for "product or object to fulfill what one believes to be the essence of one's character, or, at least, the end or purpose there. For this reason, Humbert's sense of control over having Lolita drives his character throughout the novel, and may be read as a commentary on consumerism and its postmodern nature in popular culture itself, on the act of buying her" (2014: 279).

[13] Nabokov's constructed his novels by consciously enumerating seemingly insignificant details. With a technique he calls "cosmic synchronization" (*Speak, Memory*, 1951) he garners objects in order to create the impression of coherence is instead simply listing disjointed fragments – either through the sudden convergence of details that Nabokov called "cosmic synchronization" or through the systematic collection of details. These strategies of decentralized coherence are indeed at the very heart of all of Nabokov's works.

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In SKASE Journal of Literary and Cultural Studies [online]. 2020, vol. 2, no. 2 [cit. 2020-12-11]. Available on web page http://www.skase.sk/Volumes/SJLCS04/pdf_doc/01.pdf. ISSN 2644-5506.