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The Portrait of the Artist in a Mirror: The Refraction of Joyce in Nabokov's Fiction

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by
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To my father and mother,
in appreciation

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INTRODUCTION

I

The Hungarian Football Team

In Paris on February 11th, 1937, Gabriel Marcel, in the midst of organizing a series of lectures, received an untimely call. The scheduled speaker that day, Jolán Földes, a Hungarian writer fresh from her French bestseller, had suddenly fallen ill. With only a few hours before the event, Marcel scrambled to discover a replacement. A speaker was found and in anticipation of a disgruntled audience, a troop of people was mustered to save the stand-in the embarrassment of speaking to a room of empty chairs. Surely enough, come five o'clock, at the Salle Chopin, when the Russian writer began his impromptu Pushkin lecture, the maelstrom of disappointed, shuffling feet thundered. The house almost completely emptied, but "a source of unforgettable consolation [for the speaker] was the sight of Joyce sitting, arms folded and glasses glinting, in the midst of the Hungarian football team."[1]

The man was Vladimir Nabokov. The night verged on historic. Nabokov had written to Joyce four years earlier:

> I have been invited by a prominent Russian (émigré) firm of publishers to translate for them your *Ulysses*. I need hardly say that I am a great admirer of your work, and thus should be happy to undertake this translation. It would seem to me, moreover, that the

[1] Nabokov, *Strong Opinions* 86.

> Russian language can be made to convey in a most subtle way the musical peculiarities and intricacies of the original.[2]

The translation never reached fruition; Nabokov and Joyce never met. For the first time, two of the greatest literary minds of the 20th century were in the same room, separated only by a stage and a sports team. It took another two years for the Russian and the Irishman to come face to face.

Details of the highly anticipated meeting do not seem to live up to expectations. Nabokov recollects: "another time my wife and I had dinner with him at the Léons' followed by a long friendly evening of talk. I do not recall one word of it but my wife remembers that Joyce asked about the exact ingredients of myod, the Russian "mead," and everybody gave him a different answer" (Nabokov, *Strong Opinions* 86). However, one unforgotten anecdote is that Joyce gave Nabokov a copy of *Haveth Childers Everywhere*, one of the published fragments that would become *Finnegans Wake*.[3]

II

Strong Opinions

Unfortunately for Joyce, Nabokov did not take well to *Finnegans Wake*. In fact, he "detest[ed] *Finnegans Wake* in which a cancerous growth of fancy word-tissue hardly redeems the dreadful joviality of the folklore and the easy, too easy, allegory" (Nabokov, *Strong Opinions* 102). In a different interview, Nabokov proclaimed:

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[2] Killeen 15.

[3] Boyd, *Russian Years* 504.

> the unfortunate *Finnegans Wake* is nothing but a formless and dull mass of phony folklore, a cold pudding of a book, a persistent snore in the next room, most aggravating to the insomniac I am. Moreover, I always detested regional literature full of quaint old-timers and imitated pronunciation. *Finnegans Wake's* façade disguises a very conventional and drab tenement house, and only the infrequent snatches of heavenly intonations redeem it from utter insipidity. I know I am going to be excommunicated for this pronouncement. (*Strong Opinions* 71)

Despite using the word "detested" three times to describe his disdain for *Finnegans Wake*, he lists Joyce as one of his favorite writers when he was between the ages of 20 and 40.[4] In fact, in an interview, he said: "my greatest masterpieces of twentieth century prose are, in this order: Joyce's *Ulysses*; Kafka's *Transformation*; Biely's *Petersburg*; and the first half of Proust's fairy tale *In Search of Lost Time*" (*Strong Opinions* 57). The same man who compared one of Joyce's works to cancer ranks *Ulysses* as the greatest masterpiece of his lifetime. Perhaps, there is no topic on which Nabokov held such "strong opinions."

Nabokov rejected the idea that he had been influenced by any writer, but his refutation of his works having shades of Joyce is particularly fervent. In countless interviews, he was typically prodded to acknowledge Joyce's presence in or inspiration for his works; to each interviewer, he flatly refused the notion. A quintessential example of Nabokov responding to an interviewer on the subject of Joyce goes as follows:

> *What have you learned from Joyce?*
>
> Nothing.
>
> *Oh, come.*
>
> James Joyce has not influenced me in any manner whatsoever. (Nabokov, *Strong Opinions* 102-103)

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[4] Nabokov, *Strong Opinions* 43.

Without question, Nabokov shares many of the characteristically Joycean traits, which one interviewer summarizes as "word play, punning, parody" (*Strong Opinions* 151). But, in regards to the first claim, Nabokov insists that he "played with words long before read[ing] *Ulysses*" (*Strong Opinions* 151). To the second, he maintains that Joyce's "real puns are in *Finnegans Wake*" and seeing as Nabokov found the work to be a "tragic failure and a frightful bore," which he even had trouble finishing,[5] he in no way was influenced by the book. And to the third, he diminishes Joyce's use of parody as inconsistent since *Ulysses'* parodies range from "jejunish" to "highly successful" (*Strong Opinions* 76). Accordingly, its erratic parodies cannot be the source of that characteristic in Nabokov's works.

The more Nabokov opposes Joyce's influence on himself, the less persuasive he appears. This is especially true as Nabokov ranks him a genius. His dismissal of Joyce's effect on specific works is more convincing than his insistence that Joyce and *Ulysses* have had no influence on him as a writer in general. The following quotation comes from a 1966 interview with Alfred Appel, Jr.:

> APPEL
>
> To what extent are you consciously "answering" Joyce in *Pale Fire*, and what are your feelings about his esthetic stance—or alleged stance, because perhaps you may think that Stephen's remark doesn't apply to *Ulysses*?…When in Canto Two John Shade describes himself, "I stand before the window and I pare/My fingernails," you are echoing Stephen Dedalus in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, on the artist who "remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails."

[5] Nabokov, *Strong Opinions* 74.

> Neither Kinbote nor Shade, nor their maker, is answering Joyce in *Pale Fire*…The phrase you quote is an unpleasant coincidence. (Nabokov, *Strong Opinions* 70-71)

In the same conversation, Nabokov said: "I finished *Finnegans Wake* eventually. It has no inner connection with *Pale Fire*" (*Strong Opinions* 74). Nabokov told an interviewer that by the time he read *Ulysses*, he was already "definitely formed as a writer and immune to any literary influence" (*Strong Opinions* 71). Returning to this defense, he told another one that he read *Ulysses* only "when [he] was already well formed as a writer and reluctant to learn or unlearn anything" (*Strong Opinions* 103). The question of whether or not one can become "immune to…literary influence" cannot be answered so simply. But, the idea that at one point Nabokov was not immune is perhaps more intriguing to pursue.

III

Dedalus and the Bard

If there was a time before Nabokov was "formed as a writer," surely it must have been in his boyhood when he was "a perfectly normal trilingual child in a family with a large library" (Nabokov, *Strong Opinions* 43). In one interview, he recollects:

> By the age of 14 or 15 I had read or re-read all Tolstoy in Russian, all Shakespeare in English, and all Flaubert in French—besides hundreds of other books. Today I can always tell when a sentence I compose happens to resemble in cut and intonation that of any of the writers I loved or detested half a century ago; but I do not believe that any particular writer has had any definite influence upon me. (*Strong Opinions* 46)

Here, Nabokov sets a trap for himself. How can he acknowledge the vast amount of works with which he engaged at such a young age and yet deny the influence that any of their writers have had on him?

His dismissal of the influence of any, and there for all, writers becomes especially contradictory with Shakespeare. He famously believes that "Pushkin's blood runs through the veins of modern Russian literature as inevitably as Shakespeare's through those of English literature" (Nabokov, *Strong Opinions* 63); as Nabokov has contributed to both modern Russian and English literature, surely the blood of Pushkin and Shakespeare can be felt in his works. Moreover, he proclaims that "every Russian writer owes something to Gogol, Pushkin, and Shakespeare" (*Strong Opinions* 151). For a man who claims "not [to be] one to provide much sport for influence hunters," the game seems especially engaging (*Strong Opinions* 152).

IV

Art for the Sake of Art

Concerns about literary influence inevitably lead to investigating the meaning of art and its boundaries. To Nabokov, art almost defies definition. Nabokov cannot be identified as an "art for art's sake" aesthete; the slogan's very syntax, rather than focusing on the intrinsic value of art, considers it as a means to an end. Ultimately the phrase is meaningless "unless the term art be defined" (Nabokov, *Dear Bunny* 240). It is "art for art's sake" and *not* art for the sake of art. Nabokov believes,

> A work of art has no importance whatever to society…Although I do not care for the slogan "art for art's sake"—because unfortunately such promoters of it as, for instance, Oscar Wilde and various dainty poets, were in reality rank moralists and

> didacticists—there can be no question that what makes a work of fiction safe from larvae and rust is not its social importance but its art, only its art. (Nabokov, *Strong Opinions* 33)

Lolita, framed with that very debate in its Foreword and Afterword, is Nabokov's art manifesto. We open to Ray's definition of art as a catalyst for social change, and we close with Nabokov's view of art as a kind metafiction—contaminating self-referentiality with artifice. He begins his Afterword,

> After doing my impersonation of suave John Ray, the character in Lolita who pens the Foreword, any comments coming straight from me may strike one—may strike me, in fact—as an impersonation of Vladimir Nabokov talking about his own book. A few points, however, have to be discussed; and the autobiographic device may induce mimic and model to blend. (Nabokov, *Lolita* 311)

Here, he complicates the authorial hierarchy. His Afterword "mimic[s]" the Foreword by copying the fictional John Ray. And, yet, as he is the real author, he is simultaneously the "model."

To Nabokov, any work of fiction that fits his aesthetic sensibility—any work that he views as art—is poetry. When asked about the boundaries of prose and poetry, he explains that "poetry, of course, includes all creative writing" (Nabokov, *Strong Opinions* 44). The key word here is "creative." Creative writing exhibits the virtues of art—"originality, invention, harmony, conciseness, complexity, and splendid insincerity" (*Strong Opinions* 161). If *Lolita* is his manifesto, *Pale Fire* is its epilogue. He knights John Shade, the poet of *Pale Fire*, as "by far the greatest of invented poets" (*Strong Opinions* 59). Shade personifies the artifice and poetics of Nabokovian art.

V

Creative Artists

Expanding his notion of a *creative* artist, Nabokov says that "a creative writer must study carefully the works of his rivals, including the Almighty [being the epitome of a creative artist]. He must possess the inborn capacity not only of recombining but of re-creating the given world" (Nabokov, *Strong Opinions* 32). The other category of artists is the "derivative write[r]" who rather than re-creating, "imitate[s] many others, past and present. Artistic originality has only its own self to copy" (*Strong Opinions* 95).

This project will consider the idea of the creative artist in Nabokov's works. How does he achieve "artistic originality" in "the given world" which inhabited both William Shakespeare and James Joyce? To seek an answer to this question, we will begin by examining the presence of Shakespeare in Joyce's *Ulysses* and Nabokov's *Pale Fire*, paying special attention to the Bard as the archetypal artist and the ways in which Joyce and Nabokov re-create him. We will then briefly establish Shakespeare as the link between *Pale Fire* and *Lolita* and how he underscores the creative differences between Humbert Humbert and Clare Quilty. We will then turn to *Lolita*, exploring the simultaneous emergence of Humbert as a creative artist and the transposal of his artistic failures onto Joyce.

Nabokov "never liked *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. [He] find[s] it a feeble and garrulous book" (Nabokov, *Strong Opinions* 71). His rejection of Joyce's book resurfaces in *Despair* when the narrator considers titling his manuscript "The Portrait of the Artist in a

Mirror," only to dismiss it as "too jenjune,[6] too *à la mode*" (Nabokov, *Despair* 201). It appears once more when Humbert says, "the portrait of the artist as a younger brute" (Nabokov, *Lolita* 262). *Lolita* realizes the discarded title, "The Portrait of the Artist in a Mirror," by painting a portrait of Joyce through Nabokov's mirror—a portrait of his rival, refracted into "a younger brute."

[6] An adjective used to describe some of Joyce's parodies (See *Strong Opinions*, p. 76).

PART I

THE WILL IN THE WORD:

The Hamlet Complex[7]

The fact is that every writer creates his own
precursors. His work modifies our conception
of the past, as it will modify the future.

JORGE LUIS BORGES

[7] Bloom, *Anxiety* xxii.

PART I

THE WILL IN THE WORD:

The Hamlet Complex[8]

As Harold Bloom rightly reminds us, "[o]ne cannot think through the question of influence without considering the most influential of all authors,"[9] William Shakespeare. Any investigation of "the anxiety of influence," to borrow a phrase from Bloom, *necessitates* Shakespeare—so too must our discussion begin with the Bard. Both Joyce and Nabokov return to that very past on the way to achieving originality for their works in the present. They seek to write out from under Shakespeare's shadow by writing him into those very works.

Let us ruminate on the anxiety itself—and why Shakespeare is the nucleus of such a conversation. The "anxiety of influence" is both the fear that literary history prevents one from creating something novel, and the means by which a writer overcomes it. In grappling with the ghosts of the past, artists reimagine, reinvent, and rewrite history, and in doing so, reclaim the literary tradition for themselves. Why Shakespeare? Shakespeare is Literature. He wrote our tradition; he wrote our reality. He is the Creator; he created us. Shakespeare prevents any artist from "bury[ing] him, or escap[ing] him, or replac[ing] him."[10] We are fated to re-create that which Shakespeare has already invented. However, by re-creating Shakespeare—by rewriting

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[8] Bloom, *Anxiety* xxii.

[9] Bloom, *Anxiety* xiii.

[10] Bloom, *Anxiety* xviii.

him into our own narratives—we can create out from under him. To Nabokov, *Hamlet* is "probably the greatest miracle in all literature."[11] Both Nabokov and Joyce allude to *Hamlet* more than any other of Shakespeare's works and it is the play to which they both turn in order to each reclaim the Bard for himself.

I

TAKING THE WILL OUT OF THE WAY:

The Reincarnation and Exorcism of Shakespeare in *Ulysses*

If every page of James Joyce's *Ulysses* is consumed by a surfeit of literary allusions, can his work be original or can it only be derivative of those to which he alludes? The most perennial forefather who materializes on *Ulysses*' leaves is, of course, William Shakespeare, "a ghost, a *shadow* now" (*Ulysses* 9.478-479), whose legacy still haunts literature. The question of whether or not we can write out from under Shakespeare's "shadow" goes to the heart of James Joyce's *Ulysses*. Rather than assimilating his work to that of the Bard as the mighty progenitor, Joyce turns *Ulysses* into a vehicle to usurp Shakespeare's standing as the archetype of the artistic father or creator. By assuming each role of the *Hamlet* trinity, evolving into a consubstantial trinity, and possessing each facet of reproductive power by blending the dichotomy of phallus and vagina, Bloom supersedes the Dedalus "Shakespeare" as the epitome of the artistic creator.

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[11] Unpublished note from Russian survey lecture course; cited in Boyd, *American Years* 100.

As Stephen chronicles Shakespeare, the man, in "Scylla and Charybdis,"[12] the parallels between Shakespeare and Bloom biographically overshadow those between the Bard and himself. In the proceeding chapter, Bloom reflects,

> High on Ben Howth…Wildly I lay on her, kissed her: eyes, her lips, her stretched neck beating, woman's breasts full in her blouse of nun's veiling, fat nipples upright. Hot I tongued her. She kissed me. I was kissed. All yielding she tossed my hair. Kissed, she kissed me. (*Ulysses* 8.911-916)

As Ben Howth is the hill that *dominates* Dublin Bay's northeast headland, the setting underscores the transferal of sexual power from Bloom, the male, to Molly, the female. The staccato syntax highlights that very yield. Bloom remains in control of both the sexual relationship and the syntax in, "[h]ot I tongued her," in which he acts as subject and Molly acts as object. They switch roles in the following sentence, "[s]he kissed me." Although Bloom regains his space as the subject in "I was kissed," the use of the passive voice eliminates his agency and hides the fact that Molly is a "her" and a "she" from the image. In that sense, it is in the third sentence that Molly usurps Bloom's role as the male. When the narrative returns to Stephen in the following chapter, Dedalus states that "[Shakespeare] was overborne in a cornfield first (a ryefield, I should say)" (*Ulysses* 9.456-457). Stephen's allusion to Shakespeare being subdued by his wife's sexual aggression, notably outside, links the corporeal Shakespeare to Bloom and his being "overborne" on Ben Howth.

It is important to note that the cornfield and Anne's adultery are historically spurious. Stephen bases all of his suppositions on the plot of *Hamlet* and perhaps, some apocryphal stories that Frank Harris, among others, repeated as fact. Of course, this is then a typical example of

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[12] Homeric chapter titles will be used for convenience. Joyce removed them from his work.

Joyce's appropriation of Shakespeare. The portrait he paints of the Bard is ultimately his own fiction. Re-writing his own version of Shakespeare provides Joyce with the means to eclipse him.

Returning to Stephen's fabrications, the parallels between Bloom and Shakespeare through women continue on the psychological level. Just as Anne's emasculation of Shakespeare sexually and through adultery causes his "belief in himself [to be] untimely killed" (*Ulysses* 9.455-456), so too does Molly's overpowering of Bloom on Ben Howth and in her adulterous behavior leave Bloom diffident. When his thoughts turn to Molly and Boylan, he thinks "will happen, yes. Prevent. Useless: can't move…Lips kissed, kissing, kissed" (*Ulysses* 4.447-450). He syntactically expunges himself from the active position of a grammatical noun. Rather than "[I will] prevent. [I am] useless," Bloom's lack of belief in himself expels him into the passive. Being emasculated by Anne, Shakespeare "will never be a victor in his own eyes" (*Ulysses* 9.457). By deeming himself to be "useless," Bloom too "will never be a victor in his own eyes."

Perhaps the most impregnated link between Shakespeare and Bloom is the death of each man's only son. Bloom muses on "his good lady Marion that had borne him an only manchild which on his *eleventh* day on live had died" (*Ulysses* 14.266-267). In the same chapter, Bloom thinks that his son Rudy "would be *eleven* now if he had lived" (*Ulysses* 14.418-420). The repetition of the number eleven unequivocally stems from the death of Hamnet, Shakespeare's only son, his "only manchild," at the age of eleven. Shakespeare's loss of Hamnet, which manifests his failure to become a biological father, yields his need to succeed as an artistic creator. By explaining that "if others have their will Ann hath a way. By cock, she was to blame" (*Ulysses* 9.256), Stephen deprives Shakespeare of his "will," both in the sense of the context and of his name. Dedalus gives "Ann hath(-)a(-)way" that control in a male reproductive sense ("cock") by deconstructing her name to allude to sexually having one's "way" with another.

Shakespeare's failure to successfully impregnate Ann with a son leaves him with only one option, to "[im]pregnan[ate] [the] word" (*Ulysses* 14.259), thereby reclaiming sexual creation in art.

Let us now turn to Stephen's theory of *Hamlet*, through which Shakespeare rewrites his story, replacing his biological failure with his artistic success. Dedalus begins with:

> It is the ghost, the king, a king and no king, and the player is Shakespeare who has studied Hamlet all the years of his life which were not vanity in order to play the part of the spectre…To a son he speaks, the son of his soul, the prince, young Hamlet and to the son of his body, Hamnet Shakespeare, who has died in Stratford that his namesake may live for ever. (*Ulysses* 9.164-173)

Stephen originates his theory on the fact that Shakespeare played Hamlet, the king. Thus, Shakespeare is both father and "ghost" in his play. By playing the part of Hamlet's father, Shakespeare is able to "spea[k]" to the "son of his body, Hamnet Shakespeare" whose "d[eath]" marks his own biological failure. Yet, Stephen claims that "through the ghost of the unquiet father the image of the unliving son looks forth" (*Ulysses* 9.380-381). Thus, the "unliving son" lives within the "ghost" of the "father." The voice of the "unquiet father" (*Ulysses* 9.380) is "a voice heard only in the heart of him who is the substance of his shadow, the son consubstantial with the father" (*Ulysses* 9.481). Here, Stephen insists that the father's "heart" is the "son" who is the "substance of [the father's] shadow" or in other words, the physical matter and presence of that "shadow." Furthermore, through "consubstantial[ity]," Shakespeare, as the ghost, is both father and son—all sides of Hamlet—as he has "studied Hamlet [himself] all the years of his life" (*Ulysses* 9.165-166). By becoming each part of the literary trinity (Father, Son, and Ghost), Shakespeare the artist eclipses Shakespeare the man.

Through the Ghost of King Hamlet, Bloom, like Shakespeare, becomes each element of the Shakespearean trinity. Throughout the text, Bloom maintains a ghostly presence. For

instance, Professor MacHugh, upon seeing Bloom in "Aeolus," says, "the ghost walks" (*Ulysses* 7.237). However, it is the Ghost's speech, and not his being, in which Bloom assumes the roles of both father and son. Bloom plays the role of Shakespeare as father to Rudy "the son of his body" (*Ulysses* 9.172), and Stephen, "the son of his soul" (*Ulysses* 9.171). He muses,

> That is how poets write, the similar sounds. But then Shakespeare has no rhymes: blank verse. The flow of the language it is. The thoughts. Solemn.
>
> *Hamlet, I am thy father's spirit*
> *Doomed for a certain time to walk the earth.* (*Ulysses* 8.64-68)

Although Bloom misquotes the ghost, "I am thy father's spirit, / Doomed for a certain term to walk the night" (*Hamlet* 1.5.9-10), by adding "Hamlet" at its onset and substituting both "term" with "time," and "night" with "earth," his version of Shakespeare's lines replaces the original in the remaining text. In "Scylla and Charybdis," which is the following episode, Stephen appears to quote Bloom rather than Shakespeare by recalling that same misreading, "*Hamlet, I am thy father's spirit*" (*Ulysses* 9.170). By having Bloom first misquote the ghost's most paternal words to his son and then Stephen quote that corrupted line, Joyce associates them with Shakespeare as father and son, respectively.

Ironically, just as Bloom becomes the father through the ghost's corrupted words, it is through them that he also assumes the role of son. King Hamlet, as the ghost of Paddy Dignam, tells Bloom: "Bloom, I am Paddy Dignam's spirit. List, list, O list! (*Ulysses* 15.1218). Just as Bloom, and Stephen accordingly, add "Hamlet" (*Ulysses* 8.67, 9.170) at the beginning of the quotation, Paddy Dignam inserts "Bloom." Therefore, the name "Bloom" replaces that of "Hamlet" (*Ulysses* 8.67, 9.170), which turns "Bloom" into the son.

Let us return to Stephen's *Hamlet* theory. He expands his conception of Shakespeare as the father: "he was not the father of his own son merely, but being no more a son, he was and felt

himself the father of all his race, the father of his own grandfather, the father of his unborn grandson" (*Ulysses* 9.867-869). Just as Shakespeare's father has died, so too has Bloom's. Furthermore, Bloom as the "limp father of thousands" (*Ulysses* 5.571), which echoes Abraham as the first father of the first race, links him to Shakespeare who is "the father of all his race." In fact, in the previous episode, Bloom thinks of "the oldest, the first race" (*Ulysses* 4.223-224) in the wake of the flood. Just as Shakespeare is "the father of all his race," Bloom is the "father" of "the oldest, the first race." The words "all," "oldest," and "first," emphasize the magnitude of both Shakespeare and Bloom as "father" of their respective race.

However, the moment of artistic creation, when being "all in all" (*Ulysses* 9.1020-1021) reaches fruition, is the result of both female and male power and not merely through the power of the father. Stephen describes that creative moment:

> —As we, or mother Dana, weave and unweave our bodies, Stephen said, from day to day, their molecules shuttled to and fro, so does the artist weave and unweave his image. And as the mole on my right breast is where it was when I was born, though all my body has been woven of new stuff time after time, so through the ghost of the unquiet father the image of the unliving son looks forth. In the intense instant of imagination, when the mind, Shelley says, is a fading coal, that which I was is that which I am and that which in possibility I may come to be. So in the future, the sister of the past, I may see myself as I sit here now but by reflection from that which then I shall be. (*Ulysses* 9.376-385)

Just as the "mother Dana weave[s] and unweave[s]…bodies," so does the fatherly "artist" weave and unweave…image[s]." Dana, the Celtic trifold goddess, is the mother of earth, fertility, and plenty, the mother of the forces of youth, light, and knowledge, and the mother of the forces of disintegration and death. Thus, she is a consubstantial trinity within herself. Therefore, to achieve that "intense instant of imagination," one must be a "glorified man, an androgynous angel, being a wife unto himself" (*Ulysses* 9.1052).

Here is where the parallels between Bloom and Shakespeare diverge. As cuckolds, both Shakespeare and Bloom lose their masculinity, the loss of which prevents them both from successfully having male children. Stephen's theory of Shakespeare emphasizes how he resolves the loss of Hamnet in Hamlet by becoming a father in the purely artistic sense. However, by claiming that a true artist must be a "glorified man, an androgynous angel, being a wife unto himself" (*Ulysses* 9.1052), Stephen suggests that both male and female procreative powers are needed to produce artistically. Bloom, unlike Shakespeare, inherently possesses the necessary feminine qualities. By resolving the dichotomy between the phallus and vagina in the narrative, Bloom is able to surpass Shakespeare as a self-sufficient artist. It is only after successfully becoming an "androgynous angel" that the balance between the "glorified man" and the "wife" in him can shift more towards the masculine. Thus, Bloom can fully become the ideal father after being both father and mother in the moment of creation.

By embracing the feminine side of himself, Bloom becomes the "androgynous angel" necessary for true artistic creation. During his unfulfilled affair with Martha Clifford, Bloom's pseudonym is Henry Flower. A flower is a metaphor for the vagina and female procreativity, and accordingly, Bloom exists as a "manflower" (*Ulysses* 5.264), a being in between the two genders. When taking a bath, Bloom, observing his genitals, says, "his navel, bud of flesh: and saw the dark tangled curls of his bush floating, floating hair of the stream around the limp father of thousands, a languid floating flower" (*Ulysses* 5.570-572). The image of the "limp…languid floating flower" of Henry/Leopold *Flower*/*Bloom* suggests both impotency and epicene transcendence. At first, his "limp phallus" reflects the dissolution of his male reproductive faculty. However, Joyce reworks the image that deprived Bloom of his masculinity by describing the phallus as a "floating flower." Through the metaphor of his penis as a flower, traditionally

symbolic of the vagina and fertility, Joyce transmutes Bloom's definite failure as a procreative man into his potential success as a procreative hermaphrodite.

"Circe" further turns the symbolic reworking of his "limp" phallus into a dramatically literal, yet prosaically figurative metamorphosis of his gender. Dr. Dixon calls Bloom, "a finished example of the new womanly man" (*Ulysses* 15.1798-1799), one who "is about to have a baby" (*Ulysses* 15.1810). Thus, in this moment, his "floating flower" (*Ulysses* 5.572) fulfills its reproductive potential. Bloom's exclamation, "O, I so want to be a mother" (*Ulysses* 15.1816), echoes and inverts the image of him as a "limp father" (*Ulysses* 5.571). As the chapter progresses, he becomes a woman to whom even the stage directions address with female pronouns. However, Bella/Bello more accurately uses, "shis" (*Ulysses* 15.3103) and "hrim" (*Ulysses* 15.3103), which reflect his androgyny.

It is only after Bloom throws off his female costume, that his androgynous imbalance shifts from the predominately female to the predominately male: "[f]rom infancy to maturity he had resembled his maternal procreatrix. From maturity to senility he would increasingly resemble his paternal procreator" (*Ulysses* 17.1355-1356). By recapturing his masculinity, Bloom does what Shakespeare cannot: reclaim the part of his identity which had been destroyed as a cuckold. However, the word "increasingly" serves as a reminder that Bloom does not become a completely "[man]ly man" (*Ulysses* 15.1799). Rather, Bloom emerges as the "glorified man [paternal procreator],…androgynous angel, being a wife [maternal procreatrix] unto himself" (*Ulysses* 9.1052).

As the "androgynous angel," Bloom gives birth to himself as "all in all" (*Ulysses* 9.1020-1021). During the moment of his emasculation on Ben Howth, Bloom becomes metaphorically impregnated with Molly's seed. He recollects, "ravished over her I lay, full lips full open, kissed

her mouth. Yum. Softly she gave me in my mouth the seedcake warm and chewed…Joy: I ate it: joy" (*Ulysses* 8.907-909). In feeding Bloom a "seedcake," Molly impregnates him with her "see[d]." That "see[d]" reappears at the end of "Ithaca" when Bloom lies in the fetal position:

> Listener: reclined semilaterally, left, left hand under head, right leg extended in a straight line and resting on left leg, flexed, in the attitude of Gea-Tellus, fulfilled, recumbent, big with *seed*. Narrator: reclined laterally, left, with right and left legs flexed, the index finger and thumb of the right hand resting on the bridge of the nose, in the attitude depicted in a snapshot photograph made by Percy Apjohn, the childman weary, the manchild in the womb. (*Ulysses* 17.2312-2318)

The pregnant Bloom, "big with seed," rebirths himself as the "son consubstantial with the father" (*Ulysses* 9.481). Thus, he is both "manchild," son, and "childman," father.

In fact, through his rebirth, Bloom regrows a beard that enables him to truly usurp Shakespeare. Several studies point out the association of the beard with masculinity and more specifically, the male generative faculty. One scholar, Will Fisher, actually turns to Shakespeare to support that notion. In *Troilus and Cressida*, he emphasizes the pun on hairs and heirs. Speaking to Cressida, Pandarus describes an interaction between Helen and Troilus in which Helen notices a white hair on his chin. She tells him, "Here's but two-and-fifty-hairs on your chin, and one of them is white" (*Troilus and Cressida* 1.2.162-163); to which Troilus, after repeating the numbers, responds, "That white hair is my father, and all the rest are his sons" (*Troilus and Cressida* 1.2.167-168). By assimilating his own production of facial hairs to his father's production of heirs—notably, his fifty sons—Troilus emphasizes his own procreative potential. Thus, Shakespeare himself, directly links the ability to grow facial hair and a man's fertility.[13]

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[13] Fisher 174-175.

Through the image of the beardless Shakespeare who appears in "Circe," Bloom, and Joyce, replace the Bard as the epitome of the artistic creator. When, at last, Bloom and Stephen meet, together they gaze into a mirror and see, "the face of William Shakespeare, beardless…rigid in facial paralysis, crowned by the reflection of the reindeer antlered hatrack in the hall" (*Ulysses* 15.3821-3824). To be "beardless" is to be in both artistic and biological "paralysis." The antlers, symbolizing the horns of a cuckold, tie the loss of male generative potential with Anne's actions. Unlike Bloom who possesses female reproductive potential, Shakespeare can only be the father, in Bloom, and the son, in Stephen, individually, but is not both simultaneously. After Bloom becomes "childman" and "manchild," he regrows his beard and accordingly, eclipses Shakespeare. Bloom's wanted poster describes him as "may have since grown a beard, when last seen was wearing a black suit" (*Ulysses* 17.2003-2004). Last seen, Bloom resembles Hamlet dressed in "black," but now in the narrative, he "may have since grown a beard." In "Penelope," Bloom becomes "more like a man with his beard a bit grown" (*Ulysses* 18.30).

Bloom's metamorphosis, recreating and fulfilling the Shakespearean trinity and becoming a self-sufficient procreative force, is merely a *Mouse-Trap* within Joyce's *Ulysses*. In writing *Ulysses*, Joyce reemerges as "all in all" (9.1020-1021). He is consubstantially both son and father in the guise of Stephen, as son, and Bloom, as father. While Shakespeare can only be the son, "the boy of act one," and then the "mature man of act five" (*Ulysses* 9.1020), that "which [Joyce] was is that which [he] [is] and that which in possibility [he] may come to be" (*Ulysses* 9.384-385).

II

SHADES OF HAZEL

Child as Ghost and Creator in *Pale Fire*

Unlike Joyce who rewrites Shakespeare, the man, into a figure that he can evolve and supersede in *Ulysses*, Nabokov, in *Pale Fire*, rewrites *Hamlet*, the work, as the means by which he can artistically transcend Shakespeare's influence. Both writers creatively "misread" the significance of Shakespeare in the part of the ghost. Joyce uses it as vehicle to reinvent Shakespeare biographically; Nabokov views it as a metaphor for the Bard's creative presence throughout, and ownership of, each work.

At first, the presence of Shakespeare in *Pale Fire* seems to contest Nabokov's authorial voice. The form of the text, four cantos and one commentary, reflects the five-act structure of a Shakespearean drama. However, the Bard also infiltrates the words within that structure. In "The Nature of Electricity," a poem by John Shade included in the commentary, the speaker says, "And maybe Shakespeare floods a whole / Town with innumerable lights" (Nabokov, *Pale Fire* 192). In this image, the Bard's ghost consumes the town in light; in fact, Shakespeare "floods" the world of *Pale Fire*. He haunts the trees of Shakespeare Avenue, and even the poet's words, "Help me Will! *Pale Fire*" (*Pale Fire* 68), in search of a title. We see him in the landscape, we hear him in the poetic mind, and we feel him behind the the title.

Pale Fire stems from one of two Shakespeare plays, *Timon of Athens* or *Hamlet*, or both. In *Timon of Athens*, the phrase "pale fire" appears in the lines:

> The sun's a thief, and with his great attraction
> Robs the vast sea. The moon's an arrant thief,
> And her *pale fire* she snatches from the sun.
> The sea's a thief, whose liquid surge resolves
> The moon into salt tears. (4.3.437–441)

The "pale fire" in the passage is a borrowed, or "snatche[d]," object, which appropriately reflects the idea of a stolen title. However, in his note to line 962, "Help me Will! *Pale Fire,*" Kinbote writes:

> Paraphrased, this evidently means: Let me look in Shakespeare for something I might use for a title. And the find is "pale fire." But in which of the Bard's works did our poet cull it? My readers must make their own research. All I have with me is a tiny vest pocket edition of *Timon of Athens*—in Zemblan! It certainly contains nothing that could be regarded as an equivalent of "pale fire" (if it had, my luck would have been a statistical monster). (Nabokov, *Pale Fire* 285)

While he "paraphrase[s]" the line with certainty as evidence that Shade picks his title from a work of Shakespeare, he implores that "[*his*] readers must make their own research." Kinbote only has access to a translated version of *Timon of Athens* which "certainly" does not contain the reference. His note is significant for two reasons. On the one hand, he is suggesting that the line does not come from that play. On the other, he implores the readers of *his* commentary to look; if they do explore the commentary, they will find that Kinbote includes the retranslation of a Zemblan translation of the very lines that include "pale fire:"

> The sun is a thief; she lures the sea
> and robs it. The moon is a thief:
> he steals his silvery light from the sun
> The sea is a thief: it dissolves the moon. (*Pale Fire* 80)

Evidently, the "silvery light" replaces the original "pale fire." However, the translation inverts many aspects of the original, including the genders of the sun and the moon.

If the reader instead turns to Shakespeare's canon, they will also find the term in *Hamlet*. Upon leaving his son, the Ghost cries:

> Fare thee well at once.
> The glowworm shows the matin to be near
> And 'gins to *pale* his uneffectual *fire*.
> Adieu, adieu, adieu. Remember me. (1.5.88-91)

As Nabokov believes that *Hamlet* is "probably the greatest miracle in all literature,"[14] it is no coincidence that the title echoes the Ghost's words. In fact, one of the scenes that Nabokov would like to have filmed is "Shakespeare in the part of the King's Ghost" (Nabokov, *Strong Opinions* 60). In his Forward to *Lolita: A Screenplay*, Nabokov explains:

> By nature I am no dramatist; I am not even a hack scenarist; but if I had given as much of myself to the stage or the screen as I have to the kind of writing which serves a triumphant life sentence between the covers of a book, I would have advocated and applied a system of total tyranny, directing the play or the picture myself, choosing settings and costumes, terrorizing the actors, mingling with them in the bit part of guest, or *ghost*, prompting them, and, in a word, pervading the entire show with the will and art of one individual. (ix-x)

In Nabokov's mind, to be the "ghost" is to "pervad[e] [an entire work] with the will and art of *one individual*. Titling a work is the ultimate act of ownership; yet in Nabokov's novel, Shade's naming of his poem "Pale Fire" gets usurped by Kinbote who entitles the collective work, both poem and his commentary, *Pale Fire*. Thus, whichever play from which "pale fire" stems, conceding the role of naming the text to the Bard brings the question of authorship to the forefront.

In fact, Kinbote's advice on how to read the work, which engenders three possible paths that a reader might take, complicates that very question. He instructs his readers:

> Although those notes, in conformity with custom, come after the poem, the reader is advised to consult them first and then study the poem with their help, rereading them of course as he goes through its text, and perhaps, after having done with the poem, consulting them a third time so as to complete the picture.
> (Nabokov, *Pale Fire* 28)

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[14] Boyd, *American Years* 100.

The reader might follow those instructions or at least begin with the commentary, read the poem alongside the commentary, or begin with the poem before turning to the commentary. Each approach produces a unique effect on the reader: viewing Kinbote as the superior writer, the commentator as crazy, or the poet as the better of the two, respectively.[15] No matter which path the reader takes, he will feel the discordance between the poem and the commentary.

While the dissonance between "Pale Fire" and the annotations seemingly emphasize the existence of two distinct writers, many readers search and find clues attributing the entirety of *Pale Fire* to Kinbote or Shade, most likely dependent on the order in which they tackle the novel. In fact, both characters bear similarities to their maker: Vladimir Nabokov. Near the conclusion of his commentary, Kinbote says: "I may assume other disguises, other forms, but I shall try to exist. I may turn up yet, on another campus, as an old, happy, healthy, heterosexual Russian, a writer in exile" (*Pale Fire* 300-301). That description fits Nabokov to a tee. However, Shade's resemblance to the Russian professor of literature at Cornell overshadows Kinbote's remark.

The poet resembles both Nabokov the writer, and Nabokov the man. Kinbote receives "Pale Fire" as a "batch of eighty cards…held by a rubber band" (Nabokov, *Pale Fire* 15). In Nabokov's *Playboy* interview, he describes his writing process:

> I do not begin my novel at the beginning…This is why I like writing my stories and novels on index cards, numbering them later when the whole set is complete. Every card is rewritten many times. About three cards make one typewritten page, and when finally I feel that the conceived picture has been copied by me as faithfully as physically possible—a few vacant lots always remain, alas—then I dictate the novel to my wife who types it out in triplicate.
> (*Strong Opinions* 32)

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[15] Grabes 55-56.

In the same interview, he says: "[t]his box contains index cards with some notes I made at various times more or less recently and discarded when writing *Pale Fire*. It's a little batch of rejects" (*Strong Opinions* 29-30). This quotation ties its speaker to John Shade twicefold. First, Shade also keeps "lovely rejections in his files" (*Pale Fire* 15-16). Second, his wife "urged him to put off its disposal till the time when the marble finality of an immaculate typescript would have confirmed it" (*Pale Fire* 16). Just as Nabokov claims he almost burned *Lolita* in the "garden incinerator" (*Strong Opinions* 105), Shade in fact "burn[s] a whole stack of them in the pale fire of the incinerator" (*Pale Fire* 15). In fact, it was Vera who saved *Lolita* by "urging delay" (*Strong Opinions* 105). Biographically, the "Shades' sedan" (*Pale Fire* 20) reflects the Nabokov's "eight-year-old Plymouth four-door sedan" (Boyd, *American Years* 130). Both professors would "have his [respective] wife call for him after classes with the car" (*Pale Fire* 22).

In fact, Shade himself alludes to another source who controls his writing. One of the many scholars to whom Shade appears as an insufficient choice, Brian Boyd, nominates Hazel Shade as the creator of the work. In the final Canto, Shade says: "For there are those mysterious moments when / Too weary to delete, I drop my pen; / I ambulate—and by some mute command / The right word flutes and perches on my hand" (Nabokov, *Pale Fire* 65). Kinbote says, "superb singing verses (given by me in note to lines 70, 79, and 130, all in Canto One, which he obviously worked at with a greater degree of creative freedom than he enjoyed afterwards)" (*Pale Fire* 81-82). John Shade does not address his dead daughter in Canto One, the canto in which his "*creative* freedom" is at its highest. The key word "creative" implies that there is another creative force in the cantos that follow.

Kinbote describes a moment in which he sees that "creative" force at work: "at night, in the violet glow of his upstairs study where a kindly mirror reflected for me his hunched-up shoulders and the pencil with which he kept picking his ear (inspecting now and then the lead, and even tasting it)" (Nabokov, *Pale Fire* 89). It is almost as if the poet listens to the pencil as it whispers in his ear. Kinbote continues: "I could distinguish the expression of passionate interest, rapture and reverence, with which he followed the images wording themselves in his mind, and I knew that whatever my agnostic friend might say in denial, at that moment Our Lord was with him" (*Pale Fire* 89). The idea of "images wording themselves," moves from sight—or rather insight—to language. While, Kinbote attributes the ghostly power to "Our Lord," perhaps the "Lord" of this text is of a different kind altogether.

Who is that force? As Kinbote says, "[m]y friend could not evoke the image of his father" (Nabokov, *Pale Fire* 101). Thus, unlike in *Hamlet*, the ghostly force cannot be the ghost of Shade's father. There is one character, however, with whom the ghostly plane is associated: Hazel Shade, the deceased daughter of the poet, whose death, like that of Hamlet, the father, seems to be precisely what the poet, as does Hamlet, the son in *Hamlet*, grapples with in "Pale Fire." In contrast to the non-image of Shade's father, he is able to "evoke the image of his [daughter]" in the poem. Kinbote notes, "[t]rue, in this canto he has unburdened himself pretty thoroughly, and his picture of Hazel is quite clear and complete; maybe a little too complete, architectonically, since the reader cannot help feeling that it has been expanded and elaborated to the detriment of certain other richer and rarer matters ousted by it" (*Pale Fire* 164). The image of Hazel, according to our commentator, is "a little too complete" and her picture therefore overpowers other imagery in the poem, whether or not we agree with Kinbote that the other

"matters" are superior. Ultimately, we feel the presence of Hazel's metaphorical ghost throughout the entire work.

In fact, through Kinbote's stories, we learn that even when living, Hazel communes with ghosts. Kinbote concludes his note, about the poltergeist's presence shortly after the death of Aunt Maud:

> but how curious it is that we do not perceive a mysterious sign of equation between the Hercules springing forth from a neurotic child's weak frame and the boisterous ghost of Aunt Maud; how curious that our rationality feels satisfied when we plump for the first explanation, though, actually, the scientific and the supernatural, the miracle of the muscle and the miracle of the mind, are *both* inexplicable as are all the ways of Our Lord.
> (Nabokov, *Pale Fire* 167)

Here again, he attributes the power to "Our Lord" despite linking Hazel's "weak frame" and her aunt's "boisterous ghost" in the same elongated sentence. In fact, earlier in this note, Kinbote says, "although never able to corner her, that flabby, feeble, clumsy and solemn girl, who seemed more interested than frightened, he and Sybil never doubted that in some extraordinary way she was the agent of the disturbance" (*Pale Fire* 166). The negation, "never doubted," emphasizes the certainty with which Hazel was the "agent" of this particular ghostly instance. The description of Hazel, who in the face of otherworldly interactions, "seemed more interested than frightened," transitions into the pinnacle haunted "barn incident" (*Pale Fire* 164), which Kinbote cites at the beginning of this particular note.

In the scene at the barn, the ghost forges a direct link between Hazel and Shakespeare. One of Hazel's notes describes "a roundlet of pale light" (Nabokov, *Pale Fire* 188). Kinbote explains:

> the notes continue for several pages but for obvious reasons I must renounce to give them verbatim in this commentary. There were long pauses and "scratches and scrapings" again, and returns of the

> luminous circlet. She spoke to it. If asked something that it found deliciously silly ("Are you a will-o-the-wisp?") it would dash to and fro in ecstatic negation, and when it wanted to give a grave answer to a grave question ("Are you dead?") would slowly ascend with an air of gathering altitude for a weighty affirmative drop.
> (*Pale Fire* 188)

The ghostly "will-o-the-wisp" is the "roundlet of pale light," or rather, pale fire, that Hazel sees in the haunted barn. However, it also suggests Shakespeare who is the hidden "will" throughout his canon. In his poem "Shakespeare," Nabokov writes "It's true, of course, a usurer had grown / accustomed, for a sum, to sign your work / (that Shakespeare—Will—who played the Ghost in *Hamlet*" (18-20). Like Shakespeare, Nabokov himself practices the act of "affirm[ing] [one's] authorship in code" (Nabokov, *Selected Letters* 391).

The haunted barn becomes a play itself. Kinbote continues,

> There are always "three nights" in fairy tales, and in this sad fairy tale there was a third one too. This time she wanted her parents to witness the "talking light" with her. The minutes of that third session in the barn have not been preserved but I offer the reader the following scene which I feel cannot be too far removed from the truth:
>
> *THE HAUNTED BARN*
> *Pitch-darkness.* Father, Mother *and* Daughter *are heard breathing gently in different corners. Three minutes pass.*
>
> FATHER *(to Mother)*
> Are you comfortable there?
>
> MOTHER
> Uh-huh. These potato sacks make a perfect—
>
> DAUGHTER *(with steam-engine force)*
> Sh-sh-sh!
> *Fifteen minutes pass in silence. The eye begins to make out here and there in the darkness bluish slits of night and one star.*
>
> MOTHER
> That was Dad's tummy, I think—not a spook.
>
> DAUGHTER *(mouthing it)*
> Very funny!

> *Another fifteen minutes elapse. Father, deep in workshop thoughts, heaves a neutral sigh.*
>
> DAUGHTER
> Must we sigh all the time?
> *Fifteen minutes elapse.*
>
> MOTHER
> If I start snoring let Spook pinch me.
>
> DAUGHTER *(overemphasizing self-control)*
> Mother! Please! Please, Mother!
> *Father clears his throat but decides not to say anything.*
> *Twelve more minutes elapse.*
>
> MOTHER
> Does anyone realize that there are still quite a few of those creampuffs in the refrigerator?
> *That does it.*
>
> DAUGHTER *(exploding)*
> Why must you *spoil* everything? Why must you *always* spoil everything? Why can't you leave people *alone*? Don't touch me!
>
> FATHER
> Now look, Hazel, Mother won't say another word, and we'll go on with this—but we've been sitting an hour here and it's getting late.
> *Two minutes pass. Life is hopeless, afterlife heartless. Hazel is heard quietly weeping in the dark. John Shade lights a lantern. Sybil lights a cigarette. Meeting adjourned*
>
> The light never came back but gleams again in a short poem [of John Shade's] "The Nature of Electricity." (Nabokov, *Pale Fire* 190-192)

In the title and the stage directions, the italics in the miniature play represent authorial control. In *Lolita*, Humbert himself says, "I now warn the reader not to mock me and my mental daze. It is easy for him and me to decipher *now* a past destiny; but a destiny in the making is, believe me, not one of those honest mystery stories where all you have to do is keep an eye on the clues. In my youth I once read a French detective tale where the clues were actually in italics" (210-211). Here, in *Pale Fire*, the "clues [are] actually in italics." However, the italics become a kind of commentary in "*that does* it." Who says that? The words trigger a power shift from Hazel in her words *spoil, always*, and *alone*. The Shakespearean light remains invisible to her parents and that

"will-o-the-wisp" "never c[omes] back." However, the poem that follows includes the lines: "And maybe Shakespeare floods a whole / Town with innumerable lights" (*Pale Fire* 192).

Kinbote's description of Wordsmith College provides a "correlated pattern" for understanding Hazel's role in *Pale Fire*. Kinbote says, "the prisonlike edifice containing our classrooms and offices (to be called from now on Shade Hall), the famous avenue of all the trees mentioned by Shakespeare, a distant droning sound, the hint of a haze, the turquoise dome of the Observatory, wisps and pale plumes of cirrus" (*Pale Fire* 92-93). Shakespeare Avenue gains its name specifically from its trees. The key words are "Shakespeare," "trees," "haze"—as a diminutive of Hazel and in its traditional sense—"turquoise"—as a shade of blue—"wisps," and of course, "pale." The close proximity of diction and imagery that appears throughout the text, frequently together, suggests that their meaning is shared collectively.

When "blue" and "haze" reappear together, they link Hazel to theater. In Canto III, the speaker says,

> Time means succession, and succession, change:
> Hence timelessness is bound to disarrange
> Schedules of sentiment…
> …Time means growth,
> And growth means nothing in Elysian life.
> Fondling a changeless child,
> The flax-haired wife
> Grieves on the brink of a remembered pond
> Full of a dreamy sky. And also, blond,
> But with a touch of tawny in the shade,
> Feet up, knees clasped, on a stone balustrade
> The other sits and raises a moist gaze
> Toward the blue impenetrable haze.
> …Know of the head-on crash which on a wild
> March night killed both the mother and the child?
> (Nabokov, *Pale Fire* 54)

The lines before "blue impenetrable haze" consistently underscore their connection to Hazel Shade. The image of someone "griev[ing] on the brink of a remembered pond" alludes to the loss

of Hazel in a body of water. The passage also mentions the last name "shade." However, "time" and "child" link the passage to a specific Shade. In Canto II, John Shade reflects "…while children of her age / Were cast as elves and fairies on the stage / That *she'd* helped paint for the school pantomime, / My gentle girl appeared as Mother Time" (*Pale Fire* 44). Thus, "child" recalls "children" and "time" recalls "Mother Time," who of course, is Hazel. Here, the words "blue" and "haze" reappear and in doing so, explicate that Hazel, as "Mother Time," embodies "succession, "growth," and "change." In fact, the context of the poem further links this time as succession passage to the key words and Hazel. The speaker says, "Who rides so late in the night and the wind? / It is the writer's grief. It is the wild / March wind. It is the father with his child" (*Pale Fire* 57). Here, "night," "grief," "wild," "March," and "child" appear once more. However, this time, the words underscore the connection between Shade, as both writer and father, and Hazel.

This pattern persists in his poetry which discusses both death and Shakespeare with the combination of blue and shade. In a poem dedicated to his father's death, Nabokov says,

> I see a radiant cloud, I see a rooftop glisten
> like a mirror, far away … I listen
> to breathing shade, light's stillicide …
> You're absent—why? You're dead, and on a day
> the humid world is bluish. (Nabokov, "Easter" 1-5)

Nabokov's neologism "stillicide" also appears in *Pale Fire*. When tying the words to Shakespeare, he specifically turns to *Hamlet*: "My dream was a blue-colored roadway / that through a shady hamlet passed" (Nabokov, "Dream" 7-8); "(the students were performing *Hamlet* / and heaven was out of joint for / the bard's illustrious shade)" (Nabokov, "The University Poem" stanza 19). It is important to note that "shade" suggests ghost or spectre. However, like the word "haze," it also resonates with the idea of obscurity. Ultimately, Hazel

Shade's entire name evokes the idea of a "shady a hamlet." Right before her death, she "*peer[s] / at ghostly trees*" (Nabokov, *Pale Fire* 49). The return of the italics alongside the phrase "*ghostly trees*" reaffirm Hazel's full transformation into a "will-o-the-wisp" in death as well as her creative control.

Hazel Shade's ghostly artistic control inverts *Hamlet*. In Shakespeare's play, the son grapples with his father's death; in *Pale Fire* it is the father that copes with the death of his child. When interpreting each work autobiographically, however, fiction inverts reality. Shakespeare rewrites the death of his son, Hamnet, as the death of the father; it should also be noted that his father, John Shakespeare, died the year of *Hamlet's* completion. Nabokov rewrites the death of his own father into the death of the child.

Although the fictional John Shade resembles the author, paradoxically, he also reflects three other distinct yet very real men: Vladimir Dmitrievich Nabokov (his father), John Shakespeare (Shakespeare's father) and Hamnet Shakespeare (Shakespeare's son). While the death of John Shade ties the poet to Nabokov's father, his first experience with death ties him to Hamnet Shakespeare. Not only does Shade dies on his father's birthday, July 21st, but the death scene echoes the death of the latter. When describing the moment, Kinbote writes, "Oh, he was aiming at me all right but missing me every time, the incorrigible bungler…One of the bullets that spared me struck [Shade] in the side and went through his heart" (Nabokov, *Pale Fire* 294). Just as Shade dies from a bullet to the heart by assassin with poor aim, so too does Nabokov's father die from a bullet to the heart meant for someone else.[16] On March 28th, 1922, a monarchist assassin, during a botched attempt on the life of Paul Milyukov, his colleague and politician,

[16] Boyd, *Pale Fire* 78-79.

inadvertently shot and killed his father.[17] Furthermore, Shade ends his first canto by recounting a near death experience when he was "eleven" (*Pale Fire* 38), the same age that Hamnet Shakespeare was when he died. In some sense, John Shade is the Hamnet that lived.

Pale Fire ultimately reflects and refracts *Hamlet* just as both Shakespeare and Nabokov rewrite reality into fiction through inversion. Nabokov writes *Pale Fire* ultimately in Zemblan, which is "the tongue of the mirror" (Nabokov, *Pale Fire* 242). and uses a backwards alphabet reflected in the name "Zembl*a*" itself. Shade explains that Hazel "twisted words: pot, top, / Spider, redips. And 'powder' was 'red wop'" (*Pale Fire* 45). Through Hazel, Nabokov translates Shakespeare and *Hamlet* into his own mirrored language.

[17] Nabokov, *Selected Poems* 168.

INTERLUDE

DOLORES HAZEL SHADE:

Two Works by Hazel Brown

It was a year of Tempests: Hurricane
Lolita swept from Florida to Maine.

JOHN SHADE

INTERLUDE

DOLORES HAZEL SHADE:

Two Works by Hazel Brown

On the 5th of July, John Shade was born, Charles Kinbote was born, and Humbert Humbert learns that Lolita has left the hospital, and him forever. However, it is through William Shakespeare that these two works—*Pale Fire* and *Lolita*—become intertwined. The emphasis on Shakespeare as a ghost becomes literal in *Lolita*. In *Pale Fire*, the image of "Shakespeare flood[ing] a whole / Town with innumerable lights" (Nabokov 192) evokes a town being haunted by the "will-o-the-wisp" (Nabokov 188)—Shakespeare as a ghost. In *Lolita*, Humbert says, "Shakespeare, a ghost town in New Mexico, where bad man Russian Bill was colorfully hanged seventy years ago" (Nabokov 157). Shakespeare, New Mexico is not Humbert's invention; however, since Shakespeare is no longer listed in any atlas, it is now a "ghost town."[18] Moreover, John Shade writes, "It was a year of Tempests: Hurricane / Lolita swept from Florida to Maine" (Nabokov, *Pale Fire* 58). *The Tempest* is of course a Shakespearean play, and one that shares similarities to *Lolita*. Humbert states that "the stipulation of the Roman law, according to which a girl may marry at twelve, was adopted by the Church, and is still preserved, rather tacitly, in some of the United States" (Nabokov, *Lolita* 135); two of those ten states are Florida and Maine.[19] To return to *Pale Fire*, Kinbote's comment is:

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[18] Appel 390.

[19] Appel 383.

Line 680: Lolita

> Major hurricanes are given feminine names in America. The feminine gender is suggested not so much by the sex of furies and harridans as by a general professional application. Thus any machine is a she to its fond user, and any fire (even a "pale" one!) is she to the fireman, as water is she to the passionate plumber. Why our poet chose to give his 1958 hurricane a little-used Spanish name (sometimes given to parrots) instead of Linda or Lois, is not clear. (Nabokov, 243)

He underscores the Shakespearean connection by referring to a pale fire, however, he explains that "any fire (even a "pale" one!) is feminine.

In fact, the feminine motif amalgamates Nabokov, Shakespeare, Hazel Shade, and Dolores Haze. In addressing the calendric error in his birthday and *choosing* not to correct it, Nabokov simultaneously links himself to Shakespeare and the name Hazel.

> All dates are given in the New Style: we lagged twelve days behind the rest of the civilized world in the nineteenth century, and thirteen in the beginning of the twentieth. By the Old Style I was born on April 10, at daybreak, in the last year of the last century, and that was (if I could have been whisked across the border at once) April 22 in, say, Germany; but since all my birthdays were celebrated, with diminishing pomp, in the twentieth century, everybody, including myself, upon being shifted by revolution and expatriation from the Julian calendar to the Gregorian, used to add thirteen, instead of twelve days to the 10th of April. The error is serious. What is to be done? I find "April 23" under "birth date" in my *most recent*[20] passport, which is also the birth date of Shakespeare, my nephew Vladimir Sikorski, Shirley Temple and Hazel Brown (who, moreover, shares my passport). This, then, is the problem. Calculatory ineptitude prevents me from trying to solve it. (Nabokov, *Speak, Memory* 13-14)

Here, Nabokov expounds the calendric complications in assigning his birth to a date. According to the "Old Style" Julian Calendar, he was born on April 10th, 1899, which corresponds to April 22nd, 1899, in the "New Style" Gregorian Calendar. However, in the 20th century shift from

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[20] Italics, mine.

Julian to Gregorian, a universal error mistakenly correlated April 10th to April 23rd, instead of April 22nd. Due to this "serious error," the date of birth listed on his passport is the same as several others, beginning with "William Shakespeare" and concluding with "Hazel Brown (who, moreover, shares [his] passport)." Hazel Brown is, of course, Vladimir Nabokov himself (and his eye color which would also be listed in his passport). Although he exaggerates the grievousness of this error in date, he slips in that it occurs in his "most recent" passport, one that he could have in fact corrected. Certainly, Nabokov, the chess genius and mathematically precise writer, does not suffer from "calculatory ineptitude." Rather, he chooses not to "solve it" because it is central to his artistic identity and creations.

"Hazel" resurfaces in both *Lolita* and *Pale Fire*. In the former, Humbert Humbert continuously abbreviates the nickname, Lolita, of Dolores Haze to "L." Strung together, Dolores is "Haze, L", which yields "Hazel."[21] The name "Smith, Hazel" (Nabokov, *Lolita* 52) itself also emerges in his diary as one of the students on Lolita's class list. Hazel Smith appears once more in the novel: "Donald Scott…had done it with Hazel Smith in his uncle's garage" (*Lolita* 136). *Lolita* also directly hearkens back to "Hazel Brown:" "Handsome Bryan Bryanski, alias Anthony Bryan, alias Tony Brown, eyes hazel, complexion fair, was wanted for kidnaping" (*Lolita* 222). Combining the man's *"alias*" with the description of his eye color, we get "Brown,…hazel" which inverses Nabokov's pseudonym exactly.

Shakespeare is both poet and playwright. However, Nabokov believes that "the verbal poetical texture of Shakespeare is the greatest the world has known, and is immensely superior to

[21] Shapiro 330.

the structure of his plays as plays. With Shakespeare it is the metaphor that is the thing, not the play"[22] (Nabokov, *Strong Opinions* 89-90). In *Lolita*, Humbert echoes his maker's views:

> I detest the theatre as being a primitive and putrid form, historically speaking, a form that smacks of stone-age rites and communal nonsense despite those individual injections of genius, such as, say, Elizabethan poetry which a closeted reader automatically pumps out of the stuff. Being much occupied at the time with my own literary labors, I did not bother to read the complete text of *The Enchanted Hunters*, the playlet in which Dolores Haze was assigned the part of a farmer's daughter who imagines herself to be a woodland witch, or Diana, or something, and who, having got hold of a book on hypnotism, plunges a number of lost hunters into various entertaining trances before falling in her turn under the spell of a vagabond poet (Mona Dahl). (Nabokov 200).

By turning to Elizabethan poetry to introduce Quilty's play, a faux-Elizabethan drama, Humbert puts theater and poetry—Quilty as the Shakespearean playwright and Humbert as the Shakespearean poet—in competition. Humbert concludes his memoir with: "I am thinking of aurochs and angels, the secret of durable pigments, prophetic sonnets, the refuge of art. And this is the only immortality you and I may share, my Lolita" (*Lolita* 309). Shakespeare shares the notion that the power of art, particularly poetry, can transcend the limitations of life. Humbert's conclusion echoes that of Shakespeare's "Sonnet 18:"

> But they eternal summer shall not fade,
> Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,
> Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade
> When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st;
> So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
> So long lives this, and this gives life to thee. (Shakespeare 9-14)

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[22] Buck Mulligan says, "[t]he play's the thing" (*Ulysses* 9.876-877). Here, Joyce echoes Hamlet's line, "[t]he play's the thing" (*Hamlet* 2.2.633). Nabokov, on the other hand, amends Shakespeare's words by replacing "pla[y]" with "metaphor."

In fact, at Pavor Manor, Quilty exclaims, "I propose to borrow—you know, as the Bard said with that cold in his head, to borrow and to borrow and to borrow" (*Lolita* 301). As only the dramatist and not the poet, Quilty is doomed to be "the Bard…with [a] cold." He can only "borrow" whereas Humbert can create.

Both Kinbote and Humbert allude to moments in Shakespeare's plays to describe their art outside the realm of theater. Kinbote says, "I may turn up yet, on another campus, as an old, happy, healthy, heterosexual Russian, a writer in exile, sans fame, sans future, sans audience, sans anything but his art" (Nabokov, *Pale Fire* 300-301). Here, Nabokov alludes to the end of the "All the world's a stage" speech:

> All the world's a stage,
> And all the men and women merely players;
> They have their exits and their entrances,
> And one man in his time plays many parts,
> His acts being seven ages…
> ……
> …Last scene of all,
> That ends this strange eventful history,
> Is second childishness and mere oblivion,
> Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.
> (*As You Like It* 2.7.138-165)

Through "sans audience," Kinbote expunges the motif that "all the world's a stage." Rather than "sans everything," Kinbote concludes with "sans anything but his art." Quilty's play, on the other hand, consists of seven hunters, a number which reflects the "many parts" that a man plays during "his acts being seven ages." As "a writer in exile," Humbert is able to turn Lolita into art. Indeed, in *The Tempest*, Prospero perfects his "art" during his exile.[23] Humbert's words, "thick

[23] Schuman 71.

tears that poets and lovers shed" (Nabokov, *Lolita* 52), allude to *A Midsummer's Night Dream*. In the opening scene of Act V, Theseus says,

> The lunatic, the lover and the poet
> Are of imagination all compact.
> One sees more devils than vast hell can hold,
> That is, the madman. The lover, all as frantic,
> Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt.
> The poet's eye, in fine frenzy rolling,
> Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
> And as imagination bodies forth
> The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
> A local habitation and a name.
> (*A Midsummer's Night Dream* 5.1.7-17)

Humbert brings the amalgamation of "the lunatic, the lover and the poet" to life. He chooses to echo lines from Shakespeare's play that discuss poetry over theater. Like Nabokov, Humbert picks "the poet's pen" over the idea that "all the world's a stage."

PART II

METAPHYSICAL CHECKMATE:

Scenes on Killer Street and Grimm Road

Poète en deux langues, en prose et en vers,

toujours poète[24]

JORGE GUILLÉN

[24] Guillén inscription to Nabokov on *Cantico*, January 15, 1945: "poet in two languages, in prose and in verse, always a poet;" Cited in Boyd, *American Years* 88.

PART II

METAPHYSICAL CHECKMATE:

Scenes on Killer Street and Grimm Road

Humbert Humbert says, "A poet *à mes heures*, I composed a madrigal to the soot-black lashes of her pale-gray vacant eyes, to the five asymmetrical freckles of her bobbed nose, to the blond down of her brown limbs; but I tore it up and cannot recall it today" (Nabokov, *Lolita* 44). In this attempt to artistically capture the nymphic nature of Lolita, Humbert can only render her in fragments, in fact, only fragments of fragments. He cannot fixate on her "eyes," "nose," or "limbs" themselves but only their "lashes," its "freckles," and their hairs, respectively. The detailed attributes belong to Lolita's body parts rather than to her being.

This seemingly insignificant instance of Humbert's literary failure is in fact a lens through which we can read both his reunion with the long lost Lolita Haze, now Schiller, and his murder of Clare Quilty at the end of the book. In his visit with Dolly Schiller, Humbert recaptures the elements of Lolita in his destroyed madrigal, but at last those features are hers rather than her features' features. During the murder of Quilty, he transposes the very reasons that his madrigal failed onto his rival.

From his jail cell, Humbert Humbert writes these scenes almost as if they were one. The significance of blurring the distinction between his visits to 10 Killer Street and Pavor Manor lies in the fact that it is through these scenes that Humbert becomes a poet who, at last, is capable of creating art. The following chapter will individually explore the scenes in the context of the

novel—and consider what reading them in conjunction might mean for Humbert's (and Nabokov's) conception of the art in *Lolita.*

I

A Grimm Kill

Let us begin by asking: what is it about these two scenes that suggests that they should be investigated as more entwined than other couplings in the novel? Rather than their close proximity, it is the way in which the visits to 10 Killer Street and Pavor Manor echo each other and transcend spatial boundaries. Both scenes begin with the idea that there is no one, no Lolita, no Quilty, there. Right before Dolly Schiller's words of hello, Humbert writes "*Personne. Je resonne. Repersonne.* From what depth this re-nonsense" (Nabokov, *Lolita* 269). The French translates to "Nobody. I re-rang the bell. Re-nobody."[25] On Quilty's doorstep, Humbert "trie[s] the knocker. Re-nobody" (*Lolita* 294). This "re-nobody," now translated from the French by Humbert, is truly the second nobody. The murder of Quilty fulfills Humbert's desire for a fairy tale ending with Lolita. Humbert begs the pregnant Lolita to run away with him "and we shall live happily ever after" (*Lolita* 278). Although Lolita rejects Humbert's "happily ever after," the murder scene is one almost ripped out from a fairy tale. When entering Pavor Manor, uncoincidentally on "Grimm Road" (*Lolita* 292), Humbert says, "with a petulant snarl, I pushed the front door—and, how nice, it swung open as in a medieval fairy tale" (*Lolita* 294).

Furthermore, the gun and its bullets link the two scenes. Nabokov does so directly when "this time [Humbert] hit something hard. I hit the back of a black rocking chair, not unlike Dolly

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[25] Appel 439.

Schiller's" (Nabokov, *Lolita* 302). Before Lolita's last word, Humbert says, "[t]hen I pulled out my automatic—I mean, this is the kind of fool thing a reader might suppose I did. It never even occurred to me to do it" (*Lolita* 280). Although he refers to the gun only to emphasize the absence of it from this goodbye, his following words contradict that remark. He immediately describes Lolita as his "dead love; for she is dead and immortal if you are reading this" (*Lolita* 280)—almost as if he really had "pulled out [his] automatic." The noun choice of "automatic" rather than gun or Chum significantly returns in the Quilty scene. Humbert says, "the automatic was again ready for use on the person" (*Lolita* 301). Here, the repetition of "automatic" followed by a lack of specificity in "the person" enables the weapon's target to be both Lolita and Quilty simultaneously. Furthermore, "person" implies the physical body. Whereas a name would encapsulate Quilty's or Lolita's entire being, "person" implies only that person's physical self, leaving a spiritual "immortal" (*Lolita* 280) side unharmed. Ultimately, it echoes "*Personne…Repersonne*" (*Lolita* 269), the very first link that appears between the visits.

II
That Lolita, This "Lolita"

In the context of the passage, Humbert directly links the madrigal's fragments to the reasons that he is a failed poet. He begins,

> I would like to describe her face, her ways—and I cannot, because my own desire for her blinds me when she is near […] If I close my eyes I see but an immobilized fraction of her, a cinematographic still […] "Dolores Haze" A poet *à mes heures*, I composed a madrigal to the soot-black lashes of her pale-gray vacant eyes, to the five asymmetrical freckles of her bobbed nose, to the blond down of her brown limbs; but I tore it up and cannot recall it today. Only in the tritest of terms (diary resumed) can I describe Lo's features. (Nabokov, *Lolita* 44)

He draws attention to his inability to remember the "tor[n] up" madrigal because it contradicts

his "photographic memory" (*Lolita* 40), with which he recreates the "diary" in question. Humbert frames the remaining images of the poem, "to the soot-black lashes of her pale-gray vacant eyes, to the five asymmetrical freckles of her bobbed nose, to the blond down of her brown limbs," with the notions of fragmentation and mortality. The fact that he can only see a "fraction of her" means that he is incapable of capturing his entire beloved in a poem. However, his forgettable, mortal work reflects his anguish that Lolita will not always be a nymphet.

In his opening paragraph, Humbert's punctuation and language fragment the name "Lolita" so that she is just a "fraction" (Nabokov, *Lolita* 44). After leaving her name intact as his first word, he systematically dissects it: "Lolita […] Lo-lee-ta: the tip of the tongue taking a trip of three steps down the palate to tap, at three, on the teeth. Lo. Lee. Ta." (*Lolita* 1). While the hyphens visually separate the name into three parts, they grammatically link those three syllables by indicating that they have a combined meaning. The staccato alliteration of the letter "t" after the colon illustrates that dual effect. By capitalizing the first letter and putting a period after the last letter of each part, Humbert eliminates the previously implied, syntactic connection. After fragmenting the name "Lolita," Humbert continues, "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" (*Lolita* 9). Her multiple names, each of which corresponds to a unique condition, reflects Humbert's inability to capture the whole of Lolita. He can only capture a "fraction" of Lo, of Lola, of Dolly, of Dolores, and ultimately, of Lolita.

By splitting Lolita in two, Humbert links his failure to poetically capture Lolita to the fact that she will not always be Lolita. When she leaves for camp, he tells his readers:

> I knew I had fallen in love with Lolita forever; but I also knew she would not be forever Lolita. She would be thirteen on January 1. In

> two years or so she would cease being a nymphet and would turn into a "young girl," and then, into a "college girl"—that horror of horrors. The word "forever" referred only to my own passion, to the eternal Lolita as reflected in my blood. The Lolita whose iliac crests had not yet flared, the Lolita that today I could touch and smell and hear and see, the Lolita of the strident voice and the rich brown hair—of the bangs and the swirls at the sides and the curls at the back, and the sticky hot neck, and the vulgar vocabulary—"revolting," "super," "luscious," "goon," "drip"—that Lolita, my Lolita, poor Catullus would lose forever. (Nabokov, *Lolita* 65)

The antimetabole "Lolita forever…forever Lolita" reflects his central problem. In order to capture Lolita in poetic immortality, she must be encased in the word "forever," not the other way around. The passage splits the physical "Lolita" who will grow up from an "eternal Lolita." He elaborates on her human form three times, each of which begins with the phrase "the Lolita." He defines her first by a part of her body that "ha[s] not yet" become something and then by his ability to sensually connect with her. In his third and final version, she is "the Lolita of the strident voice and the rich brown hair." Significantly, the preposition "of" can express the relationship between a general category and the thing being specified which belongs to that bracket—in this case, Lolita and "voice and…hair," respectively. Moreover, an additional "of" makes that "voice and…hair" its own general category, to which an endless list of specificity belongs. By calling the physical Lolita who will cease "*that* Lolita," Humbert insinuates the existence of a "th[is] Lolita" whom he might be able to immortalize in poetry.

During his final scene with Lolita, he reconstructs the poem's fragments. When looking at Lolita, Humbert says, "How simple! The moment, the death I had kept conjuring up for three years was as simple as a bit of dry wood […] her palefreckled cheeks were hollowed" (Nabokov, *Lolita* 269). Upon seeing the death of her nymphet stage, Humbert reclaims the "five asymmetrical freckles" (*Lolita* 44) from the poem. The number five itself resurfaces: "'Oh, things…Oh, I—really I'—she uttered the 'I' as a subdued cry while she listened to the source of

the ache, and for lack of words spread the *five* fingers of her angularly up-and-down-moving hand" (*Lolita* 276). Here, the proximity of an ellipsis and the three "[I's]" evokes "Dolores on the dotted line" (*Lolita* 1), which is the name Humbert uses right before mentioning the destroyed madrigal. Right before giving new life to the rest of the poem, he uses his own "dotted line:"

> She was only the faint violet whiff and dead leaf echo of the nymphet I had rolled myself upon with such cries in the past; an echo on the brink of a russet ravine, with a far wood under a white sky, and brown leaves choking the brook, and one last cricket in the crisp weeds … but thank God it was not that echo alone that I worshiped. (*Lolita* 277-278)

The ellipsis' reminder of "Dolores on the dotted line" brings him out of the extended description of the fact that she is only a "dead leaf echo of the nymphet."

By resolving her dichotomous nature, he can now complete the poem using the name "Lolita." He continues, "I insist the world know how much I loved my Lolita, this Lolita, pale and polluted, and big with another's child, but still gray-eyed, still sooty-lashed" (Nabokov, *Lolita* 278). The "soot-black lashes of her pale-gray eyes" (*Lolita* 44) of the madrigal's fragment come back to life, only this time as adjectives and adverbs. The "soot[iness]" of her lashes, and the "lashes" themselves belong to all of Lolita rather than the "soot[y]-black[ness]" classifying the "lashes" that are part of her "eyes." As adjectival phrases, these features at last describe Lolita as an entity thereby resolving the failure of the madrigal. Moreover, they return at the moment he resolves his previous fear: "I knew I had fallen in love with Lolita forever; but I also knew she would not be forever Lolita" (*Lolita* 44). He replicates the inversion between "Lolita forever" and "forever Lolita" with "my Lolita, this Lolita" (*Lolita* 278) and the "that Lolita, my Lolita" (*Lolita* 44) whom he believes he will lose.

III
The Man in the Mirror

Before turning to the murder scene, let us take a detour from explicating the duality of Lolita to consider that of Humbert. As he does to Lolita, Humbert fragments his own identity by referring to himself in both the first-person and the third-person. In selecting a pseudonym, Humbert Humbert deliberately picks one that evokes that idea of a dual-self; there are two Humberts. When reflecting on his split-self, he advises his reader to "take down the following important remark: the artist in me has been given the upper hand over the gentleman" (Nabokov, *Lolita* 71). There is the "he," Humbert the man, which reflects his pseudonym's resonance with "hombre," and there is "I," Humbert the artist, writer, and poet.

Both Humbert's physical self and his artistic self become doubled in the character Clare Quilty. When looking at the picture of "a distinguished playwright" (Nabokov, *Lolita* 69), Humbert acknowledges that he "resembl[es] [the man he does not know is Quilty]…slight[y]" (*Lolita* 69). Without knowing that Lolita's kidnapper is the man from the photo, Humbert says, "the tone of his brain, had affinities with my own. He mimed and mocked me. His allusions were definitely highbrow. He was well-read" (*Lolita* 249). Thus, Quilty also shares Humbert's literary side, both in "the tone of his brain" and in the fact that he is a writer. The reflection of Humbert in Quilty becomes exact when they come face to face. In their "formless tussle" (*Lolita* 29), they linguistically become one: "he rolled over me. I rolled over him. We rolled over me. They rolled over him. We rolled over us" (*Lolita* 229). If Humbert merges with his double in this scene, then whom does he kill?

At this juncture, let us note Humbert's distinction between a physical and spiritual relationship, and what that means for art. Humbert says, "Some day, Lo, you will understand

many emotions and situations, such as for example the harmony, the beauty of spiritual relationship" (Nabokov, *Lolita* 112). Thus, a purely spiritual relationship is when the two people form "harmony," that is, blend into a coherent, artistic whole. A purely physical relationship—sex without love—is "sterile selfish vice" (*Lolita* 278).

Just like Quilty the man who is "practically impotent" (Nabokov, *Lolita* 298), Quilty's art is infertile because it is precisely sex without love. After calling Quilty a "scenario writer [who sits in a] low chair" (*Lolita* 299), Humbert immediately refers to himself as a "poe[t]" (*Lolita* 299). By calling his action against Quilty "poetical justice," Humbert places his art on a "[higher] chair" than that of his dopplegänger. In this context, by murdering Quilty, Humbert figuratively kills the physical half of his identity whose existence had rendered his spiritual, poetic self impotent. While Humbert kills part of himself in Quilty, Nabokov assassinates part of someone else.

Let us begin by looking at the name Clare Quilty more closely. Clare county Ireland, in which Quilty is a town, and Clare Street appear in *Ulysses*; each of the four references to Clare concern Bloom directly or by extension.[26] While naming his antagonist after a place in Ireland and *Ulysses* can seem incidental, the special attention that Nabokov draws to Clare Street in his *Lectures on Literature* suggest that it is much more. He tells his students:

> then in section 17 Stephen's Italian teacher walks and so does the mad gentleman Farrell, with the long name. We shall soon realize

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[26] All references to Clare (county or street) in *Ulysses*: "—Well no, Mr Bloom said. In point of fact I have to go down to the county Clare on some private business" (6.16-17); "—His father [Rudolph Bloom] poisoned himself, Martin Cunningham whispered. Had the Queen's hotel in Ennis. You heard him say he was going to Clare. Anniversary" (6.529-531); "He [Cashel Boyle O'Connor Fitzmaurice Tisdall Farrell] strode on for Clare street, grinding his fierce word. As he strode past Mr Bloom's dental windows the sway of his dustcoat brushed rudely from its angle a slender tapping cane and swept onwards, having buffeted a thewless body. The blind stripling turned his sickly face after the striding form." (10.1114-1118); "The Queen's Hotel, Ennis, county Clare, where Rudolph Bloom (Rudolf Virag) died on the evening of the 27 June 1886" (17.622-623).

> that the most important synchronizing agent in the whole chapter is the blind youth, the blind piano tuner, whom Bloom helped to cross the street in an eastward direction, about two o'clock. Demented Farrell now walks westward on Clare Street, while the blind youth is walking eastward on the same street, still unaware that he has left his tuning fork in the Ormond Hotel. Opposite number 8, the office of a dentist Mr. Bloom, already referred to in the description of the funeral procession, no relation to Leopold, mad Farrell brushes against the frails oft body of the blind youth, who curses him. (Nabokov, *Lectures on Literature* 334)

Earlier in his lectures, he annotates Joyce's phrasing of that scene: "—[y]es the stripling answered. South Frederick street. [*Actually he heads for Clare Street.*]" (*Lectures on Literature* 324); "Mr Bloom's dental windows [*another Bloom*]" (*Lectures on Literature* 324). Accordingly, Nabokov clearly thought about the character of Bloom and Clare Street. In fact, he acknowledges the blind youth as "the most important synchronizing agent in the whole chapter," because he links Leopold Bloom to Mr. Bloom ["no relation to Leopold"] on Clare Street. Like that Mr. Bloom, Ivor Quilty is a dentist. His nephew Clare bears the name of Mr. Bloom's office in Dublin. Perhaps, the image of "Clare the Impredictable s[itting] down before the piano and play[ing] several atrociously vigorous, fundamentally hysterical, plangent chords" (Nabokov, *Lolita* 302) alludes back to "the blind piano tuner" in *Ulysses*.

Nabokov calls attention to the faults that Bloom shares with his maker. On May 10th, 1954, around when he was completing *Lolita*, Nabokov gave his opening lecture on Joyce's masterpiece. Speaking of Leopold Bloom, Nabokov stated: "Joyce intended the portrait of an ordinary person. [His] sexual deportment [is] extremely perverse…In Bloom's (and Joyce's) mind, the theme of sex is mixed with theme of latrine."[27] On May 28th, the final class lecture, analyzing the flaws of *Ulysses*, Nabokov complained about the "[o]bnoxious, overdone

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[27] Appel lii; from the annotator's class notes, 1953-1954.

preoccupation with sex organs."[28]

Clare Quilty reflects the perversity of Bloom and Joyce. For example, one of his plays is "*The Strange Mushroom*" (Nabokov, *Lolita* 31). While the mushroom is a sex symbol in many cultures, Nabokov specifies the image to Appel: "[s]omewhere, in a collection of 'cases,' I found a little girl who referred to her uncle's organ as 'his mushroom.'"[29] To Nabokov, by naming his play, *The Strange Mushroom*, Quilty shares Joyce's "preoccupation with sex organs." In fact, Quilty, pleading with Humbert, offers him a "young lady with three breasts" (*Lolita* 301) and tries to tempt him with "an absolutely unique collection of erotica upstairs. Just to mention one item: the in folio de-luxe *Bagration Island* by the explorer and psychoanalyst Melanie Weiss…with photographs of eight hundred and something male organs she examined and measured in 1932" (*Lolita* 302). Quilty echoes the "theme of latrine" as Humbert finds Quilty at Pavor Manor coming out of a "bathroom" (*Lolita* 294). Humbert deems him "a complete freak in sex matters" (*Lolita* 276); Quilty himself claims to have "made private movies out of *Justine* and other eighteenth-century sexcapades" (*Lolita* 298). Humbert reveals that Quilty "did not use a fountain pen which fact, as any psychoanalyst will tell you, meant that the patient was a repressed undinist. One mercifully hopes there are water nymphs in the Styx" (*Lolita* 250). Amending Appel's annotation, Nabokov adds "the main point here is that 'undinist' is a person (generally male) who is erotically excited by another person's (generally female) making water (Havelock Ellis was an 'undinist,' or 'fountainist,' and so was Leopold Bloom)."[30] Here again, Nabokov highlights the perversity that the fictional men, Bloom and Quilty, and Joyce share.

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[28] Appel liii; from the annotator's class notes, 1953-1954.

[29] Appel 349. For the letter in which Nabokov includes this anecdote, see *Selected Letters*, p. 408-409.

[30] Appel 425. For the letter in which Nabokov includes this anecdote, see *Selected Letters*, p. 407.

While "[Quilty's] allusions were definitely highbrow. He was well-read. He knew French. He was versed in logodaedaly and logomancy" (*Lolita* 249-250), these complementary characteristics, all of which can be said of Joyce as well, are empty praises as they do not apply to the writer's art.

Humbert reflects his creator's artistic vision when it comes to sex and sexual organs. In response to a question posed by an interviewer from *Playboy*, Nabokov said, "[s]ex as an institution, sex as a general notion, sex as a problem, sex as a platitude—all this is something I find too tedious for words. Let us skip sex" (Nabokov, *Strong Opinions* 23). Likewise, Humbert notes that he is "not concerned with so-called 'sex' at all. Anybody can imagine those elements of animality" (Nabokov, *Lolita* 134). Despite their different sexual proclivities, the two share a philosophy as artists. In fact, through Humbert, Nabokov parodies Joyce's affinity for sexual organs. Humbert says, "my only grudge against nature was that I could not turn my Lolita inside out and apply voracious lips to her young matrix, her unknown heart, her nacreous liver, the sea-grapes of her lungs, her comely twin kidneys" (*Lolita* 165). Rather than attempting to penetrate her sexually, he fantasizes about penetrating the interior of her body through her internal organs.

IV
Hegelian Synthesis[31]

By resurrecting the fragments of his madrigal and reconstructing them in a way that resolves their initial limitations, Humbert Humbert becomes a true poet and turns Lolita into an immortal, poetic subject. After recreating his poem, Humbert transposes her rejection of him as a

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[31] Nabokov, *Lolita* 307.

lover into poetic success. In the first half of the book, he says, "hot, opalescent, thick tears that poets and lovers shed" (Nabokov, *Lolita* 52). After she rejects him during their final meeting, Humbert "br[eaks] into the hottest tears [he] ha[s] ever shed" (*Lolita* 279). While those tears could have been the "hottest tears" of a lover, he ends the scene with an authentication of his success as a poet. Although he does not literally "pul[l] out [his] automatic" (*Lolita* 280) before Lolita's last word, Humbert Humbert produces the same outcome by calling her his "sweet immortal dead love; for she is dead and immortal if you are reading this" (*Lolita* 280). By turning his readers' suspicion that his murder victim is Lolita as a transition, Humbert intensifies the significance of the poetic immortality that he grants her. Moreover, by placing the word "love" in the center of an antimetabole, "immortal dead…dead and immortal," he encases his love of her within the immortality of poetry.

While recreating the madrigal's description of Lolita on Killer street, on Grimm Road, he transposes the failures that inhibited the initial poem onto Quilty. At the end of the forgotten madrigal passage, Humbert admits that "[o]nly in the tritest of terms (diary resumed) can I describe Lo's features. I might say her hair is auburn, and her lips as red as licked red candy, the lower one prettily plump—oh, that I were a lady writer who could have her pose naked in a naked light! But instead I am lanky, big-boned, wooly-chested Humbert Humbert" (Nabokov, *Lolita* 44). The end of the passage speaks in the conditional tense; he "might say" something; he could say something if he "were a lady writer." However, he is "big-boned wooly-chested Humbert Humbert." Each phrase is a compound which reflects the dichotomous nature of his being as both man and artist. Ultimately, he attributes the failure of his poem to the fact that, he is "lanky, big-boned, wooly-chested Humbert Humbert." In the Schiller scene, the only time he refers to himself as the compound, "Humbert Humbert," appears directly before he sits in the

rocking chair and thinks about killing Quilty: "drove to wherever the beast's lair was—and then pulled the pistol's foreskin back, and then enjoyed the orgasm of the crushed trigger" (*Lolita* 274). In fact, he never refers to himself as "Humbert Humbert" again in the remaining pages, all of which he writes in the first person. The man, the "big-boned wooly-chested Humbert Humbert" (*Lolita* 44), transposes his "wooly-chested" appearance onto Quilty's "hirsute chest" (*Lolita* 295). In doing so, Humbert resolves his dichotomy so that he is singularly an artist.

V
Quilty or Not Quilty?

"To fill in the pause," Humbert says, "I proposed he read his own sentence—in the poetical form I had given it. The term "poetical justice" is one that may be most happily used in this respect. I handed him a neat typescript" (Nabokov, *Lolita* 299). Quilty, reading his death sentence aloud, says, "because you took advantage of my disadvantage…" (*Lolita* 299). Here, Humbert's poem turns to chess terminology,[32] just as he stores Chum in a chess box.

The rivalry between Humbert and Quilty is ultimately a giant chess match, played across the checkered board of America,[33] which Humbert describes as a "crazy quilt of forty-eight states" (Nabokov, *Lolita* 152). Later on in the description of "roads crisscrossing the crazy *quilt* of dark and pale fields" (*Lolita* 307), the juxtaposition of dark and light patches, corresponding to the black and white squares of chessboard, reinforces the comparison. Quilty is the ultimate opponent as his very name symbolizes the structure of the board; after Lolita's disappearance,

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[32] Field 327.

[33] Appel lxv.

Humbert uses the term "moves" to map out his trailing of Quilty. When Humbert says, "did I mention the name of that milk bar I visited a moment ago? It was, of all things, The Frigid Queen. Smiling a little sadly, I dubbed her My Frigid Princess. She did not see the wistful joke" (*Lolita* 166), Lolita becomes the Queen.

The seemingly never-ending match between Gaston Godin and Humbert Humbert reinforces the chessboard structure of the novel.[34] Their game emphasizes Lolita's link to the Queen and mirrors the murder at Pavor Manor. Upon hearing Lolita dance downstairs during one of the games, Godin "rub[s] his head or cheek as if confusing those distant thuds with the awful stabs of my formidable Queen" (Nabokov, *Lolita* 182). Another evening, when Humbert learns Lolita missed her piano lesson again—a lie so bold that it signals that he will soon lose her—he muses,

> As the reader may well imagine, my faculties were now impaired, and a move or two later, with Gaston to play, I noticed through the film of my general distress that he could collect my queen; he noticed it too, but thinking it might be a trap on the part of his tricky opponent, he demurred for quite a minute, and puffed and wheezed, and shook his jowls, and even shot furtive glances at me, and made hesitating half-thrusts with his pudgily bunched fingers—dying to take that juicy queen and not daring—and all of a sudden he swooped down upon it (who knows if it did not teach him certain later audacities?), and I spent a dreary hour in achieving a draw. (*Lolita* 202-203).

At this moment in the narrative, while Gaston can "collect [Humbert's] queen" on the board, Quilty can take Lolita.

Nabokov revitalizes imagery from the actual chess match at Pavor Manor. Humbert first sees Quilty in "the Oriental parlor" (Nabokov, *Lolita* 295), which echoes Godin's "orientally

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[34] Appel lxv.

furnished den" (*Lolita* 181), and the replacement box for chessmen with an "elaborate Oriental design over the lid" (*Lolita* 215) that he gives to Humbert. Quilty's weak French harkens back to the fact that Godin's "English was a burlesque" (*Lolita* 181).

Nabokov often compares chess problems to literature. The most famous one being: "competition in chess problems is not really between White and Black but between the composer[35] and the hypothetical solver (just as in a first-rate work of fiction the real clash is not between the characters but between the author and the world)" (Nabokov, *Speak Memory* 290). The notion that chess problems reflect the relationship between writer and reader have a double meaning in the case of *Lolita* as both Humbert and Quilty become the other's "reader." In a problem, the solver must discover how White can deliver mate in answer to Black's moves written by the composer. Thus, to a certain extent, the reader is White and the author is Black. Those assigned roles reflect the relationship between Humbert and Quilty. Godin "always wore black" (Nabokov, *Lolita* 181) during their matches which assigns Humbert to White. Until arriving at Pavor Manor, Humbert remains the White king anxiously trying to deliver mate to the playwright. However, during the murder scene, Humbert is "wearing a black suit, a black shirt, no tie" (*Lolita* 295), and as Quilty reads his poetic sentence, he becomes the White solver to Humbert's Black composer.

More specifically, Nabokov believes that "problems are the poetry of chess"[36] (*Strong Opinions* 160). Guillén perfectly describes Nabokov as a "poet in two languages, in prose and in verse, always a poet."[37] While Joyce writes poetic prose, Nabokov writes prosaic poetry. The

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[35] When describing his literary attempts, Humbert uses the verb "to compose."

[36] Nabokov repeats this phrase in *Poems and Problems*, p. 15.

[37] Cited in Boyd, *American Years* 88.

Foreword contains no mention of the name Quilty except for “Vivian Darkbloom [an anagram for the author’s name] has written a biography, ‘My Cue,’ to be published shortly, and the critics who have perused the manuscript call it her best book. The caretakers of various cemeteries involved report that no ghosts walk” (Nabokov, *Lolita* 4). In *Lolita*, Nabokov does in fact make Joyce “[His] Cue.” Humbert gains peace of mind in knowing that he need not fear “an actual visit from [Cue], with trouble on my part to rationalize him as not being a ghost” (*Lolita* 306). Through writing *Lolita*, Nabokov has made sure that Joyce’s “ghost [no longer] walk[s].”

CONCLUSION

Humbert's *Lolita* is not a tale of pedophilia, but is a tale of art. His attraction to the body of his nymphet, "Dolores on the dotted line" (Nabokov, *Lolita* 1), is really a desire for a metatextual figure. He describes her arms and legs as having "scratches like tiny dotted lines of coagulated rubies" (*Lolita* 111). Thus, her body mirrors writing itself with its "dotted lines in varicolored inks" (*Lolita* 102). She also symbolizes a book like the "coffin-black volume almost as big as Lolita" (*Lolita* 262) that Humbert reads. By the end of the narrative, Humbert brings that image to fruition: "When I started, fifty-six days ago, to write *Lolita*" (*Lolita* 308); she is both "Lolita" and "*Lolita*." Humbert symbolizes a writer as he "talk[s] like a book" (*Lolita* 114). Therefore "this book is about Lolita" (*Lolita* 253) but is also "[Humbert's] story" (*Lolita* 308). It is the tale of writer and work.

While Joyce calls *Ulysses* the "epic of the human body," at first glance, it seems to be the epic of what is inside that body. Joyce's schemata assign specific bodily organs to all of the chapters in which Bloom appears (ch. 4-18). The language enacts the bodily functions; the sentences ruminate, embodying Bloom chewing his lunch; they spasm with locomotor ataxia in "Circe"; they orgasm in "Nausicaa":

> And she saw a long Roman candle going up over the trees, up, up, and, in the tense hush, they were all breathless with excitement as it went higher and higher and she had to lean back more and more to look up after it, high, high, almost out of sight, and her face was suffused with a divine, an entrancing blush from straining back and he could see her other things too, nainsook knickers, the fabric that caresses the skin, better than those other pettiwidth, the green, four

> and eleven, on account of being white and she let him and she saw that he saw and then it went so high it went out of sight a moment and she was trembling in every limb from being bent so far back that he had a full view high up above her knee where no-one ever not even on the swing or wading and she wasn't ashamed and he wasn't either to look in that immodest way like that because he couldn't resist the sight of the wondrous revealment half offered like those skirtdancers behaving so immodest before gentlemen looking and he kept on looking, looking. She would fain have cried to him chokingly, held out her snowy slender arms to him to come, to feel his lips laid on her white brow, the cry of a young girl's love, a little strangled cry, wrung from her, that cry that has rung through the ages. And then a rocket sprang and bang shot blind blank and O! then the Roman candle burst and it was like a sigh of O! and everyone cried O! O! in raptures and it gushed out of it a stream of rain gold hair threads and they shed and ah! they were all greeny dewy stars falling with golden, O so lovely, O, soft, sweet, soft! (*Ulysses* 13.719-740)

The long sentences reflect the build "up, up" as the body approaches climax. The clauses in between the commas become smaller and smaller until they are just a few, echoing words—"the cry of a young girl's love, a little strangled cry,…that cry." And they culminate, screaming with short bursts, free of capital letters apart from the "O!"…the "O!"…the "O!" As the novel progresses, the organs get closer to the exterior body—the final two being skeleton and flesh, respectively. The cover that holds the inner contents of *Ulysses* is that body.

Nabokov turns the body into text; Joyce turns text into the body. *Lolita* is truly "The Portrait of *Ulysses* in a Mirror." This literary mirror reverses, inverts, reflects. Both Nabokov and Joyce live in a mirror world; they see with mirror eyes.

The mirror is a metaphor for the literary text. It conveys the nature of metafiction by highlighting the distinction between reality and perception. Perception itself reflects the role of the author who observes and captures that interpretation—not the thing itself. We do not see ourselves in a mirror, we see our reflections in which right becomes left and left becomes right. We see a distortion of ourselves; we see our own fiction. And yet, mirrors represent a kind of

knowledge, a truth otherwise imperceptible. They embody the central dichotomies of the world: imitation and imitated, identity and separation, the self and the other, male and female, right and wrong. In their reflections, mirrors possess the power of re-creation, which goes to the heart of intertextuality.

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