

THE TRANSFORMATION OF NARRATIVE: AN EXPLORATION OF
ALLITERATION'S FUNCTION IN VLADIMIR NABOKOV'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY

by

REBECCA CAROLYN BLOCK

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Clinical Psychology in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City
University of New York

2011

© 2011

REBECCA CAROLYN BLOCK

All Rights Reserved

This manuscript has been read and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in
Clinical Psychology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirements
for the degree of Doctoral of Philosophy

Date

Jeffery Rosen, Ph.D.
Chair of Examining Committee

Date

Maureen O'Connor, Ph.D.
Executive Officer

Jeffery Rosen, Ph.D.
Lissa Weinstein, Ph.D.
Elliot Jurist, Ph.D.
Steven Tuber, Ph.D.
Richard Lasky, Ph.D.
Supervisory Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Abstract

THE TRANSFORMATION OF NARRATIVE: AN EXPLORATION OF ALLITERATION'S FUNCTION IN VLADIMIR NABOKOV'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY

By

Rebecca Block

Advisor: Jeffery Rosen, Ph.D.

The following is a psychoanalytic inquiry that uses the successive publishings of Vladimir Nabokov's autobiography to explore the functions that various versions of repetition play in transforming traumatic or conflicted memories into narratives that represent more symbolized and coherent accounts of the self. The data set consists of the three, successive, published, English language versions of Nabokov's memoirs. These successive versions are useful in that they represent Nabokov's repeated return to the significant memories and material that compose his autobiographical narrative. With each return, Nabokov made meaningful revisions to his narrative. Consequently, his transformations are tracked over the course of the successive, drafted versions. Specifically, this project focuses on one chapter of Nabokov's autobiography—"Mademoiselle O"—she being a figure who loomed large in the early part of Nabokov's life. This project proposes that repetition manifests in any one of three main forms: as static repetition, as means for transformation, or as a means of creative play. In addition it proposes that these forms of repetition correspond to a continuum of symbolization, with desymbolized stasis on one end and symbolized play on the other. Here, alliteration was

identified as a signifier for these varied forms of repetition. Two main hypotheses are proposed. The first states that if alliterative repetition marks emotionally salient material, then the concentration of alliteration in Nabokov's autobiographical narrative would be greater in areas that contain his most conflicted themes—loss and exile. Indeed results reveal significance. The second hypothesis proposes that if alliterative repetition serves a transformative function, then the concentration of alliteration would decline over the course of Nabokov's progressive drafts. Results are not significant but do reveal a trend toward increase in the final draft. The discussion explores various possibilities as to the given results. It is suggested that Nabokov may have increased his use of alliterative repetition because of the pleasure derived out of mastery and play. Alternatively, it is suggested that alliteration might facilitate internalization, in this case where reader internalizes author and work, thus resulting in Nabokov being better remembered by his readers, an elegant solution to his concerns around loss and being lost.

Acknowledgements

I would not have been able to complete this degree without the precious assistance of any number of loved ones—professors, friends and family. My deepest gratitude goes to my advisory committee, for their thoughtfulness and patience has guided me safely through this process. I feel profoundly lucky to have met Jeff Rosen, for he has been a wonderful mentor and friend to me through these past years. I appreciate his deep curiosity about human nature and I have enjoyed our many conversations about such matters, those ranging from the mundane to the profound to the humorous. But certainly the most meaningful aspect of our friendship has been his kindness. He has helped me to discover my own intellectual mind by generously lending me his; this has been a true gift, one that I will always carry with me. I would also like to thank Lissa Weinstein for her encouragement and inspiration. She has shown me that an academic and intellectual life need not be limited in scope, and I hope that with this knowledge I can return to some creative pursuit with all that I have gathered here. Many thanks go to Elliot Jurist, for he has opened worlds for me with his keen intellect and his precision of thought. These were qualities I attempted to emulate through out this effort. I am ever grateful to Steve Tuber for his passion and dedication to clinical work. It is in part through his passion that I have been able to discover a deep love for this work. And finally my gratitude goes to Richard Lasky. He generously contributed both his clinical and his intellectual acumen to this project, and I appreciate his astute comments and reflections on the subject.

Generally speaking, I cannot thank all of my supervisors and patients enough. It is from them that I have learned the most. It is primarily with their help that I have been better able to comprehend the profundity and tenderness of the human experience.

I am profoundly appreciative for my family. Their willingness to listen to years of complaints, fears and doubts—and their willingness to encourage me nonetheless—gave me hope when I needed it most. Their love and support are precious to me. Special thanks go to Rembert and Erik for their willingness to read all sorts of drafts, some of which were far from coherent.

And last but not least, I owe a deep of gratitude of debt to Blumberg. Words will never suffice for what you have both given me and helped me to find. Thank you.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS	viii
LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES	x
CHAPTER I: Introduction	1
Beginnings	1
Scope of the Project	7
Biographies	17
A Brief Biography	17
A Brief Biography of an Autobiography	31
The Object, Mademoiselle O	35
CHAPTER II: Repetition	48
Repetition in Psychoanalytic Theory	48
Attunement	75
CHAPTER III: Alliteration	83
Thesis Propositions	84
Why Alliteration?	86
Form, Style and Meaning	103
CHAPTER IV: Methods	119
Overview of Methods	119
Data Set	120

Data Analysis	124
Operational Definitions	126
CHAPTER V: Results	132
Hypothesis I: Differences Across Sections	134
Hypothesis II: Differences Across Drafts	140
CHAPTER VI: Discussion	146
Autobiographical Narrative	146
Hypothesis I: Concentration of Alliteration	160
Hypothesis II: Change in Alliteration Across Drafts	172
CHAPTER VII: Conclusion	190
APPENDIX: “Mademoiselle O” Chapters with Identified Alliterated Phrases	196
AM, Draft 1	196
CE, Draft 2	214
SM, Draft 3	235
BIBLIOGRAPHY	261

List of Tables and Figures

Table 1: Sections, Themes and Draft Paragraphs	123
Table 2: Descriptive Statistics	133
Table 3: Means and Standard Deviations: Averaged Number of Alliterated Words per Section	135
Table 4: Huynh-Feldt ANOVA: Differences Between Sections in Quantity of Alliterated Words	136
Table 5: Effect Sizes: Differences Between Sections in Quantity of Alliterated Words	136
Table 6: Tukey HSD Pairwise Comparison of Section Means	138
Table 7: Means and Standard Deviations: Total Number of Alliterated Words per Draft	141
Table 8: ANOVA Mauchly's Test of Sphericity: Differences Between Drafts in Quantity of Alliterated Words	142
Table 9: Effect Sizes: Differences Between Drafts in Quantity of Alliterated Words	142
Table 10: Tukey HSD Pairwise Comparison of Draft Means	143
Figure 1: Profile Plots of Section Means of Alliterated Words	135
Figure 2: Profile Plots: Draft Means of Alliterated Words	141
Figure 3: Profile Plots: Number of Alliterated Words by Section and Draft Version	144

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

A creative writer must study carefully the works of his rivals, including the Almighty. He must possess the inborn capacity not only of recombining but of re-creating the given world. In order to do this adequately, avoiding duplication of labor, the artist should know the given world. Imagination without knowledge leads no farther than the back yard of primitive art, the child's scrawl on the fence, and the crank's message in the market place. Art is never simple.

(Nabokov, 1990b, p. 32)

Beginnings

Vladimir Vladimirovich Nabokov. That ventriloquist of voices; that labyrinthine lepodiatrist; that vibrant virtuoso. The lower lip tucks neatly beneath the teeth, trailing along the top, yielding to the tongue's palate tap for the trill of the L. The initial V cut a wedge into an eternity of darkness, striking a beginning. Light spilled forth through the crack to illuminate the remainder of those letters with which Nabokov was so famous for playing. The final Nabokovian V gently closed that gap again, yielding to the weight of the darkness, vibrating with the reunion of lip and teeth. Vladimir Vladimirovich Nabokov.

But oh! What he was able to do in those brief moments of light with just a handful of letters.

Vladimir Nabokov deemed his autobiography to be "the meeting point of an impersonal art form and a very personal life story" (Nabokov, 1998, p. 124). Indeed, as

Nabokov suggested, the creating of a memoir is a somewhat different affair than the creating of either a fictional or historical work. Artful fiction, it would seem, allows us to comprehend a variety of intimate images, perspectives, intentions, and actions enacted by a variety of characters. In the end, these are images that are initially imagined by the author and finally imagined by his readers. Non-fiction, on the other hand, is a reconstruction of history, of what may have happened in the past. The author describes a factual account of events, people, and perspectives. Thus, it is not wholly invented. Despite the seeming divide, it is unlikely that fiction and non-fiction divide themselves so neatly as this. Each may tend to borrow from the other more often than either would like to admit. Autobiography and memoir, however, explicitly admit to a union of the two genres. The two are combined such that the author may attempt to discover a means of representing and comprehending a somewhat more accurate sense of past events. By doing so, the author also attempts to reach a deeper understanding of the self's perspectives, intentions and actions when faced with the given circumstances. In other words, an autobiographical narrative is a means of achieving a more coherent picture of the world and of creating a more coherent sense of self.

In bringing together an art form with a life story, autobiography may also be thought of as a union of memory and imagination. Nabokov stated the following on that subject:

The simultaneousness of these random events, and indeed the fact of their occurring at all as described by the central percipient, would only then conform to "reality" if he had at his disposal the apparatus to reproduce those events optically within the frame of one screen; but the central figure in the passage you quote is

not equipped with any kind of video attached to his lawn chair and must therefore rely on the power of pure imagination. Incidentally, I tend more and more to regard the objective existence of all events as a form of impure imagination—hence my inverted commas around “reality.” Whatever the mind grasps, it does so with the assistance of creative fancy, that drop of water on a glass slide which gives distinctness and relief to the observed organism. (Nabokov, 1990b, p. 154)

Memory, Nabokov suggested, relies more on imagination than it does strictly on the transcription of facts. Memoirist Patricia Hampl too wrote of her disbelief when she discovered that her writing process did not conform to the writer’s edict of “write what you know.” Instead, she discovered that: “I write in order to find out what I know” (Hampl, 2000, p. 205). Perhaps, then, an autobiography is a writer’s attempt to discover just what it is he imagines he knows—about himself, about others, about his past, and about the world.

If there is some truth to this idea, then one of its underlying assumptions relates to the possibility that somewhere the author must know something. He may not know the totality of the picture he is sketching. He may not even know much of the minuscule image that led him to create a particular scene. However, some aspect of the image or memory compelled the writer forward, to move further into whatever it is he is endeavoring to create. As will later be explored, Freud proposed that whatever that compelling essence is, it is compelling for a reason, conjured by a past siren’s call. Hampl too observed: “We only store in memory images of value... Over time, the value (the feeling) and the stored memory (the image) may become estranged. Memoir seeks a permanent home for feeling and image, a habitation where they can live together in

harmony” (Hampl, 1996, p. 207). She suggested that the kernel of value, the essence that compels, relates to one’s feeling. And so perhaps these feelings that originate with past sirens, be they conscious or unconscious, guide the author toward his selection of narratives valuable enough to include in his autobiography. With this determination, he strikes his mark on the blank page.

In order for the author to discover just what it is he knows, he must inevitably return to those first marks that constructed the initial images. Nabokov confessed to being an avid reviser, writing and rewriting his index cards “many times” (Nabokov, 1990b, p. 32). With each revision, he was presented with an opportunity to address the material again so that he may enliven the creatures of his creation. Nabokov described a specific impulse to revise in the following manner:

Very soon I asserted that the original sagged considerably more than I had expected... Let me only remark that my main purpose in making [the “little changes”] was not to beautify a corpse but rather to permit a still breathing body to enjoy certain innate capacities which inexperience and eagerness, the haste of thought and the sloth of word had denied it formerly. Within the texture of the creature, those possibilities were practically crying to be developed or teased out.

(Nabokov, 1968, p. ix)

Nabokov suggested that a deeper understanding of the matter at hand was accessed through a repeated return to the material. The development of texture and the teasing out of details allowed him to move into more subtle and nuanced understandings of those narratives he chose to construct.

Perhaps a similar sort of opportunity is presented to us all through a repeated return to the compelling psychic material of our storied lives. Psychoanalytic theories of therapeutic process delineate the ways in which feeling can be brought together with image and word through the process of symbolization. Symbolization is considered to be a vehicle for transformation, for with it, ambiguous and uncertain feelings or thoughts are articulated by way of detailed narratives. Thus the ambiguity is somewhat clarified, hopefully to result in the development of more meaningful and coherent conceptions of the self and one's life. In essence, this becomes a means for each of us to find out about the details of what it is that we know. Nabokov too eagerly advocated for the value of the details. And Hampl asserted that: "details are not merely information, not flat facts... They must work. Their work is the creation of symbol. But it is more accurate to call it the recognition of symbol. For meaning is not 'attached' to the detail by the memoirist; meaning is revealed" (Hampl, 1996, p. 207-208). Symbolization works on behalf of its proprietor. This is the case for both the narrative of a written autobiography, as well as for the multitude of narratives told about our everyday lives. From ambiguity to greater clarity, from unconscious to conscious and thematic, these metamorphoses can move us toward feeling more alive, and toward living a life with meaning. As will be suggested, it may be that the processes of repetition and revision can best facilitate this kind of metamorphosis.

So it is that we are all compelled toward writing the stories of our own lived lives. Some theorists have proposed that humans are compelled to construct narratives because we are biologically wired to do so. Hampl suggested we are compelled because this may be a means to discover what it is we know. Perhaps too, this may be a means for each of

us to create a self. Inevitably, our self-narratives tell the stories of a life lived and the meaning residing within. As Hampl concluded:

Memoir must be written because each of us must have a created version of the past. Created: that is, real, tangible, made of the stuff of a life lived in place and in history. And the down side of any created thing as well: we must live with a version that attaches us to our limitations, to the inevitable subjectivity of our points of view. We must acquiesce to our experience and our gift to transform experience into meaning and value. You tell me your story, I'll tell you my story. (Hampl, 1996, p. 208)

At its foundation memoir is a personal reminiscence. Yet it is just this sort of representation that carries with it the potential to move beyond a subjective and private understanding of events. A memoir may also possess the potential for imparting a more universal meaning beyond the personal, one with direct access to the commonality of human experience. Hopefully the readers of such a memoir can recognize the intimately human qualities infused into the deeply personal portraits that the author chooses to reveal. As Nabokov wrote: "To try and express one's position in regard to the universe embraced by consciousness, is an immemorial urge. The arms of consciousness reach out and grope, and the longer they are the better. Tentacles, not wings, are Apollo's natural members" (Nabokov, 1989, p. 218). We are each Apollos in our own worlds, each with our own stories to tell. We tell our stories, in part, as an effort to reach others, hoping to find some point of contact between us. And we listen to the stories of others, hoping to be embraced by some familiarity of detail or some greater understanding the tale summons.

Following is Nabokov's story, as well as the story of his story. Mine will be an attempt to uncover the meaning, value and transformation inevitably buried within them. I hope that a close inspection of Nabokov's autobiography may reveal some illuminating details where aforementioned matters are concerned. In addition, there may be something discovered about the processes Nabokov employed to create his autobiography that in turn may resonate for and inform us all.

Scope of the Project

Vladimir Nabokov began writing his memoirs in 1936 and did not conclude his work on the project until 1966. He published at least three English language versions. He translated the autobiography from French, to English, to Russian, only later to translate it back into English once again. From this very brief description, one can begin to glimpse the complications Nabokov encountered when writing his autobiography. And with all of the iterations, one might even conclude that Nabokov was not quite satisfied with his presentations of the stories that comprised his life. For us his readers, there is not only something compelling about his story, there is also something compelling about the process of its creation.

This project will consist of a close examination of the three published English language versions of Vladimir Nabokov's autobiography. In this examination, I will apply a specific kind of lens to the material—a psychoanalytic lens. An inspection of literary material through a psychoanalytic prism may allow for some clarification as to the purpose and function of autobiography and self-narrative construction. Nabokov would have heartily objected to this effort, for it was well known that he was an intensely private man, someone who meticulously controlled public access to any information

concerning his personal life. Nabokov openly abhorred Freud, believing his theories to be “vulgar, shabby, and fundamentally medieval” (Nabokov, 1989, p. 20). However, in his own essay *The Art of Literature and Commonsense* (1980), Nabokov wrote that a potential benefit could be garnered if literature were to be viewed through a particular kind of lens. In Nabokov’s case the lens was one of his own creating. Here, I intend to emulate Nabokov’s example in form rather than content. A psychoanalytic lens—one concerned with content but also with process—may contribute to a greater understanding of Nabokov’s motives and reasons for constructing and revising his self-narrative. With his sort of examination, perhaps we may also enhance our capacity to appreciate the desire for self-expression by way of autobiographical narrative, for it appears to be a particularly human inclination.

Autobiographical narrative.

This is a project concerned with Nabokov’s written word, one explicitly interested in those essays that were composed for the purposes of constructing a self-narrative, but certainly Nabokov did not hold exclusive rights to this terrain. It has been pointed out that we all engage in similar processes over the course of a lifetime. In general an autobiography is not simply a clear chronology of events. Rather it consists of a select collection of memoirs, stories and reminiscences that are reported, reworked and retold over and again. Roy Schafer articulated a related perspective so well:

We are forever telling stories about ourselves. In telling these self-stories to others we may, for most purposes, be said to be performing straightforward narrative actions... This is the story that there is a self to tell something to, a someone else

serving as audience who is oneself or one's self... On this view, the self is a telling. (Schafer, 1980, p. 35)

I will adapt this particular perspective for the purposes of this project and with the notion of a self-telling in mind, I will look to Nabokov's own narrative, as well as to the processes central to his creating that narrative, as an illustration of what might take place over the course of us all creating our own narratives. Again, a close reading of Nabokov's narrative and processes may better illuminate an understanding of both processes—his and ours.

A psychoanalytic perspective of repetition.

Thus far, the following has been identified as a general topic of interest: the construction of self-narrative. Such a broad topic calls for a set of limiters and therefore two have been selected. The first will be applied to the lens itself, the second to the subject matter. Where the lens is concerned, I will focus my efforts on understanding the role that the psychoanalytic conception of repetition played in Nabokov's process of composing his autobiography. Freud asserted that repetition served an important function for the human psyche. He identified its binding function, as in the case of language's capacity to bind affect with symbol (1920). And he emphasized its connections to remembering. A compulsion to repeat in the present, he wrote, was related to an individual's unconscious memories and conflicts originating in one's past (1914). In addition, Freud introduced the notion of repetition's transformative potential, advancing the conception that repetition is endowed with the possibility for therapeutic action. And finally Loewald (1971) too emphasized that the process of repeated revisitation might

allow for the effect of repetition's potential benefit—of bringing a designated memory into the present view so that its contents may be worked upon and potentially transformed. As will be made clear, Nabokov explicitly viewed autobiography as one means by which an author could recall those lost and forgotten stories that constitute a history of the self. And so repetition becomes important in this context because of this proposed connection between it and memory.

Briefly consider what takes place over the course of writing an autobiography or work of literature—edits upon edits. It is rare that a first trial arrives perfectly composed, polished and sparkling. Rather it is safe to say that most any decent piece of work is accomplished through the sweat and toil of multiple drafts. Therefore, the memories chosen and those words discovered to capture an autobiographical narrative must be repeated, reviewed, and revisited multiple times before they are reckoned satisfactory or complete. As such, multiple drafts of an autobiography allow for a second, third, and fourth look at that which has been remembered. The opportunity to revisit and edit those memories may also allow for the possibility of transforming them.

Considering the psychoanalytic conceptions of repetition, it is interesting to note that Nabokov did not only publish one edition of his autobiography, but rather that he published multiple iterations of the document over the years. Initially he published 15 separate articles between the years of 1943 and 1951 in journals such as *The Atlantic Monthly* and *The New Yorker*. He collected and edited those stories in 1951, publishing them under the title *Conclusive Evidence*. Nabokov then translated his memoir into Russian in 1954 as *Drugie berega*, again editing as he went. And finally Nabokov ended the publications in 1966 with *Speak, Memory*, a newly edited, English translation of the

Russian edition. In this context, the proliferation of editions might be considered to be a pattern of repetition that Nabokov enlisted for the purposes of transforming his autobiographical narrative into the best representations of those stories. Part of this project entails a comparison between the successive drafts of Nabokov's autobiography to see if a significant and interesting pattern of change can be detected, one potentially related to this sort of repetition.

Alliteration as repetition.

Now a more pointed aim for the project has taken shape: the potential relationship between repetition and any observable pattern of change revealed in Nabokov's successive autobiographical drafts. Yet the project requires even further focus—an operationalized definition of repetition that is relevant to this written, narrative context. Therefore alliteration, including both assonance and consonance, has been selected to exemplify a particular form of repetition. As a figurative device associated most often with the written word, alliteration is a mnemonic mechanism in which sounds are repeated through two or more words in close proximity to one another. And alliteration, assonance and consonance are all employed by poets and writers to create a rhyme and rhythm in the text presented.

In both a poetic and a psychoanalytic context, rhyme and rhythm establish various patterns of sound that can shape the movement and flow of words and feelings. Rhythm structures the language into specific kinds of meter, which in turn can create a tone and pace to the written piece at hand. Rhythm links specific word sequences to one another by way of specific sounds repeated in specific kinds of word companions. The overall result may produce a feeling to the work, one capable of evoking certain emotions and

moods in its audience. Where psychoanalytic theory is concerned, rhythm is related to conceptions of attunement, both between individuals and within individuals. Again it is a vehicle for matching words (though not exclusively) with feelings or bodily movement, such that certain affective experiences can be evoked by certain kinds of rhythms. These will be matters for further exploration in later pages.

Nabokov was known as a master with words who gracefully implemented many such figurative devices, alliteration being a top choice among them. Consider his most memorable line: “Lolita, light of my life, fire of my loins” (Nabokov, 1991a, p. 9). Because it repeats certain sounds, these words resonate in our thoughts, linger in our memories, and beckon us to recall this particular tale of Lolita. Because of the potential impact alliteration has on its reader, because Nabokov found the device so compelling, and because Nabokov had become such a master with it, alliteration seemed a suitable form of repetition on which to focus my explorations.

If alliteration is considered as a form of repetition, then perhaps too it might be thought of as serving similar psychic functions to repetition—for example of marking conflict and/or for providing a potential means of working through conflicted material. Indeed, an exploration of this possibility will be a primary focus of this thesis. I will endeavor to define and delimit the functions that alliterative repetition may serve its author, and I will use Nabokov’s autobiography as an avenue for exploring any deeper meanings that these propositions may raise. Specifically I will analyze the text to see if any areas of the narrative contain greater concentrations of alliteration than others. If such is revealed to be so, then perhaps the particular themes found within these particular

passages could be identified as those which include some of Nabokov's most salient and conflicted life themes.

Subsequently I will compare the drafts of Nabokov's autobiography to see if any patterns of change can be identified as he progressed through the successive drafts. If any patterns are discovered, then perhaps the repetition found within could be considered in terms of its capacity to assist Nabokov in his revision process. Therefore, if it is found that less alliteration is present in later drafts, then perhaps alliterative repetition may have served some working through function as Freud originally suggested. And subsequently, a comparison of the content of those conflicted themes in each of the drafts may indicate whether Nabokov achieved some success in transforming the conflict into more harmonious accountings of those themes.

Definition of terms.

Because this project revolves around alliterative repetition, it was necessary to establish a clear definition of terms so that the parameters used to identify alliterated phrases too would be clear. Please note that for these purposes, assonance and consonance were both collapsed under the heading of alliteration such that no distinction was made between the two. However, a distinct definition of all three terms must be given in order to clarify just what is encompassed under the definition of "alliteration." *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* was used as a standard by which the bounds of alliteration, assonance and consonance were established. Definitions are as follows:

alliteration (head rhyme; initial rhyme) The repetition of the same sounds—usually initial consonants of words or of stressed syllables—in any sequence of neighbouring words: 'Landscape-lover, lord of language' (Tennyson). Now an

optional and incidental decorative effect in verse or prose, it was once a required element in the poetry of Germanic languages (including Old English and Old Norse) and in Celtic verse (where alliterated sounds could regularly be placed in positions other than the beginning of a word or syllable). Such poetry, in which alliteration rather than rhyme is the chief principle of repetition, is known as alliterative verse; its rules also allow a vowel sound to alliterate with any other vowel. See also alliterative metre, alliterative revival, assonance, consonance.¹ (*The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 2008)

assonance [ass-n-ans] The repetition of identical or similar vowel sounds in the stressed syllables (and sometimes in the following unstressed syllables) of neighbouring words; it is distinct from rhyme in that the consonants differ although the vowels or diphthongs match: sweet dreams, hit or miss. As a substitute for rhyme at the ends of verse lines, assonance (sometimes called vowel rhyme or vocalic rhyme) had a significant function in early Celtic, Spanish, and French versification (notably in the chansons de geste), but in English it has been an optional poetic device used within and between lines of verse for emphasis or musical effect, as in these lines from Tennyson's 'The Lotos-Eaters':

And round about the keel with faces pale,
Dark faces pale against that rosy flame,

¹ "alliteration" *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*. Chris Baldick. Oxford University Press, 2008. Oxford Reference Online. Oxford University Press. CUNY Graduate Center. 3 June 2010
<<http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t56.e31>>

The mild-eyed melancholy Lotos-eaters came.² (*The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 2008)

consonance The repetition of identical or similar consonants in neighbouring words whose vowel sounds are different (e.g. coming home, hot foot). The term is most commonly used, though, for a special case of such repetition in which the words are identical except for the stressed vowel sound (group/grope, middle/muddle, wonder/wander); this device, combining alliteration and terminal consonance, is sometimes known more precisely as ‘rich consonance’, and is frequently used in modern poetry at the ends of verse lines as an alternative to full rhyme (see half-rhyme). Consonance may be regarded as the counterpart to the vowel-sound repetition known as assonance.³ (*The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 2008)

With these classifications in mind, an operational definition of alliteration was constructed for the purposes of this project.

Alliteration: The repetition of the same sounds in initial consonants of words or in stressed syllables in any sequence of neighboring words; the repetition of identical or similar vowel sounds in the stressed syllables of neighboring words

² “assonance” *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*. Chris Baldick. Oxford University Press, 2008. Oxford Reference Online. Oxford University Press. CUNY Graduate Center. 3 June 2010

<<http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t56.e100>>

³ “consonance” *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*. Chris Baldick. Oxford University Press, 2008. Oxford Reference Online. Oxford University Press. CUNY Graduate Center. 3 June 2010

<<http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t56.e247>>

Nabokov's autobiography and "Mademoiselle O."

A query into the role of repetition and its relationship to transformation now takes on a slightly new form: alliteration will be used as a specific form of repetition, one used to identify and track any potential patterns of change found in Nabokov's successive autobiographical drafts. Considering the length of Nabokov's oeuvre, searching for patterns of change across the whole of all texts would be far too ambitious an undertaking. Therefore a specific, designated portion of the text was selected—one chapter of the autobiography that concerns Mademoiselle O, Nabokov's French governess. There were several important reasons for this selection, the primary one being that this was the first chapter Nabokov wrote in this effort, a point of embarkation that launched his autobiography. Considering the notion of primacy, there may have been some significant reasoning to his choice, whether conscious or unconscious, or some combination of the two. This choice will be discussed in greater depth at a later point in the project, where speculations will be raised as to the gravitational pull of this particular topic.

Through out this project, all of theses specific points will be brought to bear on a detailed analysis of Nabokov's "Mademoiselle O." In the following pages I will examine the text to see if repetitive alliteration does in fact perform some of those functions that the psychoanalytic perspective professes it to. Subsequently I will investigate whether any patterns of transformation can be detected in a comparison of the three published, English language versions of Nabokov's autobiography. And the end will present a discussion of what is actually discovered there, as well as speculations about what those patterns revealed might tell us about Nabokov's process of constructing a self-narrative.

Again, topics mentioned above will inform both the analysis and discussion. In addition, a more detailed set of hypotheses will be defined so that the task at hand will be explicitly clear. First, however, a historical context concerning Nabokov's life and biography must be established, one that includes a description of the unique process Nabokov employed to write his autobiography. It is terrain that informs both the subject matter as well as the specific hypotheses of the project, thus illuminating the efforts and aims at hand.

Biographies

Neither in environment or heredity can I find the exact instrument that fashioned me, the anonymous roller that pressed upon my life a certain intricate watermark whose unique design becomes visible when the lam of art is made to shine through life's foolscap. (Nabokov, 1989, p. 24).

A Brief Biography

Vladimir Vladimirovich Nabokov was born on April 23, 1899 in St Petersburg Russia. His was a family of some aristocracy, and so Nabokov lived a childhood in keeping with the opulent, idyllic and cultured lifestyle that such Russian families were accustomed to at that time. Unfortunately for Nabokov, the Russian noble class system was coming to the end of its era, and a revolution against such values would soon lead to the crumbling of those patrician vestiges. The upheaval would ultimately cost Nabokov a great deal, for it set many traumatic consequences into motion that would both ravage and configure the shape of his life to come.

Nabokov's father, Vladimir Dmitrievich Nabokov (VD), was a prominent and outspoken lawyer, a politician in the liberal Democratic Party. His mother, Elena

Ivanovna Rukavishnikova, was a member of the gentry, with cultured, intellectual, and artistic leanings. By his own accounts, Nabokov's childhood was a rich and luminous one, for he wrote of those days long gone in the most idealized of manners, notably adoring both parents and of how he was adored by them. Nabokov's biographer characterized Nabokov as the "unqualified favorite" (Boyd, 1993, p. 87) of his parents, not a surprising depiction of a boy who carried his father's given name. But while Nabokov did portray his childhood as being wonderfully rich in intellectual pursuits as well as emotional relationships, it should not be forgotten that his youth was also haunted by the shadow of a country's rising unrest. Eventually revolution erupted and a chain of destructive events was ignited.

Nabokov shared his parents with four other siblings, Nabokov being the oldest of two boys and two girls following. Notably, Nabokov mentioned them only in passing in the autobiography despite having shared a great deal with them. Such a glaring lapse in mention speaks to some dynamic at play, though of what still remains speculative. There are only Nabokov's words on the subject, for he remarked upon the paucity soon after *Conclusive Evidence* (1951) was published. He explained: "[I have] very little to say about [my] siblings—two brothers and two sisters... The powerful concentration on one's own personality, the act of an artist's indefatigable and invincible will, has to bear certain consequences and the above phenomenon is, no doubt, one of them" (Nabokov, 1998, p. 126). True enough, Nabokov's own image may have blinded him to the presence or acknowledgement of others. However, blind acceptances of cursory explanations do not often fall within the purview of a psychoanalytic perspective, one that accounts for an unconscious at work behind the scenes.

Where this project is concerned, the statement above raises the specter of Nabokov's choice as to the inclusion of *Mademoiselle O*. If his argument is to be accepted, and if the concentration of Nabokov's personality inevitably influenced the omission where his siblings were concerned, then conversely one may also conclude that the very same concentration of personality could have influenced his various inclusive choices where all other figures and narratives were concerned. In other words, it may have been that Nabokov selected the particular events and people found in his autobiography because he was compelled to do so, in part as a result of his personality. Compelled to write about these topics, then, Nabokov may have been able to discover something of what he thought, felt and believed about these matters. And by returning to these particularly compelling characters and events through the multiple revisions of his autobiography, Nabokov allowed himself an opportunity to further transform and symbolize his thoughts and feelings by refining their voice and definitions. Ultimately, this may be where repetition is able to take its greatest effect, at the intersection of compulsion and symbolization.

During Nabokov's childhood, the family lived most of the year in St. Petersburg, a cosmopolitan European city that provided them with access to intellectual pursuits and the refinements of culture. They traveled to a country estate—Vyra—in the summer months, a particularly magical place that afforded a curiosity and passion only nature could inspire. It was at Vyra that Nabokov discovered his unquenchable interest in butterflies, and likely too his deep reverence for detail and specificity. As his biographer wrote:

The possibility of discovering endlessly more and more about butterflies, or for that matter any aspect of the world, convinced Nabokov that perhaps nature—or whatever lurked behind it—might almost have hidden its secrets for human detection. While even ubiquitous matter deceives by the complexity beneath its apparently simplicity, nature seem at it most artful of all in mimicry. (Boyd, 1993a, p. 83)

With mimicry, it can be only the minute particulars of one butterfly that distinguishes it from any close other. Therefore it stands to reason Nabokov may have discovered a general love of detail informed by that which he loved in butterflies. Detail too often served as a means for determining delicate distinctions between people and things in his work. And it acted as a means to ensure the singularity of some one thing. As was mentioned earlier, it is detail that allows each of us as memoirists to move closer into our memories and tease out the textures and experiences of the past. “The main delight of the creative mind is the sway accorded to a seemingly incongruous detail over a seemingly dominant generalization” (Nabokov, 1980, p. 374), Nabokov wrote in *The Art of Literature and Commonsense*. And so it was that Nabokov imitated something of the butterflies’ design by adopting the art of mimicry in his writing. Nabokov placed doubles and doppelgangers through out much of his fiction. And it was his able facility with the mirrored twin that allowed him to arrange words so they conjured their sleights of hand, a talent for which he was both known and envied.

Nabokov’s ability for writing did not develop simply out of a love for and attention to detail. Nabokov was a boy who loved to read. Books allowed Nabokov to follow his curiosities any and everywhere. During the early years of his childhood,

Nabokov was educated at home on a multitude of subjects by tutors and artistic masters. The cosmopolitan Nabokov household was a trilingual one, and all family members moved fluently between Russian, English and French. Living in an environment where languages were exchanged with such facility, Nabokov's first written words were not Russian, but rather English as learned from a governess. Upon discovering this state of affairs, Nabokov's father quickly remedied the circumstance and Nabokov became agile in speaking and writing Russian, English and French. The knowledge of these languages would prove precious to Nabokov, for he eventually worked and translated into all three.

When Nabokov was approximately 5 years old, VD Nabokov became concerned enough about the turbulence in Russia that he took the family to spend a year abroad in Europe. They left shortly after the "Bloody Sunday" killings in St. Petersburg, when hundreds of peacefully demonstrating workers were shot down as they petitioned the tsarist regime for improved working conditions. Apparently VD publicly denounced the killings to the Duma, and Elena Nabokov became so nervous after both events that the two decided to take their family elsewhere for a time. The family traveled to Paris and then on to Milan, finally landing in the Italian countryside to visit VD's sister in Abbazia, a resort for the aristocracy. While it seems that the young Nabokov enjoyed his new adventures, he also longed for his home. Thus the theme of exile was initiated, one that continued to shape his experience through the entirety of his life. And it was this early experience of exile that led Nabokov to explain how he: "went through all the sorrows and delights of nostalgia long before the revolution had removed the scenery of his young years" (Nabokov, 1998, p. 124). After a year away, the young Nabokov returned with his family. He described his return in "Mademoiselle O," with Nabokov landing on a train

platform back in his native home. Yet as he wrote it, he also told of a related arrival on another train platform—Mademoiselle’s arrival to her new, foreign home, and his imaginings of her experience stepping foot on Russian soil for the first time. This will prove to be a scene that will loom large in this thesis.

At 11 years old, Nabokov was placed in a rigorous, liberal and prestigious private school, one both he and his brother Sergey attended together. According to Boyd (1993a), Nabokov’s status of favorite was reduced to being one among many, a position Nabokov was not fond of inhabiting. Apparently resenting any pressure to conform to a mass of other boys, Nabokov preferred feeling unique. As such, Nabokov reportedly led a fairly isolative existence there. Instead he often spent his free time in pursuit of his own interests, literature and poetry chief among them. Nabokov fared well in his studies, such that he was able to direct most of his attention beyond a generalized comprehension of the work at hand. Instead he seized the luxury to ferret out those out of the way facts buried within, details that helped his imagination transform into magical playgrounds.

With the ever-present threat of war and in part a consequence of his father’s outspoken political views, the Nabokovs always lived under some degree of strain, unsure whether father’s political activities would bring danger to the family. During these years, VD was imprisoned for a few months, taken to trial for his part in constructing a Democratic Manifesto. Again he returned—this time. Finally Nabokov’s father was called to duty in 1914 when WWI broke out. This left his mother to care for the family alone and she struggled to endure her husband’s absence. While VD spent some time at the front, he was eventually stationed back in St. Petersburg with the General Staff and reunited with his family. Nabokov bore the stress of this shadow well enough, though it

surfaced on occasion in the stories of his life. When Nabokov was 12, for example, his father was challenged to a duel over a political slight. Nabokov wrote how he kept a brave face all day at school while in truth he feared the worst for his father. It was only when Nabokov returned home on the day of the event and heard his father's voice that he realized all was well. Upon hearing his father's voice, Nabokov broke into tears, losing the composure he had held through the day. Though there was ultimately no harm in this particular event, Nabokov used the duel in his autobiography both as a means to foreshadow an early death yet to come and as a way to avoid the painful topic of his father's actual death.

Nabokov was well aware of the war's goings on at the time. However, he was also quite engrossed in those trappings of youth, in his autobiography describing a lovely young girl who captured his heart in the summer of his 16th year. Nabokov also published his first poem later that same year, quite an accomplishment for such a young man. Sadly the romance did not last, for their reunion the following summer was pale and wan. As Nabokov would hint, he spent much of his adult life attempting replicate something of those early, intense experiences of love, dreaming of a lost love's impossible recapture. As Boyd (1993a) noted, such themes turned up continually in his novels, "as the longed for repetitions of past ardors so plainly disappoints in *Mary*, in *Lolita's* second motel odyssey, in *Ada's* summer at Ardis" (p. 120). Much later in life, Nabokov mimicked the lessons learned from loss and of a repeated return to its themes. In expressing his views on the art of writing literature, Nabokov emphasized the importance of "inspiration," as well as its rapture and recapture:

The kind [of inspiration] alluded to up to now is the pure flame of *vostorg*, initial rapture, which has no conscious purpose in view but which is all-important in linking the breaking up of the old world with the building up of the new one. When the time is ripe and the writer settles down to the actual composing of his book, he will rely on the second serene and steady kind of inspiration, *vdokhnovenie*, the trusted mate who helps to recapture and reconstruct the world. (Nabokov, 1980, p. 378)

Left without the actual love to quench his thirst, Nabokov came to depend more deeply on a second best: imagining love by way of his writing. Perhaps, in part, it was because of these incomparable and incomprehensible losses that writing became a main focus of Nabokov's life. Again, this sort of repeated return to subject matters driven by loss stands at the heart of this project.

As Nabokov became a young man, Russia fell into further into tumult. Open chaos eventually broke out and the war posed a deep and real danger to the Nabokov family. 1917 brought the Bolshevik Revolution and Elena Nabokov fled with her children to Crimea, a white stronghold. VD stayed behind in St. Petersburg for a time, but he eventually joined his family, narrowly escaping with his life. The family remained in exile there for the next two years, facing uncertain financial and political futures. Still the Nabokovs believed they would return to Russia. Nabokov entertained himself with writing and chess puzzles during those days, and these discoveries for coping with uncertainty and loss would prove important keystones lodged into his creative person.

In 1919 Nabokov's family was forced into full-fledged exile moving first to England, later to Berlin. Hopes for a return to their homeland were crushed and never to

be realized. Soon thereafter Nabokov enrolled at Trinity College in Cambridge where he ultimately completed his degree with honors in Slavic and Romance languages, underlining his passion for languages. From Cambridge, Nabokov wrote to his mother of his longing for Russia, a letter that revealed the depth and persistence that the trauma of exile can exert on its emigrants.

Mother dear, yesterday I woke up in the middle of the night, and asked someone—I don't know whom—the night, the stars, God: will I really *never return*, is it really all finished, wiped out, destroyed...? ...—Mother, we must return, mustn't we, it cannot be that this has all died, turned to dust—such an idea could drive one mad! I would describe every little bush, every stalk in our divine park at Vyra—but no one can understand this... (Boyd, 1993a, p. 178)

Though the deepest disbelief would come shortly to follow, Nabokov continued his studies at University, writing poetry, studying translation, and settling into a serious romance. The Nabokov family had made a provisional home in Berlin where VD wrote for the main Russian daily paper, continuing his pursuit of politics. They lived in a lively community of likeminded Russian intellectuals, and life advanced in its rich and cultured fashion.

In his exile, Nabokov may have shuttered at the impossibility of his return, but exile also afforded him opportunities that may not have been presented otherwise. With such a mass emigration, a good number of creative and intellectually minded individuals found themselves in similar circumstances. As such, Nabokov was able to interact with a variety of writers who were also living in Europe. In addition, he wrote of his increased devotion to the composition of chess problems, encountering other worldly chess

aficionados who approached the art with different aptitudes. And finally, as a direct outgrowth of exile, memories of the past were bound to become more precious to Nabokov, for he linked the two when he stated the following warning: “for the particular idiot who, because he lost a fortune in some crash, thinks he understands me... the nostalgia I have been cherishing all these years is a hypertrophied sense of lost childhood, not sorrow for lost banknotes” (Nabokov, 1989, p. 73).

In truth, the most devastating effect of exile was to come. In 1922, the family stumbled into a terrible day when VD attended a political rally. There, his good friend Milyukov was speaking as the leader of the Constitutional Democratic Party. Sometime during the speech an assassin approached and attempted to shoot Milyukov, but VD was able to disarm the man, knocking him to the ground. Upon this turn, a second armed man approached from the crowd, firing at VD so as to release his own friend. Vladimir Dmitrievich Nabokov died instantly. The Nabokov family was destroyed. Nabokov had been visiting his family in Berlin at the time, mere months away from his Cambridge graduation. He wrote of the event in his journal, apparently the one to take the fateful telephone call informing the family of the assassination. Nabokov described that night in the following manner:

That night journey I remember as something outside life, monstrously slow, like those mathematical puzzles that torment is in feverish half sleep. I looked at the lights swimming past, at the spiral reflections in the mirrory-black asphalt and it seemed to me that I was cut off from all this in some fateful manner—that the streetlights and the dark shadows of passersby were an accidental mirage, an the sole thing clear and significant and alive was the grief, tenacious, suffocating,

compressing my heart. “Father is no more.” These four words hammer in my brain and I tried to imagine his face, his movements. (Boyd, 1993a, p. 191)

In his journal Nabokov was able to recall nearly every detail of the event to an almost autistic degree. Strangely enough, however, Nabokov represented the event somewhat differently in *Speak, Memory*. There he presented only the scantest of descriptions, ending the event with the ring of the telephone, never revealing the call’s actual contents. Considering Nabokov’s unwavering admiration of detail, the omission of this most important event in the autobiography is notable. The absence of detail here may lead to speculation as to its function. Perhaps a revisitation to those event details would have transported Nabokov far too close to the original experience of losing his father. That sort of pain, it seems, may not have been tolerable at the time he was writing. Almost as a foil to the death, Nabokov chose to detail the aforementioned duel instead of the murder, preferring to recount a close encounter with father’s death as opposed to the permanence of its actuality. Perhaps this was as close as Nabokov could venture to the matter in this context. Indeed these speculations are related to the theories of this thesis—that the articulation of detail may be a vehicle through which memories can be revisited, recreated and re-experienced.

Despite these traumatic events, Nabokov persevered as he mourned the loss of his father. He graduated from University and lived in both Berlin and Paris for some years. The previously mentioned relationship crumbled, perhaps in part due to Nabokov’s struggle to find his balance during this period of loss. But Nabokov was able to distract himself from these losses of love, father, and country again by throwing himself into intensive creative work. He gained a footing and began his writing career in earnest,

finding himself situated in a community of artists and intellectuals. Nabokov began to publish under the surname of Sirin, choosing not to reveal his own true name out of concerns related to his émigré status and his family's history. Again the figure of the double emerges as a result of exile, strengthening its hold on Nabokov's being.

In the spring of 1923 he met Vera Slonim, his future wife. She was a love that lasted his lifetime. By the end of that year she was installed as his typist, editor, and muse to Nabokov's imagination, all roles that would continue through their lives together. The couple became engaged in 1924 and they were married in 1925. Nabokov supported the young family by way of teaching tennis, French, English, and composing chess problems—all detritus from his aristocratic life. He sent money home to his mother during those years as well. Throughout, his insomnia proved an invaluable aide to both earning a living while also continuing his writing efforts. Nabokov published his first Russian novel entitled *Mashen'ka* in 1926 (later translated in English under the title *Mary*), and although he continued to write and publish steadily, it was not until *Lolita* in 1955 that Nabokov's creative work would provide enough financial revenue to support the family. In 1934 Vera gave birth to their only son Dmitri, an unending joy for the both of them.

Generally speaking, life continued in such a fashion until WWII cast too imposing a shadow. Vladimir and Vera were forced to emigrate once again, this time to the United States. Nabokov's father had been an outspoken opponent of anti-Semitism and Vera was Jewish, so the growing trend in Europe became unbearable to them. Nabokov's brother Sergey was not so lucky to have escaped the Nazi tide. Though given an opportunity to leave Paris, he refused. At the time Sergey was living in Paris and it was likely that he

had felt at home for the first time in his life. Sergey Nabokov had known from a young age that he was homosexual. Paris was an enclave for the bohemian and avant-garde, and Sergey too traveled in circles populated by artists and intellectuals. Reportedly, he was close friends with the likes of Cocteau and Diaghilev. Sergey may have even attended some of the salons held by Stein and Toklas (Grossman, 2000, para. 21). Sergey eventually fell in love, and it may have been this love that kept him in Europe. Sergey was eventually interned in a concentration camp as many homosexuals were where he died in 1945.

Though Vladimir and Sergey were moderately close friends while he was alive, it has been documented that Nabokov harbored deep-seated homophobic beliefs and may have held strong opinions about his brother (Grossman, 2000). While there have been some speculations as to the reasons for Nabokov's prejudice, none of them have been made clear to any degree of assurance. Considering both Sergey's heartbreaking death and Nabokov's potentially entrenched prejudice, both may have contributed to the absence of Sergey's image in Nabokov's autobiography, though again this can only be conjecture. Despite these uncertainties, it does seem true that Sergey's shadow haunted the pages of Nabokov's fiction. In *Speak, Memory* (1989), Nabokov connected his "twisted quest for Sebastian Knight" (Nabokov, 1989, p. 257) with a failed quest to understand Sergey. In the end, Sergey's ghostly presence suggests that Nabokov harbored many unresolved emotions were his brother was concerned.

Upon arriving in the States in 1940, Nabokov spent some time in New York City, joining a community of artists and émigrés who too fled the war. He continued to devote himself to his writing, beginning *Pnin* sometime after landing on American soil. In

addition Nabokov tutored to earn money while he looked for more promising work that could accommodate his creative habits. All in all, he was quite happy in America, finding a home among people he felt were “exceedingly cultured and diverse” (Boyd, 1993b, p. 21). As his biographer remarked, Nabokov’s resilience was remarkable and Nabokov was able to build a prosperous life from what appeared to be very little. Boyd believed that the memories of a loving family allowed Nabokov the internal fortitude to succeed despite his losses (Boyd, 1993b, p 6). However, it may have also been that Nabokov’s creative practices enabled him to safely express and explore those darker images lodged within him. Indeed characters with harrowing and humiliating journeys to America populated his stories—Pnin, Kinbote, Humbert, Mademoiselle O. And not all of these individuals fared quite so well as Nabokov.

Nabokov was eventually offered a summer position at Stanford University. During the years that followed, Nabokov lectured and taught literature in several academic outposts, Wellesley College and Cornell University primary among them. In 1942 Nabokov published his first English novel *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*, and in 1943 he was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship—the first person under forty to have been granted the honor. During this time that he also held one of his most beloved positions: curator of the Lepidoptera Collection at Harvard’s Museum of Comparative Zoology. Nabokov wrote that it was, in fact, his most rewarding work outside of writing, one far more treasured above teaching. Nabokov was eventually appointed to the permanent faculty at Cornell University in 1948 and the security he had been in search of reclaiming was finally found. While at Cornell, Nabokov wrote *Lolita* and it was published in 1955. Despite the controversial subject, the novel sold well and appeared on

bestseller lists. Eventually its successes allowed him the financial freedom to depart from teaching altogether. Once retired, he and his family moved to Montreux, Switzerland where Nabokov continued to write until his death in 1977.

While there was much excluded in the synopsis above, all of one person's life cannot be covered in but a few short pages. Indeed since the focus of this project is Nabokov's autobiography, his book will remain as the main resources for relaying the most formative events of his life. That particular work had quite a life of its own, for the way in which Nabokov went about writing his autobiography was a fascinating process in and of itself.

A Brief Biography of an Autobiography

While the subject of this paper is Vladimir Nabokov, it should not be forgotten that this project also revolves around the unusual life of Nabokov's autobiography. The whole of *Speak, Memory* presents us with a straightforward, chronological, and autobiographical account of Nabokov's life. It is comprised of fifteen chapters, each of which describe specific aspects of his life: early childhood and father, mother, uncle and family lineage, English education, Mademoiselle O (Swiss governess), butterflies, first childhood love, Russian education, school, adolescence and first poem, first adult love, university, exile, parenthood. Yet in keeping with his own convictions about the cyclical and circular nature of memory, Nabokov did not write his narrative in such a linear fashion. Rather he constructed it as he would when following the "unraveling of a riddle [as] the purest and most basic act of the human mind" (Nabokov, 1998, p. 126).

Nabokov first published versions of each chapter as separate articles between 1943 and 1951, the bulk of which appeared in *The New Yorker*. Indeed these chapters

were all written first in English, not in his primary language as one might assume a memoir would be. The very first of these articles was entitled “Mademoiselle O” and portrayed the life and character of his old Swiss governess. Unlike the other articles, however, Nabokov wrote this particular chapter in French as opposed to English or Russian, still another twist on his use of language. It was published in *Mesures*, a French periodical, in 1936, several years before Nabokov immigrated to America. After he moved to the United States in 1940, Nabokov was offered the opportunity to publish an English version of “Mademoiselle O” in *The Atlantic Monthly* (1943) and so he went about the task of translating the story into English. He then set out to finish the remaining fourteen articles that were published in *The New Yorker* and *The Atlantic Monthly*. Nabokov gathered the chapters and published them in 1951 under one title: *Conclusive Evidence: A Memoir*, using the opportunity of its new publishing to make revisions and improvements he deemed necessary. And so it stood for some years until he translated the volume into his native Russian in 1954, entitling it *Drugie berega* (rough translation: Other Shores).

The request to translate the document into his native language proved fortuitous in a way Nabokov may not have been able to initially anticipate. It allowed him yet another fresh look at those memories already written. Nabokov had reported that by writing his memoirs in America, he felt constricted by his lack of access to data related to family history. Without these facts, he believed he had no means for checking his memory when details were in question. While he could not return to Russia to check the actual specifics, his use of Russian unlocked a multitude of additional memories and details that enabled him to clarify previous writings. Nabokov wrote:

I revised many passages and tried to do something about the amnesiac defects of the original—blank spots, blurry area, domains of dimness. I discovered that sometimes, by means of intense concentration, the neutral smudge might be forced to come into beautiful focus so that the sudden view could be identified, and the anonymous servant named” (Nabokov, 1989, p. 12)

With *Drugie berega* published, Nabokov determined that the changes made were too important to neglect and he proceeded to translate the Russian back into a third English version. He reported:

This re-Englishing of a Russian re-version of what had been an English re-telling of Russian memories in the first place, proved to be a diabolical task, but some consolation was given me by the thought that such multiple metamorphosis, familiar to butterflies, had not been tried by any human before. (Nabokov, 1989, p. 13)

Finally, in 1966, *Speak, Memory: an Autobiography Revisited* was completed and this is the version we are familiar with today.

In all of this reworking activity there is much to remark upon. The more seminal points as related to the subject of this paper will be addressed throughout later discussions. Here it is enough to note certain points of interest indicated by Nabokov himself, for curiously, Nabokov, using a pseudonym, also wrote a book review of his own work, though he did not publish it at the time. *The New Yorker* finally published this self review after his death in the December 28, 1998 issue under the same title “Conclusive Evidence.” In it, he stated:

Nabokov's method is to explore the remotest regions of his past life for what may be termed thematic trails or currents. Once found, this or that theme is followed up through the years. In the course of its development it guides the author into new regions of life. The diamond pattern of art and the muscles of sinuous memory are combined in one strong and supple movement and produce a style that seems to slip through grass toward the warm flat stone upon which it will richly coil. (Nabokov, 1998, p. 124)

Some of the main themes will sound familiar to Nabokov's admirers: riddles and chess compositions, time and memory, the blurred distinctions between reality and artistic creation, metamorphosis, mimicry, and, of course, the theme of exile. It is even interesting to remark that the title of the book migrates from *Memoir* to *Autobiography*, implying a metamorphosis of a narrative that begins as a personal account of his own history and moves into a more formal, independent representation of both historical and personal events.

Having sketched a mirrored pair of brief biographies—one of his story, the other of the story of his story—I will next turn to “*Mademoiselle O*” and further explore its importance as the section of text on which this project will focus. Nabokov's own words can best summarize his autobiographical efforts and point us to those elements that are worth attending. Again from the aforementioned review Nabokov wrote:

Possibly the most moving theme in the book is the line of “exile,” to which I shall have to refer again. In a way Nabokov went through all the sorrows and delights of nostalgia long before the Revolution had removed the scenery of his young years. He is out to prove that his childhood contained, on a much reduced scale,

the main components of his creative maturity; thus through the thin sheath of a ripe chrysalis one can see, in its small wing cases, the dawning of color and pattern, a miniature revelation of the butterfly that will soon emerge and lets its flushed wings expand to many times their pupal size. (Nabokov, 1998, p. 126)

Once more, Nabokov's own words lead us to wonder about the development of both creativity and psyche.

The Object, Mademoiselle O

Object of identification.

It was no coincidence that Nabokov began writing this project with his first governess, for she was an émigré herself—a native of Switzerland, born to French parents, traveling to Russia having accepted the rank of governess. Mademoiselle's exile was threefold, a circumstance that left her unfamiliar to any singular land and untethered from any home. As Nabokov promised, the main theme of the book was exile as connected to loss. Perhaps the act of writing afforded him the possibility of reunion, of recapture, or of coming to grips with those losses he detailed. When Nabokov began writing this work in 1936, Nabokov was stranded in Europe, living comfortably enough yet unwilling to establish more permanent roots there. Nabokov may have been acutely attuned to the unrest in Europe at the time, sensitized to the mounting Nazi threat as a result of his recent exile from Russia. One can imagine that as he wrote, these circumstances may have called to mind another such émigré, a woman who also found herself relegated to a foreign land. Considering that Nabokov wrote "Mademoiselle O" as

he was anticipating a future immigration while also looking back on to a recent exile, his selection of Mademoiselle O as his first subject matter may not come as such a surprise.

Nabokov introduced Mademoiselle as she arrived at the train station, unable to speak a word of Russian. As he situated her, he also revealed his identification with her. The reader's first glimpse of Nabokov here was as he too arrived by train after having spent a year abroad with his family. He wrote of that return in a two-fold fashion, having discovered "an exciting sense of *rodina*, 'motherland'" (Nabokov, 1989, p. 96), yet also as one suffused with longing affiliated with a deep sense of loss. "That particular return to Russia, my first *conscious* return, seems to me now, sixty years later, a rehearsal—not of the grand homecoming that will never take place, but of its constant dream in my long years of exile" (Nabokov, 1989, p. 97). Thus his arrival into the station foreshadowed Nabokov's inevitable and forced departure, one that paralleled Mademoiselle's exodus from her own motherland as she stepped off of the train. As if offering further assurances of their twinship, this was the only chapter Nabokov wrote in French, quite literally using Mademoiselle's native voice. In addition, it was the only chapter published while Nabokov was living in Europe. And finally, perhaps by coincidence perhaps not, when Nabokov retired after the successes of *Lolita*, he did so in Switzerland, Mademoiselle's original homeland.

Despite an identification with her, Nabokov portrayed Mademoiselle in a fairly unfavorable light, for example comparing her to an aging swan, "a large, uncouth, dodo-like creature, making ridiculous efforts to hoist himself into a moored boat" (Nabokov, 1989, p. 116). Following is another example of Mademoiselle's image that he painted for his audience:

Her Russian vocabulary consisted, I know, of one short word, the same solitary word that years later she was to take back to Switzerland. This word, which in her pronunciation may be phonetically rendered as “giddy-eh” (actually it is *gde* with *e* as in “yet”), meant “Where?” And that was a good deal. Uttered by her like the raucous cry of some lost bird, it accumulated such interrogatory force that it sufficed for all her needs. “Giddy-eh? Giddy-eh?” she would wail, not only to find out her whereabouts but also to express supreme misery: the fact that she was a stranger, shipwrecked, penniless, ailing, in search of the blessed land where at last she would be understood. (Nabokov, 1989, p. 98)

One would think Nabokov might have more empathy for her plight considering the similarity of their circumstances. Yet perhaps with Mademoiselle Nabokov was able to construct a vessel through which he could explore all the varied experiences and feelings tied to the circumstance of exile. To explore those negative emotions inevitably associated with exile might have been a luxury many were not able to afford, for most émigrés are occupied with the tasks of trying to repair and reconstruct a life after sustaining such a major upheaval. But perhaps too, there are other potential explanations for Nabokov’s clear devaluation of his Mademoiselle.

Object of disidentification, separation, and individuation.

Salaman Akhtar (1995, 1996, 2000) wrote extensively about the complex effect that immigration imposes on the development of an individual’s identity. In exploring this terrain Akhtar contemplated the impact of forced abandonments and journeys into unfamiliar, unpredictable landscapes. Akhtar theorized that in response to the traumas

associated with immigration, the new émigré must undergo a psychic reorganization in order to deal with the losses of the old and the encounter of the new. Therefore he posited the necessity of a “third individuation” (Akhtar, 1995), one akin to earlier separation-individuation processes found over the course of childhood and adolescence. He wrote that this third individuation: “denot[es] an adult life reorganization of identity, a potential reworking of earlier consolidations” (Akhtar, 1995, p. 1053). Akhtar theorized that in this reorganization, the immigrant is vulnerable to splitting of self and object representations in a manner similar to that which occurs in the rapprochement and adolescent stages of separation-individuation. He portrayed one example of this splitting as an émigré’s tendency to idealize or devalue either the motherland or the new homeland.

Indeed Nabokov’s clear nostalgia for his homeland could be cast in a similar light, those dreamy memories of his past an idealization of land and people to which he was never able to return. Nabokov’s disdain for Mademoiselle, on the other hand, could be thought of as a polarized devaluation of the immigrant, a role from which he may have felt compelled to separate himself. Considering how well Nabokov ultimately fared in the face of such difficult odds, an image such as “the heavy, impotent flapping of [the swan’s] wings” (Nabokov, 1989, p. 116) could represent those split off, clandestine fears Nabokov may have harbored despite his successes. In addition, the act of splitting and projection may have served a yet another purpose—to allow Nabokov the opportunity to explore a wider array of feelings than simply those he explicitly claimed as his own. Consider again the image of Mademoiselle crying “Where, Where?!” Out of her element, she was frightened and forever searching for a sense of belonging. And while certainly Nabokov developed much more adaptive strategies than she, he may well have felt some

fundamental kinship to this state of being. After all, these were not Mademoiselle's actual recollections, but rather Nabokov's imagining of them. Ultimately that image originated with Nabokov's own experience of the world. Perhaps by painting Mademoiselle in such a pathetic light, Nabokov permitted himself to express an aspect of his own experience that may not have been otherwise acknowledged: vulnerability.

Akhtar also explained that an immigrant's separation-individuation process from his native country must involve elements of mourning. He wrote:

With each progressive move toward autonomy and identity consolidation, there is an incremental loss of infantile omnipotence, symbiotic bliss, and ego simplification through splitting and projection. Compensation for this is found in the secondary narcissism of burgeoning ego capacities, autonomous functioning, a realistic self-concept, and deeper object relations. (Akhtar, 1995, p. 1064)

Nabokov too may have utilized the image of Mademoiselle for the purposes of working through these sorts of separation issues, and "Mademoiselle O" contains a concrete illustration of what may be just such an effort. Over the course of this chapter in which Nabokov develops from young boy into young man, the placement of his and Mademoiselle's bedrooms in relation to one another could be interpreted as a metaphoric means by which Nabokov represented his progressive separation from her. Her room physically moved farther and farther from his as the chapter advanced, originally situated directly next to his and ending at a great distance down the hall. Ultimately the chapter concluded with Mademoiselle back in her homeland, living in a completely separate country. In his representations, the concept of her otherness was palpable.

Mademoiselle's personal space was portrayed as a polarized opposite from anything

created by the Nabokov family, her “enuretic hothouse” standing in contrast to the Nabokov’s “well-aired” home (Nabokov, 1989, p. 107). The narrative may have provided a space in which Nabokov attempted to come to terms with her otherness, to find an optimal distance between she and he, and possibly even to situate himself more comfortably between his native and adopted homes.

By the very end of the final draft of the chapter, Nabokov had begun to ask himself if all his criticisms of her could be accurate. By doing so he essentially opened a tiny space for doubt and ambiguity where his interpretations of Mademoiselle were concerned. For Nabokov to be able to reach this capacity to ask this question, he must have previously discovered space enough to process all of the complicated emotions tied up with his picture of Mademoiselle. So perhaps Mademoiselle was one of the few safe individual to whom Nabokov could ascribe some of his negatively tinged affects while he attempted to navigate those complicated routes which any émigré is forced to reckon.

Psychoanalytic theory puts forth a plausible argument that ambivalence and ambiguity are a part of most any healthy relationship, such that multiple perspectives can be held in mind at once. Akhtar too looked to ambivalence as a goal to be reached in the context of immigration, where a sense of differentiated mutuality between polarizations can be reached. Akhtar believed that that sort of space: “leads to a psychic rebirth, the emergence of a new and hybrid identity” (Akhtar, 1995, p. 1076). By the final version of *Speak, Memory*, Nabokov seemed to respond to both Mademoiselle’s presence and absence with some ambivalence.

Upon their first meeting, Nabokov ran away from Mademoiselle, hiding from her so as to arouse terror at his disappearance—a game of daytime hide-and-seek (Nabokov,

1989, pp. 102-104). Mademoiselle had been recently hired as governess to help Nabokov's pregnant mother.

As I reconstitute it now, my mother had probably gone, with her maid and young Trainy, to St. Petersburg (a distance of some fifty miles) where my father was deeply involved in the grave political events of that winter. She was pregnant and very nervous... In order to prove that this was no way of treating us, I immediately formed the project of repeating the exciting performance of a year before when we escaped from poor Miss Hunt in Wiesbaden. This time the countryside all around was a wilderness of snow, and it is hard to imagine what exactly could have been the goal of the journey I planned. We had just returned from our first afternoon walk with Mademoiselle and I was seething with frustration and hatred. (Nabokov 1989, p. 102)

Nabokov was enraged by the abandonment and so entreated his young brother into joining him on a long snowy walk without Mademoiselle's knowledge. As it turned out, this was a reenactment of a previous scene with a previous governess, one that resulted in her permanent dismissal. When Mademoiselle discovered their absence, she panicked, for she was certainly in no condition to chase after them through the forest. Eventually another servant retrieved the boys and no harm was done.

We had gone more than two miles, and the moon was fantastically shiny, and my brother, in perfect silence, had begun to fall, every now and then, from his mount when Dmitri with a lantern overtook us and led us home. "Giddy-eh, giddy-eh?" Mademoiselle was frantically shouting from the porch. I brushed past her without a word. My brother burst into tears, and gave himself up. (Nabokov, 1989, p. 104)

Deep down Nabokov may have been thrilled with his effect, for the escape left Mademoiselle shouting frantically from the porch and his brother in tears.

Nabokov painted a somewhat different picture of Mademoiselle when he described her seminal role in helping him to develop his love of literature. He fondly remembered her “dulcet” voice (Nabokov, 1989, p. 114) reading volume after volume to him on the veranda. Certainly these sorts of days shaped a formative writer’s mind. It inspired his craft and provided him access to new worlds of thought through those books she read. Thus he discovered a world outside the family, one that may have been a foundation of his own independence and agency.

Finally Nabokov revealed his deep dependency on Mademoiselle when facing insomnia, clearly conflicted about looking to her for relief. He described this nighttime hide-and-seek scenario (Nabokov, 1989, pp. 108-111) where he was the one to suffer as victim to Mademoiselle’s disappearance. Nabokov, tortured by sleeplessness, could not disconnect his association of sleep to death. Consequently he clung desperately to any ray of another’s existence, and Mademoiselle was the nearest bystander. However when she inevitably went to sleep and extinguished her candle, Nabokov felt utterly alone, both angry with her and desperate for her during those late hours.

Both of the hide-and-seek games might be compared to Freud’s description of the Fort (gone)/Da (there) game. In it, Freud observed his grandson tirelessly repeat a game in which he threw a toy over the bed, thus making it disappear. He subsequently followed with an action of pulling a string attached to the toy that led to its retrieval, thereby initiating a reunion. In his discussion of the game, Freud speculated that it was a means the child employed to revisit and master an understanding of his mother’s constant

disappearance and reappearance. The daytime hide-and-seek incident with Mademoiselle could be perceived as a related effort on Nabokov's part, a means for a young boy to grapple with his mother's inevitable absence. In a direct response to his mother's leaving, Nabokov deserted Mademoiselle, thus arousing tremendous anxiety in her. Thus Nabokov successfully forced Mademoiselle to suffer those very emotions that he likely felt in response to his mother's disappearance. With the nighttime hide-and-seek event, however, Nabokov was not so successful. As he depicted it, Nabokov experienced the terror night after night, unable to sustain himself through the perceived abandonment. Yet in remembering and writing about both events, Nabokov may have granted himself some opportunity to work through those difficult emotions aroused by abandonment and exile. The drafts may have also figured into his working through of this matter, for while Nabokov included this nighttime scene in the first version of "Mademoiselle O," the daytime scene had not yet been created. Instead it was remembered and introduced in a later draft. These indicators suggest that a parallel could be drawn between the Fort/Da game and Nabokov's writing process. Both were designed to allow their users to remember, recreate, and work through important aspects of uncomfortable experiences. And these will be topics for later discussion.

In those initial words that began Mademoiselle's tale, Nabokov outlined the manner in which he set out to rescue those memories and characters he donated to his fiction. Perhaps this practice of giving characters away and then recapturing them in the autobiography was also an abstracted version of a hide-and-seek or Fort/Da game. By placing these characters and memories in his fictions, Nabokov may have been hiding them, making them disappear just as Freud's grandson caused the disappearance of his

own toy. Then, Nabokov lovingly collected many of these same memories back into his own narrative, an action akin to pulling the string back so that the memories reappear. As if in a final act of assuring Mademoiselle's there-ness, or perhaps in an anxious checking for her gone-ness, Nabokov ended the chapter by writing about a final visit to Mademoiselle made when he was an adult and she in retirement. He left perplexed as to her place in his life. He wrote:

Have I really salvaged her from fiction? Just before the rhythm I hear falters and fades, I catch myself wondering whether, during the years I knew her, I had not kept utterly missing something in her that was far more she than her chins or her ways or even her French—something perhaps akin to that last glimpse of her, to the radiant deceit she had used in order to have me depart pleased with my own kindness, or to that swan whose agony was so much closer to artistic truth than a drooping dancer's pale arms; something, in short, that I could appreciate only after the things and beings that I had most loved in the security of my childhood had been turned to ashes or shot through the heart. (Nabokov, 1989, p. 117)

While Nabokov's relationship to the character may have amounted to a complex one, he may have ultimately found something of value in the process of writing about her, thus making her existence real enough for him.

In a final word on the matter, Nabokov added an appendix to the very end of "Mademoiselle O" in the final, *Speak, Memory* version of his autobiography.

There is an appendix to Mademoiselle's story. When I first wrote it I did not know about certain amazing survivals. Thus, in 1960, my London cousin Peter de Peterson told me that their English nanny, who had seemed old to me in 1904 in

Abbazia, was by now over ninety and in good health; neither was I aware that the governess of my father's two youngest sisters, Mlle Bouvier (later Mme Conrad), survived my father by almost half a century. She had entered their household in 1889 and stayed six years, being the last in a series of governesses. A pretty little keepsake drawn in 1895 by Ivan de Peterson, Peter's father, shows various events of life at Batovo vignettted over an inscription in my father's hand: *A celle qui a toujours su se faire aimer et qui lie saura jamais ne faire oublier*; signatures have been appended by four young male Nabokovs and three of their sisters, Natalia, Elizaveta, and Nadezhda, as well as by Natalia's husband, their little son Mitik, two girl cousins, and Ivan Aleksandrovich Tihotski, the Russian tutor. Sixty-five years later, in Geneva, my sister Elena discovered Mme Conrad, now in her tenth decade. The ancient lady, skipping one generation, naively mistook Elena for our mother, then a girl of eighteen, who used to drive up with Mlle Golay from Vyra to Batovo, in those distant times whose long light finds so many ingenious ways to reach me. (Nabokov, 1989, p 117-118)

There, he discovered one last keepsake related to his lost father—a French dedication scripted in VD Nabokov's own hand that endorsed the connectedness of love and memory. It is essential to note that Nabokov was only able to discover and retrieve this precious keepsake through his repeated return to Mademoiselle. In the story he literally returns to visit her sometime after his father has died. But in fact it was his repeated writing about this particular memory that unearthed the artifact, for Nabokov was only able to rediscover this particular image drawn in his own father's hand when writing the

final draft of this document. It is in this way that writing and revising can literally transform a text, through the alteration and discovery of memory.

Conclusion

Nabokov's radiant, transcendent images enchant us, seduce us, inspire us to imagine lives, worlds, and possibilities never before conceived of. Such is the role of a great writer: that of chanteuse. His words beckon us to follow him into his imaginings, for he was a man who saw "all the world as the potential for fiction" (Nabokov, 1980, p. 2). It is a delight to paint Nabokov in one's mind's eye, perched at a sidewalk cafe "notic[ing] and fondl[ing]" (Nabokov, 1980, p.1) the ordinary details of passers by, all the while jotting his musings onto index cards, "lovingly collected" (Nabokov, 1980, p.1) for later reference. While we can romanticize Nabokov's particular talent for such things, it would behoove us not to forget how he came by this ability—by way of loss. In exile, Nabokov was bound to have found everything around him to be a novel and extraordinary experience. This was so precisely because lived in a denaturalized world, his surrounds always unfamiliar and unnatural to him. No thing encountered fell within the recognizable bounds of his cherished memories. No thing made intuitive, metaphoric, or familiar sense. Every thing had to be painstakingly decoded. Yet there was a payoff: the ordinary became extraordinary. Nabokov developed a capacity for keen observation, for invention, and a deep reverence for detail. Ultimately as a result of Nabokov's denaturalized stature, all elements of the world around him automatically entered into an enchanted space for play.

A global nomad, Nabokov constantly dreamed of experiences elsewhere. Dreaming, conjuring, he recreated these images and themes over and over in his fiction.

Nabokov lost his motherland as well as his actual father to revolution. These events plus others could have been nothing short of traumatic. In the case of trauma, Freud (1914) demonstrated that repetition could be cast as a particular way of remembering these events. Akhtar (1995) wrote that the immigrant might discover new opportunities for creative and vital solutions to a reworking of old consolidations relating to the processes of individuation. Perhaps Nabokov's various means of telling and retelling the stories of his exiled life was akin to this sort of repetition, though a means to moving beyond enactment. Perhaps Nabokov's continued return to writing about exile might be viewed as a method he employed to bring those traumas, piece by piece, back into a conscious foreground. Thus the page provided him a place where he could actively think *about* those events instead of leaving them to be re-enacted. And thinking *about* his experience could have offered a means for Nabokov to process, understand, and ultimately construct a greater meaning around these otherwise destructive events. Viewed in this light, Nabokov may have constructed his autobiography, in part, to provide a space in which he could locate past, present and anticipated future experiences in a single, continuous, comprehensive narrative, a narrative context where any given piece was not left to languish alone. All elements together may have created a greater whole, one that could offer some foothold of understanding onto that which was beyond comprehension.

CHAPTER II: REPETITION

Rough drafts, false scents, half explored trails, dead ends of inspiration, are of little intrinsic importance. An artist should ruthlessly destroy his manuscripts after publication, lest they mislead academic mediocrities into thinking that it is possible to unravel the mysteries of genius by studying canceled readings. In art, purpose and plan are nothing; only the results count. (Nabokov, 1991b, p. 15)

Repetition in Psychoanalytic Theory

Repetition is a cornerstone of psychoanalytic theory, one that acts as a foundation for multiple, integral concepts such as symptom formation, transference, regression and acting out/enactment. It is even is one that ties together past and present, for Freud reckoned that a remembering in the present was a means of repeating the past. Furthermore, and central to this thesis, repetition can define a path that a person may undertake when attempting to “work through” an as yet unresolved problem. In such a capacity, repetition might serve as the psychic process and journey that could result in a more positive and creative solution to that problem at hand.

In 1939, Kubie pointed out that the concept of repetition had become so overused and over-interpreted in psychoanalytic theory that the definition was rendered nearly useless. Thus, early in the history of psychoanalytic thought, many theorists simply abandoned a pursuit of a definition or a development of its deeper meanings. Repetition’s importance to psychoanalytic theory did survive, and in this project I will ultimately specify a certain kind of repetition to be investigated: alliteration. While it is not

traditionally conceived of as a psychoanalytic device, alliteration is defined by repetition—of word sounds. If it can be tentatively be accepted that alliteration entails some form of repetition, then, the figurative device could potentially serve as link between psychoanalytic theories of the mind and integral elements employed in the creation of self-narratives. Before a detailed look can be taken at the role and function that alliteration plays in this context, however, some historical ground must be established concerning repetition and its relationship to psychological functioning, as well its relevance to Nabokov's process of creating his autobiography.

Repetition in the Service of Remembering and Repeating

In *Studies on Hysteria*, Freud and Breuer (1893-1895) observed ties between memory, repression and repetition; they remarked upon the fact that their patients suffered from painful and perplexing hysterical symptoms, ones they believed were ultimately related to their patients' repression of certain kinds of memories and of aggressive, libidinal, and generally instinctive drive impulses. At the time Freud believed that these repressed memories or instincts simply needed to be brought into conscious awareness by way of hypnosis and association so that they could then be remembered as something belonging to the past. Theoretically, the conflict could be addressed and the need for the symptom possibly dispelled. In a sense, Freud was characterizing these hysterical symptoms in terms of repetition; he recognized that a memory could be acted out in terms of the physical rather than the mental. Yet because patient resistances often proved too powerful for Freud and Breuer, a rapid cure was not such a simple matter. As such, Freud was compelled to continue his investigations and elaborate a deeper understanding of repression and repetition.

In his “Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through” (1914), Freud further clarified his thoughts on the compulsion to repeat, separating repetition into two general types: that which manifests in action versus that which manifests in psyche. Here Freud cast remembering a sort of repetition, seeing it as a “reproduction [of the past] in the psychical field” (Freud, 1914, p. 153). In addition, he further defined the notion of repetition as action, stating: “the patient does not remember anything of what he has forgotten and repressed, but acts it out. He reproduces it not as a memory but as an action; he repeats it, without, of course, knowing that he is repeating it” (Freud, 1914, p. 150). In the conception of repetition as action, Freud believed that the repressed material was brought forward into the present not as an explicit memory but rather as an act. In this way, acting out served as a substitute for conscious recollection. Ultimately, Freud wrote that repetition also held with it the potential through which therapeutic process could transform that repressed material—by way of transference. And, in a sense, it was repetition that allowed for new levels of organization and ego development, for, Freud theorized, it was the repetition of the Oedipal drama that necessitated the development of greater levels of structure to mediate between aggressive, libidinal, internal drives that contrasted with external prohibitions of these drives.

It was this conception of repetition that ultimately tied instincts, fantasies and memories to the act of “binding.” Eventually psychoanalytic theorists came to believe that this primary process energy is bound over the course of the symbolization process. Freud remarked that giving language to instinct related fantasies and memories allowed for their potential transformation from action into words. Currently, some psychoanalytic schools of thought hypothesize that the instinctual energy is dispelled across the chain of

these associative links. Ideas, thoughts, words and symbols bind the affect found within. Therefore, symbol formation serves as one of the primary means by which affects can be captured, mediated, potentially shaped into more constructive forms. Symbol formation also provides a way for thoughts and feelings to be communicated to and shared with others. Thus Nabokov gave us *Speak, Memory*.

Repetition in the Service of Binding

Freud revisited his understanding of repetition in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), outlining several, sometimes confusing, means by which repetition was related to an economic point of view. Generally speaking, Freud proposed that an excess of tension could arise when external forces conflicted with internal drives. These were circumstances an individual invariably and often encountered over the course of his being in the everyday world. This tension resulted in an excess of excitement (today, a term akin to affective arousal) that then necessitated some mediation by the ego. The ego then attempted to redirect instincts into alternative, more acceptable vehicles of expression—examples being compromise formations such as symbolization or sublimation. In this context one could cast Nabokov's creative efforts in terms of sublimation, an advanced process of symbolism and one of the most adaptive of the defenses. Nabokov connected this matter to his love for art, stating: "for me a work of fiction exists only insofar as it affords me what I shall bluntly call aesthetic bliss, that is a sense of being somehow, somewhere, connected with other states of being where art (curiosity, tenderness, kindness, ecstasy) is the norm" (Nabokov, 1991, p. 314-315). While he did not directly refer to drives, conflicts, or instincts, Nabokov did seem to believe that some kind of pleasure might be directed into and derived from a creative practice. Freud essentially

believed that an individual gained invaluable flexibility through the displacement of instincts. While the height and intensity of pleasure were sacrificed, the pain inherent in the starvation of this pleasure was also avoided. Essentially Freud observed that creativity amounted to a compromise—between the reality that could not be controlled and the imaginary that could be constructed. Thus, the psyche achieved some effort toward self-preservation as it were, balancing the system by diminishing the excitatory tension.

Where binding was concerned, Freud revised his definition on multiple occasions, articulating different aspects of its functions at different times. Early in his thinking Freud observed that on certain kinds of occasions, the compulsion to repeat surfaced as an effort to restore an earlier state. In this sense, the repetition served as an attempt to preserve an established homeostasis. He wrote: “an instinct is an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things which the living entity has been obliged to abandon under the pressure of external disturbing forces” (Freud, 1920, p.36). Yet Freud did not believe that conservation was the only force acting on the system. He also believed there to be other instincts that impelled individuals toward change and progress. In effect, Freud introduced such a force in *Ego and the Id* (1923): Eros. In that context, binding took on yet a different quality: “the main purpose of Eros—that of uniting and binding—... helps towards establishing the unity, or tendency to unity, which is particularly characteristic of the ego” (Freud, 1923, p. 45). One could consider human efforts toward mastery as an example of such “uniting and binding” if “unity” had some qualities of an ideal or wished for state toward which Eros strives. Freud’s own references to Plato’s *Symposium* in this regard suggests that he was well aware of, if not sympathetic to the notion of an erotic, Platonic ideal. With respect to Nabokov’s autobiography, Nabokov’s

overall effort to re-collect his memories and construct them into a coherent, unified, and artful story of the self can also be seen as a prime example of such a force where mastery and creativity are entwined.

Freud also noted an exception to the striving toward an Eros based ideal in the *Pleasure Principle* (1920) when he tied binding and repetition to trauma. He observed that individuals who had experienced some sort of trauma often were forced to deal with a persistent recurrence of those traumatic scenes in a variety of forms, examples being dreams, intrusive memories, or a re-experiencing of the situation. Trauma, he wrote, could originate either with external forces such as war or with internal sources such as in the failure to achieve the binding of instinctual impulses. He speculated that in trauma a breach occurred in the ego's protective boundaries that then flooded of the psyche with an overabundance of stimuli and energy. He stated:

The fulfillment of wishes is, as we know, brought about in a hallucinatory manner by dreams, and under the dominance of the pleasure principle this has become their function. But it is not in the service of that principle that the dreams of patients suffering from traumatic neuroses lead them back with such regularity to the situation in which the trauma occurred. We may assume, rather, that dreams are here helping to carry out another task, which must be accomplished before the dominance of the pleasure principle can even begin. These dreams are endeavouring to master the stimulus retrospectively, by developing the anxiety whose omission was the cause of the traumatic neurosis. They thus afford us a view of a function of the mental apparatus which, though it does not contradict the pleasure principle, is nevertheless independent of it and seems to be more

primitive than the purpose of gaining pleasure and avoiding unpleasure. (Freud, 1920, p.32)

Here Freud saw repetition as an effort to both bind and master something of that trauma rather than an effort to strive towards an ideal, thus not only as an effort to restore the system to an earlier state.

Repetition in the Service of Re-creating and Re-constructing

Again in *The Pleasure Principle* (1920), Freud outlined another means by which repetition and mastery were connected, implying repetition's potential for serving a creative, constructive function. In his writings about the famous Fort/Da game, Freud described the way in which his young grandson repeatedly played the same game over and over again:

The child had a wooden reel with a piece of string tied round it. It never occurred to him to pull it along the floor behind him, for instance, and play at its being a carriage. What he did was to hold the reel by the string and very skillfully throw it over the edge of his curtained cot, so that it disappeared into it, at the same time uttering his expressive 'o-o-o-o' [*fort* (gone)]. He then pulled the reel out of the cot again by the string and hailed its reappearance with a joyful '*da*' ('there').

This, then, was the complete game—disappearance and return. As a rule one only witnessed its first act, which was repeated untiringly as a game in itself, though there is no doubt that the greater pleasure was attached to the second act. (Freud, 1920, p. 14)

Freud remarked that with the game, the boy had created a means to master the inevitably difficult affects stirred by the temporary, recurrent loss of his mother. It was an active rather than a passive stance that allowed repetition to be a useful and transformative process to the child. By taking an active role, by making things disappear and appear, the child assumed the role of agent in his constructed game world. He could make things happen instead of simply allowing things happen to him. He wrote:

At the outset, he was in a *passive* situation—he was overpowered by the experience; but, by repeating it, unpleasurable though it was, as a game, he took on an *active* part. These efforts might be put down to an instinct for mastery that was acting independently of whether the memory was in itself pleasurable or not. But still another interpretation may be attempted. Throwing away the object so that it was ‘gone’ might satisfy an impulse of the child’s, which was suppressed in his actual life, to revenge himself on his mother for going away from him. In that case it would have a defiant meaning: ‘All right, then, go away! I don’t need you. I’m sending you away myself.’ (Freud, 1920, p. 15)

While these actions may not have always produce results the child desired—e.g. to prevent the mother from leaving or to bring her back the very moment he desired—they were, at most basic, a means to managing the unavoidable upset aroused by her absence.

As Freud suggested, the game also became a means in which the boy could safely express some anger at the object for leaving. He observed the following in his footnote to the story:

A further observation subsequently confirmed the interpretation fully. One day the child’s mother had been away for several hours and on her return was met

with the words ‘Baby o-o-o-o!’ which was at first incomprehensible. It soon turned out, however, that during this long period of solitude the child had found a method of making *himself* appear. He had discovered his reflection in a full-length mirror which did not quite reach to the ground, so that by crouching down he could make his mirror-image ‘gone.’ (Freud, 1920, p. 14)

Not only did the boy play with mastering the toys disappearance and reappearance, he also devised a different version of the same game. There he made himself into the object that could magically disappear and reappear. Thus Freud observed a version of mastery through identification—if it were that the boy could have assumed the position of disappearing object in the scenario with his mother, then he could have potentially assumed magical control over the comings and goings of his encounters with mother, ostensibly reappearing in her presence any time he desired. The illusion of control, then, may have provided the child with some solace in a circumstance that was likely to have left him feeling quite helpless and powerless. Essentially, this type of imaginary play allows for an ability to regulate fantasy.

With the descriptions of the Fort/Da game, Nabokov’s own daytime hide-and-seek with Mademoiselle (Nabokov, 1989, pp.102-104) may assume a new dimension in meaning. To review, Nabokov described how he staged an adventurous game of escape from Mademoiselle that followed her initial arrival. Upon arriving back from a stayed stroll with Mademoiselle, Nabokov promptly convinced his brother Sergey to join him in a dash away from their governess and into a snowy wilderness. Mademoiselle panicked because she was incapable of following, and the two were finally rescued from their cold and tired journey by one of the stable hands. Nabokov described his response to her upset

upon their return: “Mademoiselle was frantically shouting from the porch. I brushed past her without a word” (Nabokov, 1989, p. 104). Considering both descriptions, perhaps Nabokov was using Mademoiselle in a manner similar to the manner in which Freud’s grandson used both the toy, himself and the mirror—to play with and begin to master some kind of provisional understanding of both losing and finding. In this scene it is clear that Nabokov designated her as a safe object toward which he could direct his anger. And too Nabokov may have been able to further play with his emotions by causing Mademoiselle to feel some of the distress he had likely experienced. After all, it was his mother who was the first to do the leave taking. He wrote:

As I reconstitute it now, my mother had probably gone, with her maid and young Trainy, to St. Petersburg (a distance of some fifty miles) where my father was deeply involved in the grave political events of that winter. She was pregnant and very nervous... In order to prove that this was no way of treating us, I immediately formed the project of repeating the exciting performance of a year before when we escaped from poor Miss Hunt in Wiesbaden. (Nabokov, 1989, p. 102)

It is not so difficult to imagine that the abandonment would have stirred some rage in Nabokov. His mother was not only leaving temporarily, she was also pregnant and would soon be turning her attention to a new child. And so with his own Fort/Da, Nabokov was able to actively regulate emotion. Freud stated: “As the child passes over from the passivity of the experience to the activity of the game, he hands on the disagreeable experience to one of his playmates and in this way revenges himself on a substitute”

(Freud, 1920, p. 17). Thus Nabokov revealed his identification with Mademoiselle, for he ensured that she experience those very same feelings that were so distressing to him.

In support of this more active, constructive view of repetition, Loewald clarified and elucidated some of Freud's points concerning repetition in his 1971 paper "Some Considerations on Repetition and Repetition Compulsion." Here Loewald focused on Freud's distinction between passive versus active repetition, emphasizing the implications of each stance. If repetition was to be a common feature to all psychic life, he reasoned, then the way in which that early material was repeated inevitably affected the outcome, resulting in either a regenerative or a fixed end. In other words, Loewald was interested in the qualitative details of repetition, and he stressed the importance of the way in which repetition was used or enacted. He observed:

Everything depends on how these early experiences are repeated in the course of life, to what extent they are repeated passively—suffered again even if 'actively' rearranged—and to what extent they can be taken over in the ego's organizing activity and made over into something new—a re-creation of something old as against a duplication of it. In such re-creation the old is mastered, where mastery does not mean elimination of it but dissolution, and reconstruction out of the elements of destruction. (Loewald, 1971, p. 60)

Freud's observations of his grandson's Fort/Da game may reflect something of an active rearranging, as may the above hide-and-seek game with Mademoiselle O.

However, there were times that Nabokov was not able to take such an active, playful stance with his object Mademoiselle. In quite a different kind of disappearing game,

Nabokov described the early years of his lifelong battle with insomnia (Nabokov, 1989,

pp. 108-111), a nighttime hide-and-seek. He was utterly terror stricken when left alone in the midnight hours, feeling passively subjected to a kind of recurring death. In this circumstance, Nabokov unsuccessfully attempted to use Mademoiselle as a life preserver to steady him through the night. In those hours of darkness, Nabokov made it clear that only the light leaking from Mademoiselle's room comforted his vast loneliness. After she blew out the candle in her own room, however, Nabokov fell to pieces. He described his reaction: "in absolute darkness my head would swim and my mind melt in a travesty of the death struggle" (Nabokov, 1989, p. 109). Flooded by anxious terror, Nabokov could not preserve a figurative image of his governess in his mind. Instead he believed her completely gone. Nabokov's loss of contact with the object proved overwhelming even though it was only temporary. In the object's absence, Nabokov required a concrete cue—light—to keep his fears at bay. Once the light was doused, however, Nabokov's terror of loss caused such disorganization that he was unable to create an imagining of Mademoiselle to comfort him in his aloneness. He could not call upon play as a resource since there was no object available to play with. Only her literal and concrete presence would work, and that proved too tentative a proposal.

Freud commented that the initiation of the Fort/Da disappearing game might have, in part, been "a necessary preliminary to her joyful return" (Freud, 1920, p. 15). Loewald too conceived that a reconstruction of destructed elements could produce something of a pleasurable outcome. As if to confirm these notions, Nabokov did describe the pleasures of reunion with Mademoiselle after a night's separation. Once morning arrived, Nabokov was offered a glorious reprieve from his horrors—a jubilant ride with brother and governess through a city bursting with the promise of spring. "How utterly foreign to the

troubles of the night were those exciting St. Petersburg mornings when the fierce and tender, damp and dazzling arctic spring bundled away broken ice down the sea-bright Neva! It made the roofs shine. It painted the slush in the streets a rich purplish-blue shade which I have never seen anywhere since” (Nabokov, 1989, p. 111). While loneliness instilled the deepest of terrors, equally thrilling was the reunion following. It reinvigorated Nabokov’s senses and allowed him to view his universe with the fresh and excited eyes of he who has been granted a stay of execution. This scene could also be read as a metaphor recreating some version of Nabokov’s separation and reunion experiences. As with a toddler temporarily lost to his mother, Nabokov’s subsequent reunion with Mademoiselle reconfirmed an exalted love and joy found only between those individuals who once imagined the other gone forever.

With this these two disappearing games, it appears that Mademoiselle as object occupied two positions for Nabokov, one based on activity and one on passivity. In the daytime hide-and-seek, Nabokov took an active stance toward Mademoiselle where he played with the notions of losing and finding. In the nighttime version, Nabokov’s position was a passive one, for he clearly felt helplessly subject to Mademoiselle’s disappearances, powerless to mitigate any ill effects of his aloneness. As previously mentioned, the former circumstance allowed for Nabokov to repeat, play with, and then rearrange some elements of that abandonment conflict, enabling him to then master and better understand his concerns. Yet the later nighttime encounter with Mademoiselle more closely resembled a repetition in the service of binding, as well as an effort aimed toward restoration. There, Nabokov desperately attempted to capture and control the anxiety that abandonment evoked night after night. The nightly separation from

Mademoiselle was interpreted as being a permanent one, that is until the morning brought the thrill of finding Mademoiselle's existence once again renewed. Thus Nabokov discovered his original circumstances restored. Such a narrative resembles a wish for a return to a pre-traumatic state, though perhaps in this case the nighttime scenes potentially acted as substitute for the series of traumatic events Nabokov encountered in his life. As if to highlight the totality of his losses, Nabokov ends the chapter such that he and she are the only survivors left.

Not only can repetition and recreation be considered in reference to the specifics of a given event in Nabokov's autobiography, they can also be considered in the context of the autobiography as a whole. The effort, he stated explicitly, was originally one initiated to re-collect all those memories and characters that had purportedly disappeared into the seas of his fiction. Notably, it was Nabokov himself who bequeathed those memories and characters to his art, to the point of their feeling lost to him. "Fort." Seen in this light, then, perhaps the construction of his autobiography was a means to making those memories reappear. "Da." Too, Nabokov's penchant for creating doppelgangers and mimics strewn throughout his fiction might also be construed as highly complex vestiges of this Fort/Da process. By painting a handful of emblematic personas in a variety of disguises, Nabokov might have discovered a method to masterfully control their repeated arrivals and departures, materializations and dissolutions, appearances and disappearances. Perhaps the practice of writing and artistic creation in general could be considered in these terms, as a complex repetition and recreation designed to mediate and work through the significant losses in an artist's life. As if in empathy with such an idea, Nabokov wrote the following:

The art of writing is a very futile business if it does not imply first of all the art of seeing the world as the potentiality of fiction. The material of this world may be real enough (as far as reality goes) but does not exist at all as an accepted entirety: it is chaos, and to this chaos the author says “go!” allowing the world to flicker and to fuse. It is now recombined in its very atoms, not merely in its visible and superficial parts. The writer is the first man to mop it and to form the natural objects it contains. Those berries there are edible. That speckled creature that bolted across my path might be tamed. That lake between those trees will be called Lake Opal or, more artistically, Dishwater Lake. That mist is a mountain—and that mountain must be conquered. Up a trackless slope climbs the master artist, and at the top, on a windy ridge, whom do you think he meets? The panting and happy reader, and there they spontaneously embrace and are linked forever if the book lasts forever. (Nabokov, 1980, p. 2)

The recombining of atoms may have left Nabokov missing his actual memories, but it also, apparently, left him feeling a bit less lonely, for in his writing Nabokov was kept company by his apparitional readers. Even these potential benefits of recreation through repetition may not simply apply to writers, but rather could apply to their audiences as well. Again in *The Pleasure Principle* (1920), Freud contemplated the very curious but common circumstance of an artist portraying the most painful of experiences; surprisingly, Freud observed that it was often such a rendering of pain the audience found to be highly enjoyable. Freud wrote: “Even under the dominance of the pleasure principle there are always ways and means enough of making what is in itself unpleasurable into a subject to be recollected and worked over” (Freud, 1920, p. 17). Just as theatergoers or

film audiences are given the opportunity to experience an event without actually having to live through it, reading too could be thought of as a means for an individual to safely experience a tragedy and its repercussive effects. Indeed Walker Percy (1954) suggested that it is only with the experience of catastrophe that we are then able to truly see the world around us. Similarly, it may have primarily been Nabokov's nightly terror that allowed him to see the next day as so dazzling and shiny. Thus reading, theater, film, or nearly any art form may allow audiences a means to truly see the world, to understand something of those tragic effects, only to easily reemerge unscathed on the other side. Therefore, even the act of reading could be cast in the light of the Fort/Da game. Reading the detailed descriptions of an imagined world, perhaps even one including a cataclysmic disaster, serves as Fort; placing the book down to then see the actual world magically restored before one's very eyes serves as Da.

Repetition in the Service of Affect Regulation

Thus far, the concept of repetition has been discussed in the following terms: of duplication with the intention to return the system to an earlier homeostatic state; of mastery; and of re-creation and working through. Too in this context of creative, regenerative ends, an active stance with respect to repetition could translate to an individual's ability to regulate and play with fantasy. Thus affect can be bound to symbol. Yet repetition can offer another regulatory function. In *The Interpersonal World of the Infant*, Daniel Stern (1985) detailed the manner in which all individuals develop the capacity for affect regulation, demonstrating how affect regulation is related to the development of an individual's capacity for affective attunement.

Stern observed that an infant develops both an integrated, core sense of self as well as a stable, consistent sense of others through his repeated, interpersonal interactions with significant others. From the very early months of life, Stern wrote, an infant becomes increasingly more engaged in the environment around him, as well as in the social relationships with his caretaker. As he does, he repeatedly engages in need driven interactions with the caregiver around basic events, for example, as in the case of hunger and being fed. As the infant reaches 3 months and older, however, his interactions grow increasingly more social. Primarily, these are constituted by interpersonal interactions, for example as in the playing of simple, suspense games like peek-a-boo. Eventually, Stern argued, the child internalizes these repeated interactions with caretakers, thus forming internalized, generalized representations for social relationships—or what he later titled “ways-of-being-with” (Stern, 1985, p. xv).

Stern described how these social based interactions typically consist of the caregiver’s exaggerated repetitions of a theme. As in the case of peek-a-boo, the caregiver repeatedly plays the same game with the infant but introduces some degree of novelty as the rounds progress—variations in script, in timing, in vocal tone for example. This combination of repetition with slight novelty, then, keeps the infant engaged in the activity. It is important, too, that the caretaker adjust the degree of novelty introduced in order to ensure that the infant does not become too over-stimulated or too under-stimulated at any given time. Through this optimal repetition on a theme, the caregiver “help[s] regulate the infant’s level of arousal and excitation within a tolerable range (and to keep the parents from getting bored)” (Stern 1985, p. 74). Therefore, it is the degree of variation that regulates both the infant’s and the caretaker’s interest and attention. The

infant too regulates his own level of excitement. He either averts his own gaze when the stimulation becomes too great, or he engages the caretaker's gaze when stimulation is not great enough, inviting new variations and repetitions of the play. In effect, the infant is not only regulating his own levels of affective arousal, he is also regulating the caretaker's behavior by responding to or eliciting the kind of activity at hand. In sum, each partner regulates the affective engagement of both self and other through his/her behaviors enacted.

While the example of these suspense games outline the manner in which the infant's arousal and actions are regulated, it is important to note that this activity is not exclusive to the management of excitement. Rather, the caretaker performs a similar function in a number of arenas, for example as in the regulation of intense affects or in the regulation of security and attachment experiences. The quality and kind of responses enacted by the caregiver shapes the tone or flavor of that regulatory function. Therefore one can imagine how the quality and kind of repeated responses typically encountered might shape an infant's burgeoning experience of himself overall, as well as his overall experience of others. In other words, it is through these repeated experiences with a regulating other that the infant begins to develop a subjective sense of self—one separate from yet related and connected to a sense of the other.

Stern argued that the repeated, regulating interactions between infant and caretaker allows the infant to internalize a working model of a "self-regulating other" (Stern, 1985, p. 102) in the following manner. Essentially, an infant's first experience of playing peek-a-boo establishes a basic, episodic memory of the event. As the caretaker plays this game with him over and over, varying the play as needed, the infant then

begins to form a generalized memory of this episode, an average of all the experiences. Thus an infant internalizes an abstracted, prototypic version of the experience. Stern initially termed these RIGs: “representations of interactions that have been generalized” (Stern 1985, p. 97), but later developed the more general “ways-of-being-with” descriptive term. As this latter term makes clear, Stern was primarily interested in the interactive experience between self and other as one that becomes generalized and internalized. He also remarked that this representation of “ways-of-being-with” is primarily a preverbal one—an aspect of this process to note for later discussions.

Finally, Stern outlined how these prototypical memories of generalized, past interactions can potentially influence an infant’s present-day experience. He wrote:

The experience with the self-regulating other gradually forms RIGs [“ways-of-being with”]. And these memories are retrievable whenever one of the attributes of the RIG is present. When an infant has a certain feeling, that feeling will call to mind the RIG of which that feeling is an attribute. Attributes are thus recall cues to reactivate the lived experience. And whenever the RIG is activated, it packs some of the wallop of the originally lived experience in the form of an active memory.

Each of the many different self-regulating other relationships with the same person will have its own distinctive RIG. And when different RIGs are activated, the infant experiences different forms or ways of being with a self-regulating other. The activation of different RIGs can influence different regulatory functions, ranging from the biological and physiological to the psychic. (Stern, 1985, p. 110-111)

Essentially, Stern suggested that this prototype of the self-regulating other can be evoked in the present, thus bringing with it some, if not all, of those attributes that comprise the specific “ways-of-being-with” RIG evoked. And he drew ties between this model of functioning and those proposed by other theorists—such as internal working models of others found in attachment theory and of internalized objects found in traditional psychoanalytic theory.

The following question now arises: How does Stern’s theory relate to the process Nabokov employed to construct his autobiography? And further, how could this model be used to deepen an understanding Nabokov’s creative process or of the construction of his narrative autobiography? In considering the potential connections between Nabokov’s autobiography and affect regulation, some of the themes mentioned above may sound familiar. Recall the discussion of the Fort/Da game and Nabokov’s own hide-and-seek experiences with Mademoiselle O. Seemingly, similarities can be detected between Nabokov’s descriptions and the suspense games Stern described. The repetitions in Fort/Da, Freud stated, operated as an effort geared toward mastering a conflict, and toward re-creating the pieces into a more constructive outcome. Nabokov’s hide-and-seek games were cast in a similar light, for they may have served as a means Nabokov employed to work through some of his own conflicts around the themes of absence and loss. In addition, perhaps even the act of writing as a practice—and specifically Nabokov’s writing of his autobiography—might have functioned in a similar fashion. By writing about both hide-and-seek games, Nabokov could have been managing his fantasies concerning loss—attempting to play with actions, outcomes and the various

consequences carried out on all players in the game. On one occasion he seemed to achieve some success to this end, on another he did not.

Repetition in the Service of Reflection and Play

Nabokov's explicit, stated intent in writing his autobiography was one of rescue. While all those memories had not disappeared from mind, Nabokov remarked, however something had faded from them. "Although it [the treasured item of my past] lingered on in my mind, its personal warmth, its retrospective appeal had gone and, presently, it became more closely identified with my novel than with my former self" (Nabokov, 1989, p. 95). It was the warmth and appeal—the feeling component—that had been siphoned away. Perhaps this was not strictly an effort to recall the specifics of past events. Perhaps this was Nabokov's attempt to rediscover something of those lost affects allied with those particular memories. Perhaps it was an attempt to reconnect the two by way of binding affect to the symbolic, to language.

The act of translation as the creation of a space for reflection.

Nabokov's proclivity for translating this particular narrative back and forth between various languages may be connected to these attempts at restoring lost memories and emotions. To review, Nabokov began writing his autobiography work in pieces, constructing detailed stories of remembered episodes from his past that were eventually printed as discrete pieces in literary magazines. In 1936, Nabokov wrote the story of "Mademoiselle O" in French while living in Europe. He did not take up the project again until 1948, finally having settled in America. Nabokov completed the remainder of the stories by 1951, writing all the rest in English. He then collected the memories and

published them under one English language title. Following, Nabokov translated the book into his native Russian, making changes along the way. And finally Nabokov completed his revisions when translating the Russian version back into English for a fourth and final publishing. In this context, Nabokov's process of repeated revisions and repeated translations may bear some resemblance to a complex version of affect regulation.

Considering the matter of how and when multiple languages are used in psychotherapy, Rose-Marie Foster contended that bilingual individuals store different experiences of the self that are specific to and organized around each of the various languages spoken. She wrote:

Each language is unique in evoking the relational experiences and social-contextual environment at the time of original acquisition and early usage. In brief, condensed within each language are both the verbal symbols and the other who that offered those symbols. Alive within each symbol is its semantic meaning and the interiorized versions of the self and that other who mutually shared and negotiated common experiences and gave them a name. (Foster, 1996, p. 100)

Jacqueline Amati-Mehler (1995) too discussed her observation that the context in which a new language is acquired is integral to the kinds of memories and emotions encoded. If one language is developed in conjunction with a specific other and with specific events—for example, with a specific parent versus a schoolteacher, or at home versus due to emigration—then these aspects will also shape the ways in which an individual experiences both the language and the self encoded into that language. She wrote: these “factors in play will set up a particular configuration of the intrapsychic scenario that can range from a positive maturing and enriching experience to that of a most traumatic

confrontation with the *unheimlich*, an uncanny sense of alienation” (Mehler, 1995, p. 94). Not only is affect bound to symbol, Mehler suggested that specific affects, emotions and experiences of the self are bound to specific kinds of symbols—in this case to the different kinds of symbols that constitute the building blocks of different languages.

Stern’s concept of “ways-of-being-with” RIGs, as well those concepts proposed by developmental and psychoanalytic theorists concerning adult psychic functioning—internal working models, internalized objects, or various mental schemas, for example—suggest that specific circumstances and specific objects stir certain kinds of affects in an individual at any given time. Foster and Mehler theorized that specific affects could be encoded into the memories of an event as well as the language used in that particular context. Therefore, just as specific memories recalled may evoke the corresponding affects inscribed at the time of the actual event, so too may the specific language used in the process of retelling the memories potentially influence the kinds of affects, the aspects of self, or even the kinds of memories recalled. As Foster suggested, perhaps Nabokov associated different aspects of himself with each of the various languages he knew. And as Mehler suggested, perhaps each particular language Nabokov employed while writing and editing his texts evoked specific, distinct aspects of those memories recounted. These memories would likely be dependent upon the relational experiences and the socio-cultural details encoded in that particular language and its symbols. Perhaps translating the same memories into alternative languages assisted Nabokov in the regulation of those memories, as well as in the regulation of the affects encoded into those memories—managed either by way of arousal or avoidance.

Earlier it was argued that Nabokov's use of French might have been one of several means he discovered to identify with his Mademoiselle. It is possible to speculate that perhaps too Nabokov may have enlisted French because it was the primary language of his in situ experiences with Mademoiselle O. In doing so, he may have maximized his access to the greatest detail and richness possible when attempting to recall his memories of her. Foster would argue that such a choice allowed him to best capture "the interiorized versions of the self and that other who mutually shared and negotiated common experiences and gave them a name" (Foster, 1996, p. 100). These versions of self and other may too have carried specific, corresponding affects. Therefore perhaps Nabokov unconsciously chose a specific language because it brought with it the capacity to evoke certain kinds of affects, feelings or sensations that would, in turn, penetrate and influence the mood of the text.

What, then, can be said about how Nabokov went about documenting the remainder of his memories and experiences unrelated to Mademoiselle? The choice of English for recounting these memories may not be considered the language most evocative of his childhood. Perhaps Nabokov enlisted English because it was his original written language, seemingly his mother written tongue. However, considering the points above, perhaps there may have been other operations at work too, specifically the possibility that Nabokov may have used English as a means of titrating intense emotions associated with traumatic memories. Ferenczi commented that the mother tongue was "strongly invested with affect" (Ferenczi, 1952, p. 145) and Greenson concluded that the mother tongue was "the bearer of important unresolved conflicts" (Greenson, 1950, p. 21). The use of a newly acquired language, Greenson suggested, was thought to offer

some freedom from that inhibition or shame associated with the “infantile,” “primitive,” or “regressive” attributes of a primary language. A second language offered “an opportunity to build up a new defensive system against past infantile life” (Greenson, 1950, p. 21). Considering such statements, perhaps Nabokov was inclined to use English because it was a means of modulating strong conflicts and emotions. If his memories of events and loved ones from home were encoded in Russian, then perhaps retrieving those memories in Russian may have also brought forward the whole of those overwhelming emotions around what had been lost. Thus, Nabokov may have gravitated toward his language selection in part to regulate his affects, titrating and timing the manner in which they surfaced into consciousness.

Nabokov very well may have used translation and language choice as a means to move closer to and further from his memories while constructing and editing his autobiography. With the observations above, it could be considered as a means Nabokov regulated affect—through the use of distance. Therefore in this context, Nabokov’s repeated translations may have created a space for reflection, allowing him an appropriate psychic distance from which he could reflect upon his memories in the manner necessary for the task at hand. French, it would seem, may have provided him an intimacy with his subject matter, drawing him closer to the details and affects of his past experiences. English, on the other hand, may have allowed him a distance with which he could safely distance himself from the intensity of the affects recovered. In this way, he may have preserved his ability to reflect and write about the past by protecting against emotional flooding. And finally Russian might have provided Nabokov another opportunity to place himself back into the fond scenes of his youth, again immersed in the detail, but here with

the added benefit of earlier reflections discovered in previous drafts. Thus he may have initiated a different kind of closeness to the details, one that only a mother tongue could afford. Generally, this perspective presents the possibility that Nabokov may have used the act of translating as a vehicle to mediate and create an optimal distance from which he could reflect back onto these scenes from his past. The degree of this distance may have been determined by the kind of remembering Nabokov required at the time, one that would regulate affects such that he could be allowed the best possible recall of those precious memories.

The act of translation as the creation of a space for play.

Nabokov's process of repeated translations might have functioned as an affect regulation mechanism, and as a means to create a psychic space for adequate and appropriate reflection. However it may too have served yet another purpose, one that facilitated the opening of a transitional space for creative play. Patrick Casement (1982) noted that Samuel Beckett too chose to write certain texts in a secondary language, scripting in French instead of his primary English. Also an émigré, Beckett's exit was not an exile forced by external circumstances. Rather his was self-imposed, designed, many agree, to escape the overbearing presence of his mother. "By leaving his motherland, and by finding another language, he had found freedom enough to write" (Casement, 1982, p. 38). Casement concluded that the use of a secondary language allowed Beckett access to a transitional space in which he was able to play with and play out some of his own unresolved conflicts related to his mother. Perhaps the English tongue would have been overly identified with his mother. This space for play was integral to Beckett's work—in

essence it may have been what enabled his particular brand of genius: a play with words and language.

Nabokov too may have used English in a similar fashion to Beckett, as a means to create a transitional space in which he could play with language, with memory, or with his narrative images. Nabokov, of course, had his own thoughts on the matter of language. In an interview, he stated the following:

My private tragedy, which cannot, and indeed should not, be anybody's concern, is that I had to abandon my natural idiom, my untrammelled, rich, and infinitely docile Russian tongue for a second-rate brand of English, devoid of any of those apparatuses—the baffling mirror, the black velvet backdrop, the implied associations and traditions—which the native illusionist, frac-tails flying, can magically use to transcend the heritage in his own way. (Nabokov, 1991a, p. 317)

Nabokov lamented the loss of language, along with all those versatile devices implanted within. Nabokov's baffling mirror and its backdrop echo that which Foster and Mehler suggested, that language itself is impregnated with associations and details which cannot be separated out from the language itself. However his statement should not be taken simply at face value. After all, it was Nabokov's own choice as to which language he used through out his career, and for the most part, he chose English. If the use of a second language could be thought to offer some emotional distance from the material itself, then perhaps Nabokov's choice of English was deliberate. Perhaps it was a means of creating a potential space in which he could play with memories, ideas, meanings and language without being overburdened by their affective components. Both Greenson (1950) and Mehler et al (1990) observed that the use of a second language can be defensive in

nature, preserving and possibly even isolating conflicted or traumatic sections of narratives. However, Mehler et al also observed that:

Substituting the childhood language with a new language which provides new paths for thoughts and affects, and by using a cultural and emotional context which is not marked by archaic conflicts, some patients not only submit to their resistances and defences, but are also able to create new pathways (even at the cost of deep and painful splittings) towards valid and structuring introjections. (Mehler, Argentieri, and Canestri, 1990, p. 575)

Therefore, perhaps Nabokov's use of a second language could be thought of as a synthesis of all the theories above—as a way to discover and explore certain affects, as a way to titrate and limit other affects, as a means of creating a space to play with fantasies and memories, ideas and affects, and ultimately as a means to transform traumatic material through its exploration and reintegration into the larger, ongoing narrative of the self. In translating his memories back and forth between languages, Nabokov may have discovered he could both create a space for play and then play with language. In playing with the form of language—by mediating affect as well as reflective space—Nabokov may have been able to discover new ways of constructing his remembered experiences. In doing so, he may have kept those remembered scenes fresh and animated, forever involved in the process of being created, and therefore forever alive.

Attunement

Attunement can be thought of as a development and extension of regulation, for as a kind of resonance between entities, various states of being are matched with one

another, as, for example, when musical rhythms correspond with movement patterns, or bodily expression match to internal emotions. One can think of attunement in relation to the arts, to theater, music, dance, and visual mediums. Attunement in artistic expression can bring together varied elements into some sort of harmony so that the work impresses a more powerful effect onto both artist and audience. Consider that a guitar is tuned by adjusting one string in accordance with another, thus producing two strings that vibrate in synch together. A Greek Chorus recites their lines in unison, fashioning a chanted narrative that structures and modulates the emotional tone of the tragedy or comedy. Or consider that dancers in a performance ensemble strive, at times, to move in synchrony with one another as if they were a single living entity, leaving their audience with a feeling of calm synchrony. Yet the same ensemble of dancers can also be directed to move quite differently from one another, performing individualized movements that may relate to one another while also working in opposition. The audience, then, is challenged to attend to more than one set of movements, a circumstance that may arouse any number of different and even conflicting emotions in the audience. Balanchine was a master at understanding the extent to which an audience could engage in such diachrony. He was well known for choreographing individual, separate movements for his dancers, demanding that the audience bear the tension until just the right moment when he brought them back into a harmony of unitary movement.

The examples above demonstrate that if external patterns are in sync with one another, this harmony can generate positive internal feelings in the audiences as a result. Conversely, if external patterns are out of sync with one another, the disharmony can generate negative internal feelings in the audience. The feelings, whether positively or

negatively valenced, result out of the kind of match found in those external patterns constructed by the artist, or as Nabokov suggested, those synchronized (or asynchronized) patterns occasionally found in nature. Indeed Nabokov's description of just such an event will be presented later in this paper, for he claimed it was the harmony of water dripping and leaf dipping that stirred such an excitement in him that he was inspired to write his first poem.

Daniel Stern outlined the manner in which the capacity for attunement developed out of a history of interactions established between caretaker and infant—the caretaker's repeated efforts to match her own behaviors to her infant's expressions serving as the basis for regulation. As the infant reaches around nine months, Stern wrote, the caretaker begins to vary her repetitions significantly by adding cross-modal dimensions to her behaviors. She now moves beyond a repetition that simply encompasses imitation. The caretaker introduces matching behaviors that are articulated by way of a different mode of expression. Stern gave the following example:

A nine month old boy bangs his head on a soft toy, at first in some anger but gradually with pleasure, exuberance and humor. He sets up a steady rhythm. Mother falls into his rhythm and says, "kaaaaa-bam," the "bam" falling on the stroke and the "kaaaaa" riding with the preparatory upswing and the suspenseful holding of his arm aloft before it falls. (Stern, 1985, p.140)

Here the caretaker vocalizes a rhythmic word pattern that corresponds with her child's ongoing actions. In this, Stern emphasized, the "ultimate reference for the match appears to be the feeling state... Affective attunement, then, is the performance of behaviors that

express the quality of feeling of a shared affective state without imitating the exact behavioral expressions of the inner state” (Stern, 1985, p. 142).

Turning back to the description of Freud’s Fort/Da game, one can imagine that the boy’s mother may have played an early role in her son’s developing the game. Imagine that she was in the habit of playing standard, basic games with her young son, not such a farfetched notion if mother had cared for him exclusively as Freud reported. Imagine that she played peek-a-boo with him, exclaiming “fort!” as she hid him (or herself), and then a corresponding “da…” upon his (or her) magical return. In the scenario, the sound “fort!” becomes affiliated with the excited / anxious feeling of anticipation of disappearance, and conversely “da…” with the joy of return. Now imagine that over the typical course of her son’s play, mother watches as a toy rolls out of her son’s perimeter, just out of his reach. Imagine that she follows this rolling of the toy with a long, drawn out “o-o-o-o,” yoking the pace of her sound with the pace of the toy’s movement. Thus she creates another association to disappearance, another sound to match the anticipation, frustration, and anxiety of “fort / gone.” Imagine that perhaps mother even matched the boy’s attempt to reach and stretch for the toy with a long drawn out “o-o-o-o,” again partnering her sound to the feeling of his physical action. It would not be so unlikely that the boy would later conflate peek-a-boo and his general play with toys to arrive at his own created version of Fort/Da. Perhaps he created this game as a means to invoke his mother’s spectral presence when faced with her actual absence.

Stern specified that affective attunement is possible because “different behavioral expressions occurring in different forms and different sensory modalities [are] somehow interchangeable” (Stern, 1985, p. 152). In the hypothetical scenario above, the

vocalizations of “fort” and “o-o-o-o” are matched with equivalent affective states—of anticipation and anxiety, and possibly even with a physical experience of reaching for a something moving out of range. In such a case, “o-o-o-o” would become linked with a longing and striving for something that has disappeared. Sound is matched to a feeling in the body. Stern argued, that humans possess the capacity to perceive the world amodally whereby those properties that are common to more than one mode of perception—properties such as intensity, time, and shape—can be experienced across various modes of perception as the examples above demonstrates. With intramodal equivalence, the possibility arises that any common property can be easily transposed from one mode of perception to another. Perhaps this capacity could be cast as a subsymbolic prototype, where any of these given properties has yet to adopt a specific, definite symbol or form of expression, and thus could be shaped into any number of configurations based on the mode of perception employed.

In attuned activity, Stern emphasized that the caretaker’s recognition and matching of the infant’s internal feeling state is a way that mother begins to communicate a shared sense of meaning. By communicating to the infant that she recognizes his feeling state, she also begins to define that feeling state for him. In essence, it could be viewed as a prototype of a toddler’s uncertain explorations out into the world around him. In his early wanderings, it is not uncommon for the baby to encounter ambiguous stimuli that will prompt him to look back at his caretaker for her assessment of the situation. If she acknowledges his query and then smiles, the toddler will accept and adopt this affective attribution and continue on exploring. However if she responds with a negative display of affect such as a frown or a furrowed brow, the baby will use the information

accordingly and turn away from the stimulus presented. In all of these examples above—both in the toddler’s explorations as well as in the conflation of peek-a-boo and Fort/Da—the caretaker links various modes of experience together for her child. She links circumstances and affects to experiences had within his person as well as to experiences shared between the two of them. Thus meaning is progressively assigned to experience. Stern stated:

Meaning, in the sense of the linkage between the world of knowledge (or through) and words... is something to be negotiated between the parent and the child... Meaning results from interpersonal negotiations involving what can be agreed upon as shared. And such mutually negotiated meanings (the relation of thought to word) grow, change, develop and are struggled over by two people and ultimately owned by *us*. (Stern, 1985, p. 170)

The process of affective attunement certainly details the process by which individuals are able to share experiences, share meanings, and share a sense of connection with one another. It has become an important concept in the field of psychology. For these purposes, however, the aim is to understand how and why Nabokov gravitated toward the use of a specific kind of repetition in his writing. The concept of attunement becomes important in this context because the process by which meaning is exchanged figures large into the picture of how a writer imparts meaning to his readers. Certainly explicit meanings are communicated through the particular words chosen. But there are often implicit, quiet and affective meanings communicated through the written word that may not be explicitly related to the literal words written. I suspect that attunement and the amodal transposition of feeling states relate directly to the means

by which writers achieve this implicit sort of communication. If certain dimensions of experience such as intensity, time and shape can be transposed across various channels of perception, then individuals can share and communicate some degree of their own experience with another by transposing aspects of their experience across various modes of perception. Just as mothers and infants are able to attune affectively to one another, perhaps artists and their audience might do the same. In other words, perhaps amodal transposition is one manner in which one person can help another literally *feel* something similar to his own experience. Where the written word is concerned, it is my hypothesis that alliteration may be related to this question of how presymbolic dimensions of experience and meaning are communicated through words, though not through their explicit, literal meanings.

Conclusion

To review, it was proposed that repetition might serve a variety of functions for its owner. First it was mentioned that repetition might be a sort of reproduction of the past, thus an acting out or unconscious form of recollection. And it was said that repetition might exist as a potential means of working through traumatic, conflicted or unformulated psychic material. By these standards, repetition may be present, and even more concentrated, in psychically significant material.

In addition, it was proposed that repetition might be utilized as one means of mastering conflicted material. In that vein, it was proposed that repetition might also serve to bind affect to symbol. And, as an extension, it was proposed that repetition might bind affect in the service of uniting and striving toward an ideal, thus become a means of working toward a greater degree of symbolization.

Similarly, it was thought that repetition could present an endeavor aimed at re-creating and re-constructing something of the conflicted or unformulated material into a new form. Thus, its actor was afforded a more active stance when faced again with the return of similar circumstances.

And finally, it was proposed that repetition might play a role in both the regulation of affect, as well as with creating and establishing an affective attunement with another.

Now that these general matters of repetition have been defined, an application of what has been learned will now begin with respect to this particular context and this particular man. Repetition will now be cast in the light of alliteration.

CHAPTER III: ALLITERATION

First of all, I do not understand what you mean by “overwhelming style,” “light story” and “elaboration.” All my stories are webs of style and none seems at first blush to contain much kinetic matter. Several pieces of “Conclusive Evidence”, for instance, which you were kind to admire were merely a series of impressions held together by means of “style”. For me “style” is matter. (Nabokov, 1990a, p.p. 115-116).

In *A Poetry Handbook* (1994), poet Mary Oliver provided her readers with explanations of the technical aspects of poetry writing. There she gave a description of oft employed literary devices, ones she believed could “brighten the language and help to hold the reader in thrall” (Oliver, 1994, p. 29). Oliver defined alliteration as the following:

Alliteration, strictly speaking, is the repetition of the initial sounds of words in a line or lines of verse... Sometimes alliteration includes the repetition of both initial sounds and interior sounds of words... It is also, then known as *consonance*.

Assonance is the repetition of vowel sounds within words in a line or lines of verse. In effect, such repetition creates a near-rhyme. (Oliver, 1994, pp. 29-30)⁴

With these definitions, repetition in the context of Nabokov's narrative assumes a more nuanced meaning than previously believed. It is easy enough to accept the notion that alliteration is a kind of repetition, along with its cohorts assonance and consonance, for in each of their definitions there is some mention of recurrence and correspondence of resembling sounds that takes place in a group of proximal words. Simply saying one of Nabokov's alliterative phrases—for example “Buddha-like bulk” (Nabokov, 1989, p. 105)—confirms the power that this sort of repetition can have, for to say these words encourages one to roll delight round in the mouth, a delight that adds a full and rotund dimension to the image that it might not have contained otherwise. Alliteration, therefore, will be considered as an emblematic example of repetition in a writer's repertoire, a more progressive version than that the rhetorical device of repetition itself.

Thesis Propositions

If alliteration is defined in terms of repetition, then perhaps alliteration might also possess some of those properties identified as falling under repetition's purview. If it is said that repetition indicates importance, that it facilitates learning and mastery, then it

⁴ From the Oxford English Dictionary (n.d.):

Alliteration: 1. gen. The commencing of two or more words in close connexion, with the same letter, or rather the same sound.

Assonance: 1. Resemblance or correspondence of sound between two words or syllables. 2. a. Pros. The correspondence or riming of one word with another in the accented vowel and those which follow, but not in the consonants, as used in the versification of Old French, Spanish, Celtic, and other languages.

Consonance: 1. Correspondence of sounds in words or syllables; recurrence of the same or like sounds, e.g. in a verse; = ASSONANCE. 2. Agreement of sounds; pleasing combination of sounds.

perhaps it could be said that alliteration may serve some of these similar functions. Freud noted that repetition was a means of working through traumatic, conflicted, or unformulated material—a well enough accepted notion in current psychoanalytic theory. In a piece of writing where alliteration is more concentrated in one certain area when compared with the rest of the document, perhaps alliteration may be viewed as an indication that this particular area contains significant, conflicted or unformulated material. And taking this one step further, one might surmise that if this text were an autobiographical one, then any concentrations of alliteration located within might be conceived as an indicator of conflicted, unformulated material in the story of that individual's life, material which is still being worked upon, an attempt at mastery as it were.

If such a possibility exists, then it may be the case that certain sections have higher concentrations of alliteration. If so, then the themes of these particular sections may be ripe with meaning. Considering Nabokov's extensive history of loss and exile, it would not be surprising to discover that the themes of these sections revolved around such matters. Therefore, the thesis of this project proposes that the themes of separation, loss, and exile will be most likely to contain the greatest concentrations of alliteration in Nabokov's autobiographical text, perhaps, in part, a result of his efforts to transform these matters to some greater or lesser extent.

And finally, if alliteration can be taken as an example of repetition, and if repetition does allow for a working through or mastery of unformulated material, then a close study of Nabokov's successive autobiographical drafts may reveal something about Nabokov's success or failure in employing this device for such purposes. If Nabokov did

achieve some degree of success in transforming something of these conflicts, then it would stand to reason that the amount of alliteration would be reduced in latter drafts. Therefore this project will compare the successive drafts of Nabokov's autobiography to observe whether there is a change in the concentration of alliteration to be discovered over the course of his writing and editing process.

If later drafts do contain a diminished concentration of alliteration, then perhaps Nabokov accomplished some degree of working through that material, clarifying some of the conflict, binding some of the intense affect with symbolic language, and thereby formulating something of the unformulated material. Therefore, the details found in later drafts may be more intricate, his images more redolent, and his words more evocative. Thus Nabokov's process of writing and editing the multiple drafts of his autobiographical narrative would have allowed him ample opportunity to process, bind and even perhaps master some of the ambiguous, conflicted material and themes residing therewith.

Why Alliteration?

A consummate craftsman, Nabokov was a man who precisely chose and controlled every word he allowed into print. His statements were always planned to the finest detail. Even interviews given were neither spontaneous nor improvised. Rather Nabokov required that every interviewer send him a list of questions in advance so that he could write out his responses before meeting. During the conversation, Nabokov reportedly read his responses off of those cards, unwilling to stray from his crafted words for even a moment.

As an artisan, Nabokov had the pick of linguistic devices at his fingertips. He wove elegant texts, filthy with deceit and humor, ripe with his unique imagery. It was, in

part, by way of these devices, by way of his style, that Nabokov could place such vivid images in the minds of his readers. Why, then, did alliteration figure so large into his repertoire? Freud emphasized that the mind does not simply choose its interests at random, believing that the unconscious gravitates toward certain subjects and actions for specific reasons. Considering that Nabokov took such careful measures to select the words at his disposal, perhaps his creative choices can be seen as being inexorably meaningful in this sense that Freud defined, in both in content and form, regardless of whether this meaning was devised on a conscious or unconscious basis.

Though Nabokov taught and wrote about the formal construction of literature, he did not often write specifically about a preference for alliteration. However, Nabokov did make noteworthy use of alliteration in all of his work, and certainly in his autobiographical text. It appears to be a characteristic aspect of his personal writing style. Nabokov was clear in his belief that the style a writer employed could not be separated from the content of the work. Indeed he was a conscious stylist, and he was so for a reason. In an interview Nabokov remarked:

I: What are the literary virtues you seek to attain—and how?

VN: Mustering the best words, with every available lexical, associative, and ***rhythmic*** assistance, to express as closely as possible what one wants to express.

(Nabokov, 1990b, p. 181; bold, underline and italics mine)

Here Nabokov explicitly stated that these stylistic devices and tools enabled him to accurately represent those images he so desired. More specifically, it is the “rhythmic” that is stressed here, for as will be argued, it was the “rhythmic” that assisted Nabokov in engaging the reader at the level of the body.

In his *Lectures on Literature* (1980), Nabokov commented on an artist's style, confirming his belief that an author's creative work reflected something of the particulars related to that individual. He wrote:

Another aspect of form is style, which means how does the structure work; it means the manner of the author, his mannerisms, various special tricks; and if his style is vivid what kind of imagery, of description, does he use, how does he proceed; and if he uses comparisons, how does he employ and vary the rhetorical devices of metaphor and simile and their combinations. The effect of style is the key to literature a magical key... to all great masters. (Nabokov, 1980, p. 113)

To this list of rhetorical devices, I would emphasize alliteration, assonance, and consonance, among others. Nabokov continued the thought in another essay:

Style is not a tool, it is not a method, it is not a choice of words alone. Being much more than all this, style constitutes an intrinsic component or characteristic of the author's personality. Thus when we speak of style, we mean an individual artist's peculiar nature and the way it expresses itself in his artistic output. (Nabokov, 1980, pp. 59-60)

If an artist's style is shaped in part by the characteristics of his personality or his particular nature, then perhaps the events of an artist's past might also play a role in shaping that style. One's past, it is safe to say, influences who one becomes and colors the way in which each of us sees the world. Therefore, an artist's past, too, may influence just what his artwork ultimately becomes, shaping the perspectives represented and the various images portrayed. Nabokov believed in this argument himself. Therefore, it is

well worth looking into the particulars of Nabokov's style to discover if any patterns and predilections exist.

Thus far, alliteration has been identified as one such device Nabokov gravitated toward. In addition, Nabokov's efforts to "muster the best words" (Nabokov, 1990b, p. 181) included the particular power that rhythm, rhyme and cadence brought to a text. In a 1964 interview, Nabokov stated the following:

I: To what extent do you feel that prose and poetry intermingle as art forms?

VN: Well, poetry, of course, includes all creative writing; I have never been able to see any generic difference between poetry and artistic prose. As a matter of fact, I would be inclined to define a good poem of any length as a concentrate of good prose, with or without the addition of recurrent rhythm and rhyme. The magic of prosody may improve upon what we call prose by bringing out the full flavor of meaning, but in plain prose there are also certain rhythmic patterns, the music of precise phrasing, the beat of thought rendered by recurrent peculiarities of idiom and intonation. As in today's scientific classifications, there is a lot of overlapping in our concept of poetry and prose today. The bamboo bridge between them is the metaphor. (Nabokov, 1990b, p. 44)

Nabokov was well known by critics for his "almost obsessive attention to the phrasing, rhythm, cadence and connotation of words" (Nabokov, 1990b, p. 25), implemented in order to bring out "the full flavor of meaning" (Nabokov, 1990b, p. 44). Taken with his previous statements about style, it is not surprising to discover that Nabokov believed the structure of a piece of literature could convey some meaning in addition to, though

perhaps not separate from, that imparted by the words themselves. An aspect of this meaning may be conveyed by way of the body.

Alliteration is a device that employs repetition to structure rhyme and rhythm into the actual composition of the text. In a related matter, recall Stern's example of the mother who vocalized a rhythmic word pattern to correspond with her child's actions.

A nine month old boy bangs his head on a soft toy, at first in some anger but gradually with pleasure, exuberance and humor. He sets up a steady rhythm. Mother falls into his rhythm and says, "kaaaaa-bam," the "bam" falling on the stroke and the "kaaaaa" riding with the preparatory upswing and the suspenseful holding of his arm aloft before it falls. (Stern, 1985, p.140)

The same amodal information about intensity and time was transposed between feeling, physical action, and verbalized vocal rhythms. Thus, Stern demonstrated that individuals possess the capacity for cross sensory matching. He wrote:

Infants thus appear to have an innate general capacity, which can be called amodal perception, to take information received in one sensory modality and somehow translate it into another... We do not know how they accomplish this task. The information is probably not experienced as belonging to any one sensory mode. More likely it transcends mode or channel and exists in some unknown supra-modal form. It is not, then, a simple issue of direct translation across modalities. Rather, it involves an encoding into a still mysterious amodal representation which can then be recognized in any of the sensory modes. (Stern, 1985, p. 51).

In a written text, it may be possible for a writer to achieve a similar process of cross sensory transposition with the help of alliteration. The rhythm established by alliterative repetition may be able to transmit and exchange information about amodal properties (intensity and/or time) across sensory modalities, thereby corresponding to and perhaps even arousing affective experiences in the reader. Thus, Nabokov's "certain rhythmic patterns, the music of precise phrasing, the beat of thought rendered by recurrent peculiarities of idiom and intonation" (Nabokov, 1990b, p. 44) may very well possess the capacity to give rise to feeling generated in the reader's body. If so, writer and reader become attuned to one another such that meaning is whispered from one and then echoed into the other.

Nabokov elucidated his confidence in style's capacity to transmit meaning. Above, it was proposed that the specific stylistic device of alliteration may carry the capacity to rouse feeling in the reader's body. Yet Nabokov also implied that stylistic choices related not only to meaning found in the text, but also to a personal meaning uniquely associated with the artist. So, with the example of Nabokov and alliteration, it may not be unreasonable to suggest that a multilingual person could be particularly attuned to the actual sounds of words in a variety of languages. If so, perhaps Nabokov's predilection to play with sounds in the words he selected could have been influenced by this proclivity. And this inclination may have facilitated Nabokov elegant enlistment of alliteration's rhythmic repetition that could, in turn, induce feeling in his audience.

It may have been for any number of reasons, then, that Nabokov could have unconsciously gravitated to alliteration for all its potential benefits. Indeed it may have been that he felt an unconscious gravitational pull to be even stronger while writing his

memoirs. In a work comprised of his actual memories, Nabokov would no longer have had access to his practice of giving memories to his characters. Therefore he would have lost means to disguise his own conflicts or concerns in the cloaks of his fictional characters. Again, the question as to why Nabokov gravitated toward alliteration arises, one that will ultimately serve as a fundamental root to this project. The discussions found in the following pages will endeavor to further define and clarify those meanings that buried themselves in and across Nabokov's autobiographical life narrative.

Alliteration's Potential for Psychodynamic Significance

The idea that Nabokov may have gravitated toward alliteration brings with it additional questions concerning alliteration's functions and meanings. The various themes of Nabokov's work practically beg for psychodynamic interpretation and have certainly been subjected to such determinations many times over. But venturing into such territory points down a complicated path, for it is well known that Nabokov generally despised psychodynamic determinations of meaning. Nabokov believed that Freud inspired an unfortunate practice of rendering unique, individualized specifics inert with his drab, over-generalized, psychic substitutions. In contrast, Nabokov advised that a reader take a very particular stance when investigating meaning with respect to a work of literature. He stated:

My advice to a budding literary critic would be as follows. Learn to distinguish banality. Remember that mediocrity thrives on "ideas." Beware of the modish message. Ask yourself if the symbol you have detected is not your own footprint. Ignore allegories. By all means place the "how" above the "what" but do not let it be confused with the "so what." Rely on the sudden erection of your small dorsal

hairs. Do not drag in Freud at this point. All the rest depends on personal talent.
(Nabokov, 1990b, p.66)

While here it seems that an instruction to ignore Freud is about to itself be ignored, perhaps Nabokov's direction to pay attention to the "how" is advice well worth heeding. Perhaps alliteration not only served to identify Nabokov's conflict, but perhaps it also served as a sort of solution to Nabokov's dilemmas—dilemmas defined by the very content to which the alliteration pointed.

If there is merit to the theory that Nabokov's alliteration was more concentrated in those areas of the autobiographical text where he was attempting to work through matters of separation, individuation and loss, then consider that alliteration could also exist in these particular locations as an unconscious action devised to alleviate the very conflict at hand. Perhaps alliteration was present in these particular passages because it was a means the author discovered to repeatedly place himself in the mind of the other—here the reader—thus serving to remedy his persistent concerns about loss and being lost. Through alliteration and through his stylistic cadence, Nabokov may have increased the likelihood that his audiences would better remember him and his work. Another way of stating this idea is to say that alliterative repetition might facilitate and improve the reader's internalization of author and work as objects to reside in the reader's psyche. The more successful the internalization, the better remembered the author and work. Indeed, such a concept may relate to the commonly accepted idea that a remembered and beloved work of art possesses the ability to live beyond the artist, surviving in the audience's imaginations. Considered in this light, the exalted artwork then might act to

unconsciously mitigate an artist's fears of loss or of being lost, for every artist is arguably aware of this potential to live on in other's minds.

Thus far, repetition and alliteration have been said to serve a number of varied functions. It would seem that a static, unchanged repetition of a word or a phrase might have pointed to some enactment on the author's part, one suggesting a stereotypic action and perhaps may represent an attempt to return to a previous state, a pre-traumatic state, or in this context, a state when there was no loss and there was no exile. On the other hand, if alliteration was employed as a vehicle to transform conflicted or unformulated psychic material over the course of its repeated use in successive drafts, then it would stand to reason that this sort of alliterative repetition would be diminished in later drafts if successful in this service. And there now stands yet another proposition, one stating that alliteration may have functioned in a different capacity, as a means to facilitate the internalization of the author and his work into the mind and body of his readers. Because alliteration may have encompassed such a wide range of functions, alliteration will be considered as a marker to indicate some possible function taking place, a device to indicate that a deeper exploration of the text and subject at hand is warranted. Whatever its use employed, certainly it could be one of notable interest.

If Nabokov used alliterative repetition in a number of different capacities through the process of writing his autobiography, each occasion may have had its own variable successes toward those declared ends. In addition, perhaps alliteration's function may also have been prone to transformation just as was the content housed within. If alliteration were used as a means to transform psychic material, and if Nabokov became a master of using alliteration for such purposes, then it might have been that he was able to

take pleasure in his mastery of the form in certain circumstances. If so he may have continued to utilize the device out of delight, as Freud implied in *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (1905). In this way, the function of alliteration could have changed—from a reparative one to a creative one, the latter retained explicitly for its playful function. Similarly, Freud's grandson initially employed repetition as a means to work through his anxieties about loss and being lost. Yet he too continued the play for some time, even after he had reached a seemingly successful resolution by transforming his passive position in the game an active one. This might indicate that Freud's grandson actually enjoyed the game and continued to play because of the pleasure it brought, along with a sense of mastery achieved. Thus in both Nabokov's case and Freud's grandson's case, the form of alliteration was preserved but its function transformed.

Alliteration: a Means of Placing its Author in the Mind of the Reader

The overarching concept of internalization is considered to be a process by which an individual takes something of the outside world into his self, incorporating it into something of one's own being. And generally speaking, his process is thought to be one that primarily involves the mind. Freud, Klein and Fairbairn all discussed the fundamental means by which an object is installed within an individual's ego, one that is shaped in accordance with each individual's unique set of history and life circumstances experienced. In a corresponding matter, attachment theory tells us that the quality of the relationship between caretaker and infant influences the kinds of self and object representations internalized.

A caretaker who is able to consistently respond to and adequately mirror the infant's internal state is able to help that infant internalize a consistent representation of

the other, a stable capacity for affect regulation, and even a cohesive representation of the self. The relationship and the corresponding internalizations are determined, in part, by the quality and kinds of repeated actions that comprise the caretaker's mirrored responses to the infant's shifting emotional states. Over the course of the mirroring process, the child begins to match his own internal states with those reflections that the caretaker provides in response to those states.

If the mother's mirroring is effectively to modulate her baby's emotions, and to provide the beginnings of a symbolic system by means of which the capacity for self-regulation can be further extended, it is important that as well as reflecting the emotion the child is feeling accurately (i.e., the mirroring is congruent with the child's emotional display), she signals in some way that what he is seeing is a reflection of his own feelings. (2003, Fonagy et al, p. 424).

With these repeated interactions, the child then is able to learn the meaning of his internal states. Understanding his own internal states, the child also develops a cohesive representation of himself as a self, and consequently develops the capacity to construct a cohesive, ongoing narrating self. It is here with the child's understanding of his own internal states, that attachment theories meet those ideas concerned with the capacity for Mentalization and Theory of Mind:

Most modern psychoanalytic theories of self-development (e.g., Fairbairn, 1952; Winnicott, 1960; Kohut, 1977; Target and Fonagy, 1996; Fonagy and Target, in press) assume that the psychological self (the part of the self-representation where the self is represented not as a physical entity but as an intentional being with goals based on thoughts, beliefs, and desires) develops through perception of

oneself, in another person's mind, as feeling and thinking (Davidson, 1983).
(1998, Fonagy and Target, p. 93).

As the child begins to acquire an understanding of his own internal emotional states, he may then take a step toward developing an understanding of another's internal or emotional state. "His experience of himself as a thinker of thoughts, believer of ideas, feeler of emotions, in the mind of the caregiver (see Fairbairn, 1952)" (Fonagy and Target, 1998, p. 93) allows him the eventual ability to think about another in these same ways. In other words, being held in mind leads to the development of the capacity to hold an other in mind. In this way, individuals develop and eventually possess the capacity for a Theory of Mind—a means of understanding that both the self and others are thinkers of their own thoughts, believers of their own ideas, feelers of their own emotions—in effect that others, too, possess minds of their own. And ultimately, the capacity for mentalization equates to an individual's understanding that people can possess the capacity to hold one another in mind.

Not surprisingly, in the recent years concepts developed out of Theory of Mind have been recognized as being relevant to the fundamental importance of literature, in part explaining the long standing attraction of narrative. Reading literature may help us to understand the motives and intentions behind a wide variety of human behaviors, or so the theory goes. In *On the Origin of Stories* (2009), Brian Boyd, Nabokov's biographer no less, concluded that: fiction is "central to human life" precisely because "storytelling sharpens our social cognition, prompts us to reconsider human experience, and spurs our creativity in the way that comes most naturally to us" (Boyd, 2009, p. 384). Boyd continued, stating that this approach:

lets us link literature with the whole of life, with other human activities and capacities, and their relation to those of other animals, as they compete, cooperate, and play, as they observe, understand and empathize with others. It can reconnect literature with the whole of human experience. (Boyd, 2009, pp. 384-385)

Readers must be able to internalize something of a text in order to process its meaning on deeper and more complex levels. And it is clear that literature does not profoundly affect readers simply by virtue of being literature. An author must sufficiently capture his audience's attention and keep them engaged in the narrative in order to achieve a desirable impact upon his readers. In other words, the author must strive to construct a memorable narrative so that the reader feels compelled enough to hold the narrative—and the author by proxy—in mind. Just what captures a reader's attention certainly varies from individual to individual and from culture to culture. But generally speaking, if an author creates a story that is a believable and compelling construction of human intention, behavior and emotion (Theory of Mind), then perhaps he increases the chances of being remembered by a significant enough portion of the reading public. Perhaps alliteration is one technique that an author might employ to seize his audience's interest, or as Mary Oliver wrote, to "hold the reader in thrall" (Oliver, 1994, p. 29); perhaps it may even facilitate the reader's internalization of his narrative. If so, perhaps Nabokov's use of alliterative repetition may have facilitated his unconscious aim: to be held in the other's mind and to be installed into the other's psyche.

Alliteration: a Means of Placing its Author in the Body of the Reader

Alliteration's remedying effect may not simply end there. Perhaps alliteration might act in even more subtle ways to maximize the possibility that its author will be more readily held by the other—though not just in the mind of the reader. Perhaps alliteration might also possess the power to place its author in the body of the reader, allowing the other literally to feel these alliterated words in his body. If such were possible, then feeling the words would serve to underline and emphasize the literal meaning of those words written. If the words are well remembered, so too may be the author. Therefore, if such a proposal were even remotely possible, alliteration might also carry with it the capacity to imbed multiple sources of meaning into the passage, ones related to both mind and body, certainly meanings both consciously and unconsciously conveyed to the readers.

The statements above introduce the question as to how alliteration can possibly act in such a fashion—to literally place a feeling, an experience, into the body of the reader. Nabokov quite clearly outlined such a process in his very first lines of *Lolita*: “Lolita, light of my life, fire of my loins. My sin, my soul. 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.” (Nabokov, 1991a, p. 9). With this statement, Nabokov directed the reader to attend to his own body as he read specific words, detailing exactly where the reader's tongue was going to land and when. By pointing this out, Nabokov asked his audience to consciously feel the words resonating in his mouth.

Nabokov divined and described such effects because he had spoken those same words aloud, he had felt his tongue landing upon his palate, he had experienced those

syllables resonating in the chamber of his mouth. One of his former students reminisced: “‘Caress the details,’ Nabokov would utter, rolling the r, his voice the rough caress of a cat’s tongue, ‘the divine details!’” (Wetzsteon, 1970, p. 245). Explicitly implored to read, feel, and caress words together with the author, reading then became a shared activity. With these alliterated words, Nabokov slyly seduced his readers to join him in this pleasurable activity. And by doing so, Nabokov placed his reader squarely in a seat of identification with the writer of those words. In the case of *Lolita*, this identification was with both Nabokov and Humbert. Now one can begin to comprehend just how Nabokov operationalized his encouragement of uniting reader with writer. “Up a trackless slope climbs the master artist, and at the top, on a windy ridge, whom do you think he meets? The panting and happy reader, and there they spontaneously embrace and are linked forever if the book lasts forever” (Nabokov, 1980, p. 2).

Alliteration, internalization, and embodiment.

Freud famously argued that: “the ego is first and foremost a bodily ego” (Freud, 1923, p. 26). As such, feeling something in one’s body may add significantly to the quality of the experience at hand. Lakoff and Johnson (1999) too convincingly argued that cognition is primarily an embodied process, detailing just how often it is that we formulate thoughts and concepts in terms of the body. Without the body, they stated, there would no vehicle to interpret the various signals found in the outside world. Raw information would remain raw and without meaning. They stated that in order for even the most fundamental levels of meaning to exist in our knowledge base, our bodies must interpret information for us. As such, Lakoff and Johnson argued that the body and the body’s experiences in the world actually shape the categories and concepts created in the

mind. Therefore, they wrote, categorization and reasoning are not actually faculties developed strictly through the intellect. To the contrary, they are faculties defined by sensorimotor experience in the body. Lakoff described the means by which this process occurs, stating that: “primary metaphorical thought arises when a neural circuit is formed linking two brain areas activated when experiences occur together repeatedly. Typically, one of the experiences is physical” (Lakoff, 2010, para. 16).

In order to make more sophisticated use of these categories and patterns to apprehend the world, Lakoff and Johnson argued that the mind utilizes metaphor. Experiences based in the body are projected outward and mapped onto more subjective and abstract experiences in the world, thus giving these experiences subjective meaning. Lakoff and Johnson explained:

When we conceptualize understanding an idea (subjective experience) in terms of grasping an object (sensorimotor experience) and failing to have an idea as having it go right by us or over our heads. The cognitive mechanism for such conceptualizations is conceptual metaphor, which allows us to use the physical logic of grasping to reason about understanding... Metaphor allows conventional mental imagery from sensorimotor domains to be used for domains of subjective experience. (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999, p. 45)

When Nabokov wrote of the steady beat of time marching, he used his body as a means of understanding it and his reactions against it. He wrote: “Over and again, my mind has made colossal efforts to distinguish the faintest of personal glimmers in the impersonal darkness on both sides of my life. That this darkness is caused merely by the walls of item separating me and my bruised fists from the free world of timelessness is a

belief I gladly share with the most gaudily painted savage” (Nabokov, 1989, p. 20).

Nabokov was not literally beating and bruising his fists against an actual wall of time.

However his use of bodily imagery lent a palpable and subjective *feeling* to the heavy burden of time, as well as to Nabokov’s objection to its passing. It was the combination and conflation of experiential categories—corporal plus conceptual, material plus immaterial—into one metaphor that enabled Nabokov to communicate those images so effectively and elegantly to his readers.

Lakoff (2010) argued that the development of embodied, metaphorical thought begins at infancy. He provided the following example:

When a child is regularly held affectionately by its parents, two distinct brain areas are activated simultaneously—one for temperature and one for affection.

The synapses in both areas are strengthened and activation spreads along existing pathways until the shortest pathway between the areas is found and a circuit is formed. That circuit is the neural realization of what is called a “primary metaphor” that is embodied. Hundreds of such cases are formed unconsciously and automatically in childhood. (Lakoff, 2010, para. 13)

With the above in mind, consider how temperature associated with affection might develop into a more complex metaphor with the following example. In summarizing some of the most recent research on embodied cognition, Natalie Angier (2010) cited one study from Yale in which all participants were supplied with a folder containing the same information about a fictitious person. Participants were subsequently asked to evaluate the personality of this individual. At the beginning of this process, researchers casually asked half of the participants to hold a warm cup of coffee while they read through the

information in the folder, and the other half to hold a cup of iced coffee during the evaluation process. Results demonstrated that participants who held the warm coffee during the evaluation were far more likely to depict the character as being warm and friendly than were those who held the iced coffee. Researchers surmised that it was the physical temperature of an item being held in a person's hand that may have influenced the individual's abstract judgment of a seemingly unrelated matter. Angier also provided additional examples of current research that supported corresponding ideas, research that demonstrates that bodily experience and cognition are very closely, if not inextricably, tied.

If Lakoff and Johnson and Angier demonstrated that our bodies influence what and how we think, then perhaps this connection between mind and body can be related to Nabokov's explicit efforts to bring the readers' awareness to his words effect on their bodies. Nabokov's use of alliteration may have increased the likelihood that his readers might feel something in their bodies, and if so, it would stand to reason that the particular passage emphasized might have been more memorable in some form or fashion. After all, what, arguably, is one of Nabokov's most memorable lines? "Lolita, light of my life, fire of my loins" (Nabokov, 1991a, p. 9).

Form, Style and Meaning

Here two additional propositions have been introduced. The first asserts that an author may employ alliteration to increase the potential that he will be better held in both the mind and the body of his readers, thus increasing the possibility that he and his work will be better remembered. Coupled with earlier hypotheses, alliterative repetition might now be considered as a solution or a dynamic designed to address those very conflicts

alliteration may have also revealed. A fear of losing or being lost to others might be alleviated if the likelihood of being remembered by others to whom one is representing these very circumstances were increased.

Such claims require more explanation, ones connected to earlier concepts of repetition, attunement, and mentalization, as well as to the meaning conveyed by an author's literary style. Literary theorist Roman Jakobson (1960) wrote that poetics functioned to convey a message by way of the form of the language itself. He argued that both the verbal structure and the succession of sounds generated meaning distinct from the represented images and content. With this, Jakobson believed the communication of the message to the audience was intensified. In a related matter, Susan Sontag (1961) argued that a work of art should not just be treated as a statement with some matter to impart. Rather she advocated that:

A work of art encountered as a work of art is an experience, not a statement or an answer to a question. Art is not only about something; it is something. A work of art is a thing in the world, not just a text or commentary on the world. (Sontag, 1961, pp. 21)

Synthesizing these statements, it may be concluded that any meaning conveyed by way of a text's structure might be both conceptual and experiential at once. Perhaps, as Sontag suggested, "the knowledge we gain through art is an experience of the form or style of knowing something" (Sontag, 1961, pp. 22). This knowing something, it would seem, could be related to experience—to the work's expressiveness, and perhaps even to the artwork's ability to evoke an affective experience in its audience. A work of art's "distinctive feature is that [it] give[s] rise not to conceptual knowledge... but to

something like an excitation, a phenomenon of commitment, judgment in a state of thralldom or captivation” (Sontag, 1961, p. 21- 22).

Perhaps the form of a written, narrative text may be able to convey an experiential, even affective meaning through the actual structuring of the language. Therefore, an experiential meaning found in the text may correspond to the conceptual content conveyed by the words themselves, by either confirming or contradicting the content. Thus any information imparted by way of the body may synchronize form and content, thus creating a continuous, coherent, and intensified feel to the text. Or any information imparted by way of the body might contradict the conceptual content, thereby creating a diachronic, disjointed, fragmented feel to the text. Such possibilities may relate to Daniel Stern’s theories of intramodal equivalence where: “different behavioral expressions occurring in different forms and different sensory modalities [are] somehow interchangeable” (Stern, 1985, p. 152). And too perhaps suppositions concerned with the possibility that the structure of a text can transmit experiential meaning might also relate to Stern’s (1985) conceptions of affective attunement.

Repetition and Rhythm

The study of poetics suggests that form indeed may convey a meaning of its own, one separate from but related to that which is contained in the literal meanings of its words. As was earlier defined, repetition positions a rhythm in the text by repeatedly placing stresses on certain syllable or vowel sounds. Thus a pattern is established. And it is this pattern that creates an overall intonation to the text, a rise and fall to the action of one’s voice moving along the words. Alliteration, too, employs repetition to build rhythm and cadence in a text. And again, this rhythm may be one of the structural aspects that

can transmit meaning, as Sontag suggested, one related to the creation of an “excitation” or another affective state.

If meaning can be imparted by way of rhythm and alliteration, then this meaning should be able to cut across certain constraints imposed by any one given language. It should be able to do so in part through the repetition of sound. To illustrate, consider an overheard conversation spoken in a foreign language. It is nearly impossible to know the content of what is being said if one does not know that particular language. However, one may be able to garner something of the meaning imbedded by watching the gestures of the two speakers. One may also be able to infer meaning out of the various cadences each speaker employs, or through the intensity and pace of the conversation. Generally speaking, a question is usually indicated when the cadence of a sentence ends on an upswing. Or an emphasized point is often identified by an increase in vocal intensity. These sorts of qualities can help to transmit something of an affective experience lying beneath the explicit content of the conversation. And too there is the repetition of sound. Repetition too can draw a listener’s attention to a specific series of words, for any person’s ear should be able to hear the repetition of a basic sound without knowing the language itself. The repetition of words or sounds suggests there is meaning lying within. It is just that without an explicit knowledge of the language, we simply cannot know the meaning of the actual content as defined by the words spoken.

Nabokov indicated that this kind of meaning held some importance where his own work was concerned. Prosody improved meaning, Nabokov stated, as did “rhythmic patterning” and “beat of thought rendered by recurrent peculiarities of idiom and intonation” (Nabokov, 1990b, p. 44). Recurrent peculiarities (repetition, in other words)

can be thought of as a means for establishing a beat, a rhythm, or a pattern in the text.

Nabokov's description of his first literary effort provides an illustration of just this point:

A moment later my first poem began. What touched it off? I think I know.

Without any wind blowing, the sheer weight of a raindrop, shining in parasitic luxury on a cordate leaf, caused its tip to dip, and what looked like a globule of quicksilver performed a sudden glissando down the center vein, and then, having shed its bright load, the relieved leaf unbent. Tip, leaf, dip, relief—the instant it all took to happen seemed to me not so much a fraction of time as a fissure in it, a missed heartbeat, which was refunded at once by a patter of rhymes: I say “patter” intentionally, for when a gust of wind did come, the trees would briskly start to drip all together in as crude an imitation of the recent downpour as the stanza I was already muttering resembled the shock of wonder I had experienced when for a moment heart and leaf had been one. (Nabokov, 1989, pp. 217)

“Tip, leaf, dip, relief” (Nabokov, 1989, pp. 217). In muttering this stanza, Nabokov alternated back and forth between two sounds, bouncing between the *ip* of tip and dip and the *eaf-ief* of leaf and relief. Not only did the alternation create a patter, it also created a pattern and rhythm in the sound of the language itself. Nabokov reported that it was the rhythm that brought a layer of meaning to the experience above, one that would not have otherwise existed. So while readers cannot actually see or experience the dip of the leaf, Nabokov used words to create a picture imagined in the reader's mind's eye. In addition to a visual image, these very same words also established a rhythm in the passage. It was through this rhythm that Nabokov may have also been able to transmit something of the affective component in the experience to his readers. Acting as a heartbeat, the rhythm in

the text informed the audience that this passage is alive. It told us that this passage contains feeling—wonder and awe. By playing with alliteration and by alternating the varied sounds, Nabokov may have been able to infuse this passage with that excitement he felt in the actual circumstance. It seems that the rhythmic pattern of the text may have mimicked the vitality those words contained. In doing so, Nabokov may have been able to achieve some degree of match between internal and external, feeling and word, heart and leaf.

Nabokov created various rhythms throughout all of his texts, and he was able to do so by way of varied means. Several other examples of consonance and assonance from *Speak, Memory*'s "Mademoiselle O" (1989) illustrate his efforts to use the repetition of sounds towards an effort to create feeling in the text.

"Smooth swellings of snow" (Nabokov, 1989, p. 103); the consonance of the slithering *s* sound aides in creating long, continuous, and rolling rhythms that may imitate the rising and falling feeling of snowdrifts.

"Briskly twisted" (Nabokov, 1989, p. 105); the assonance of the *isk* and *ist* provides a quick, sharp beat that may then mimic the snapping feeling of quick, sharp turns.

"When that pearly language of hers purred and scintillated, as innocent of sense as the alliterative sins of Racine's pious verse" (Nabokov, 1989, p. 113); an entrancing combination of assonance and consonance may encourage a feeling akin to skipping a rock along a smooth surface of water—the low, rounded and undulating beat of the *ur* of *pearl-hers-purl* slowly luring us into the crackling, short repetitions of those short *ins* of *scin-inn-sins*; the high, round looping *lls*

intermingled with and acting as a languid bridge between the brisk *ins* and the long, scintillating *s* sounds in *cent-sense-cine-ious*.

How is Meaning Conveyed through Repetition and Rhythm?

As has been discussed, embodied experience literally means that our bodies impact what we feel and even what we think. Lakoff and Johnston (1999) demonstrated how our motoric experiences shape what kind of metaphors we use, thereby giving shape to the kinds of thoughts we have. Angier (2010) cited studies that demonstrated how our sensory experiences shape what affects we may feel, which in turn may shape what we think. Literary theorists including Jakobson (1960) and Sontag (1961) proposed that while a text conveys a conceptual meaning (thus shaping what we think), its structural form may also convey an experiential meaning as well, thus conveying a feeling to the reader. Indeed, Nabokov implied his similar belief that the form of a text could transmit an experience of meaning that was distinct from but related to its semantic content. In essence, all of these arguments suggest that information can take on different forms, and perhaps might even be transferred from one modality of experience to another.

This project puts forward the idea that the rhythm established in a text may, in part, be able to convey meaning by way of the body. Take the very simple example of physical arousal and excitement. Excited, our heart quickens to a pace faster than its standing rate. As we calm down, our heart rate slows. In a related matter, it has been demonstrated that if a musical rhythm moves faster than a standard, resting heart rate, then it is more likely that the listening audience will feel excited by that particular song. And conversely, if the musical beat is slower than a resting rate, then the audience is far more likely to feel the music to be soothing and calming. In general, then, perhaps a fast

rhythm is interpreted as a feeling of excitement while a slow rhythm is interpreted as a feeling of calm. Now consider the rhythm constructed in a written text. In the example above, Nabokov established a short, fast, staccatoed beat with his “tip, leaf, dip, relief.” Perhaps in creating this quickened rhythm, he may have been able to give his readers a short burst of excitement, one that imitated the brief excitement he felt in hearing, seeing, and experiencing the beautiful image he then described. Thus his feeling may have been communicated to his audience by way of the rhythm he built into the text.

The concept of attunement may be related to the manner in which rhythm can transmit feeling. Stern (1985) wrote that attunement is characterized by a caretaker’s ability to synchronize her motor behavior with her infant’s expression. In other words, when a caretaker recognizes something of her infant’s inner feeling state, she then must find an accurate, expressive behavior in her own repertoire to match his state. In turn, the infant must also recognize that his caretaker’s expressed behavior and his inner state share some quality in common. Stern stated: “for attunement to work, different behavioral expressions occurring in different forms and in different sensory modalities must somehow be interchangeable” (Stern, 1985, p. 152). A gesture, a feeling in the body, a physical movement and a vocal expression must share some common, interchangeable, underlying properties. Trevarthen (2005), who has also focused his work on matters related to attunement, observed that: “the infant’s responses [to the caretaker] exhibit the two cardinal features of conscious, self-motivated or intentional behaviour—inter-modal sensory equivalence, and motor equivalence for matching gestures with different body parts” (Trevarthen, 2005, p. 94).

Stern identified three main properties that many modes of perception and behavioral expression share in common—intensity, time and shape. For all three, Stern cited multiple research studies that demonstrate how infants and all individuals transpose the information from each property across modalities to corresponding behaviors, expressions and the like. Nabokov’s example above presented an illustration of the manner in which alliteration’s rhythm in the text may have corresponded to and may have even evoked bodily arousal in his readers. The beats composed by “tip, leaf, dip, relief” may have acted as a time-based property and, if so, may have been able to transpose information about excitement from one dimension of experience into another. Thus the rhythm implanted into a text translated to a feeling in the reader’s body. Stern’s example of a mother creating a loud vocalization to match her child’s forceful physical action demonstrated how information concerning intensity could be transposed across modalities. One can imagine that both his physical action and the loudness of her vocalization may have also corresponded with the infant’s magnitude of feeling in the circumstance, and perhaps even the mother’s intensity of feeling as well. Thus the property of intensity may have been able to transpose the feeling content into vocalization and behavioral expression, echoing and emphasizing the overall content of that material. With his work, Stern pointed out that this ability to transpose information about properties across modalities is essential to the continuity of our experience as humans. Without some ability to transpose information across modalities of perception, everything we encounter would be experienced as being separate and unrelated to anything else. Thus our experience in the world would be extremely fragmented and discontinuous.

In an attuned exchange, it is important to stress that the infant, too, must recognize that his internal state matches to his mother's expressive, motoric behavior. Trevarthen (2005) has written extensively on the ways in which infants are born equipped with the foundations for this sort of interpersonal communication, the rhythm of an imitative exchange between caretaker and infant serving as one of those primary building blocks. In fact, numerous researchers (Nagy and Molnar, 2004; Kugiumutzakis et al, 2004; Trevarthen, 2005) have demonstrated that neonatal imitation occurs within hours of birth, such that infants imitate the facial expressions, basic vocal expressions, hand gestures, and shifts of the heads of their caretakers. Trevarthen (2005) wrote:

Imitation involves apprehension not just of the same form of movement, but of the intrinsic motive that generates both the form of imitation and its significant difference, and also expectation for its perceptual validation from the other person's reply. It is communication with prospect of reply, made with emotions of pleasure, interest, surprise, etc. as the baby intently watches and listens (Kugiumutzakis et al., 2004). (Trevarthen, 2005, p. 94)

In essence, this sort of imitation is constituted by a rhythmic exchange between two individuals. So, for example, when an infant expresses some imitation of his mother's gesture, he then awaits her response, readying himself to receive her returned expressive version of the gesture. She, in turn, acknowledges his imitation by repeating her gesture and in doing so furthers an imitation-initiation cycle.

Interestingly enough, Nagay and Molnar (2004) closely monitored newborns' imitative exchanges with adults, confirming that infants were not only able to imitate adults' expressions, but that they were also able to initiate the imitative exchanges,

seeking a response from the adult. Infant heart rate patterns captured during the exchange differed during imitation as compared to initiation. Directly preceding imitation, an infant's heart rate significantly accelerated, whereas directly preceding initiation or provocation, the infant's heart rate significantly decelerated. Since heart rate deceleration has been shown to be an indicator of orientation, attention, recognition and stimulus expectation, Nagay and Molnar (2004) concluded that when infant provoked or initiated the exchange, the infant also demonstrated an expectation of and readiness to receive the experimenter's response. In contrast, however, since heart rate acceleration often precedes voluntary, motoric movement, Nagay and Molnar (2004) concluded that the infant was preparing for arousal, preparing for muscular activity. Ultimately Nagy (2006) summarized her conclusions: "Imitation and provocation—two naturally otherwise intertwined phenomena could thus offer a laboratory model of all human communication" (Nagy, 2006, p. 229).

Thus far, attunement between individuals indicates that inter-modal, protosymbolic dimensions of experience can be translated across multiple sensory and expressive dimensions. In addition, an infant or caretaker can also read these differing expressions as being relatively equivalent, as essentially representing the same information. Thus, affective, behavioral or expressive information can be received and then imitated by the infant, reproduced such that he can feel the meaning of the communication in his own body. As such, imitation may also serve as a prototype for identification or internalization. Trevarthen (2005) wrote about similar matters, theorizing that this imitative transfer of information may serve as the foundation for the development of a sympathetic understanding of another's state—perhaps even acting as

foundation for both empathy and a capacity for mentalization. In addition, he believed this process might also allow an infant to begin to contribute to the construction of the meaning through his participation in the exchange. Trevarthen (2005) connected this imitative exchange to the development of narrative. In doing so, he expressly stated that:

This belief that narratives are their *content*, that the contrived and conventional ‘scientific’ structure is essential to the coherence of any recollection of content in a narrative seems an error... meaning arises only in a narrative *process* of communicating among persons who are performing acts of discovery and understanding, and infants join in this with a natural competence. (Trevarthen, 2005, p. 92)

Perhaps meaning in a written narrative too can be experienced in a similar fashion, as being constructed by both author and audience who are engaged in acts of “discovery and understanding.” Perhaps this process is in part facilitated by the rhythm built into the text by way of prosody, cadence, meter, repetition and alliteration.

Current research (Trevarthen 2005, 2010; Malloch and Trevarthen, 2010; Miall and Dissanayake, 2003; and Kugiumutzakis et al, 2004) is beginning to demonstrate that a musicality and rhythm exists in this imitative exchange between mother and infant. A detailed analysis of a dyadic interaction between caretaker and infant performed by Miall and Dissanayake (2003) demonstrated that “the poetic texture of the mother’s speech—specifically its use of metrics, phonetics, and foregrounding—helps to shape and direct the baby’s attention, as it also coordinates the partners’ emotional communication” (p.337). They emphasized that it was ultimately the “resources provided by meter...together with the variations provided by tempo and pitch, that offer basic aural

instruments for the mother to either respond to or reengage the baby's attention" (p. 347). Meter, they noted, either accelerated or decelerated the tempo of the exchange. Coupled with Nagay and Molnar (2004) findings, one could hypothesize that the tempo of the exchange might influence the infant's readiness to receive information from the mother—in that it could shape the infant's experience by literally arousing or calming his heart rate. In such a fashion, the tempo and rhythm found in an exchange may actually be able to generate a feeling in one or both participants.

If rhythm plays an integral role in the exchanges between infants and their caretakers and serves as a foundation for the structure of communication and exchange in general, then it may be that the rhythm established by Nabokov in his text might be able to literally convey a feeling in his reader. As Miall and Dissanayake (2003) concluded: "We suggest that our identification of affective aesthetic (or protoaesthetic) elements in babytalk [imitative exchange] provides a biological or naturalistic basis for Formalist [Jakobson's] claims about the importance of sound structure in poetry" (Miall and Dissanayake, 2003, p. 354). In Nabokov's case, perhaps the rhythms established in a text were actually able to shape a reader's heart rate, attention, or even physical feeling experience. If so, then perhaps Nabokov might have been able to shape the areas in his text he desired his readers to carefully attend—theoretically orienting them for "stimulus expectation" by decelerating their heartbeat, for example. Or conversely, he may have been able to encourage his audience to literally feel excitement by quickening the beat of the rhythm in the text so that the reader's heart rates accelerated. In support of this possibility, Miall and Kuiken (1994) empirically demonstrated that foregrounded passages (passages infused with aesthetic, stylistic and poetic features) both attracted the

readers' attention and typically aroused a heightened affective response. Therefore, perhaps alliteration as a stylistic and poetic device was able to assist Nabokov in directing his readers to attend to and even feel those specific passages in his memoirs he desired them to, passages that may have contained the greatest meaning for him.

Conclusion

While the concepts proposed above may be highly speculative, they are interesting speculations and may not be far off from Suzanne Langer's beliefs that human feelings assume specific sorts of forms. She observed: "tonal structures we call 'music' bear a close logical similarity to the forms of human feeling" (Langer, 1953, p. 27). As such, these structures of music—rhythm and rhyme included—may possess some of these amodal properties that Stern defined, such that affective information may be able to be transposed between the two. Langer continued in her statement, defining some universal "forms of human feeling." She identified:

Forms of growth and attenuation, flowing and stowing, conflict and resolution, speed, arrest, terrific excitement, calm, or subtle activation and dreamy lapses-not joy and sorrow, perhaps, but the poignancy of either and both-the greatness and brevity and eternal passing of everything vitally felt. Such is the pattern, or logical form, of sentience... (Langer, 1953, p. 27)

Similar to music, the cadence of spoken language may be able to mimic the various "forms of feeling" and possibly transpose information in a similar manner to that described above. Recall the aforementioned illustration of an overheard, foreign-language conversation. It was argued that while the explicit, semantic meaning may not be

understood, one might still be able to appreciate something of the meaning conveyed by gestures, cadence, rhyme, rhythm, pace and intensity found within. If, in such a situation, a conversant's voice grows loud and attenuated, one might infer excitement or anger. A flowing, melodious cadence might suggest the speaker's confidence in the subject matter. An individual's halting speech might imply an anxiety or uncertainty about his ideas. Or low, quiet and subtle activations of language might hint at an attempt to soothe or seduce. In this sense, perhaps language possesses its own kind of musicality, one that may have "import...the pattern of sentience—the pattern of life itself, as it is felt and directly known" (Langer, 1953, p. 31).

The arguments above propose that alliterative repetition may facilitate some of those same functions that repetition has been proposed to carry. Repetition's actions include efforts aimed toward maintaining homeostasis, working through conflict, binding affect to symbol, and transforming and re-creating. Consequently, it was said that alliteration might be more concentrated in text that contains conflicted, ambivalent or unformulated themes. Considering Nabokov's personal history, the themes most salient in his autobiography are likely to be concerned with exile and loss.

In addition, the possibility was introduced that repetition and alliteration may perform yet another additional function, one beyond a straightforward, transformative, working through role. It was proposed that repetitive alliteration might have also been a means Nabokov discovered to attempt to remedy those very conflicted or unformulated circumstances with which he was forced to grapple. It was suggested that alliteration might have provided him a counter to his ever-present concerns of loss, abandonment and exile. Generally speaking these arguments delineate the manner in which repetition may

be utilized in the service of ensuring that one is internalized as an object in the mind and the body of the other. Specific to this context, it was demonstrated how Nabokov may have used alliteration to this end, to counteract his concerns with losing and being lost to others, and to place both he and his work into the minds, memories, and even bodies of his readers.

This project is an attempt to capture something of repetitive alliteration and the various ways Nabokov may have used it in his autobiographical text. The following pages will outline a procedure by which some measure was attempted, along with the results captured. Hopefully further light will be shed on the questions raised through this document. It could be, too, that the results will raise more questions than they answer, for this is not likely to be the final word on repetition, alliteration, or on Nabokov's autobiographical narrative.

CHAPTER IV: METHODS

Overview of Methods

The overall aim of this project is to examine what role repetition may have played in Vladimir Nabokov's process of creating his autobiographical story. More specifically, the study will focus on the potentially transformative effect that repetition might have had in the creating and editing his Nabokov's life narrative. Here, alliteration will be considered as an operational form of repetition, for it is a literary device that utilizes the repetition of word sounds to achieve a literary effect. In this context, alliteration will include both consonance and assonance under its title.

This project consists of a close examination of the three published English language versions of Vladimir Nabokov's autobiography. One specific chapter was selected for analysis—"Mademoiselle O"—for reasons previously articulated. Each of the versions of "Mademoiselle O" will be considered a "draft." Each draft was organized into roughly equivalent sections. Divisions were guided by Nabokov's own determination of the matter made clear by his numbering 1 through 7 in the final draft. A clear, discrete theme was then identified for each of the sections.

An operationalized definition of alliteration was established and all alliterative phrases were identified in each draft. The numbers of substantive words used in each alliterated phrase (omitting articles, conjunctions, etc.) were then tallied in each draft. Specific number amounts were thus tabulated for each draft and for each draft section.

Several repeated measures ANOVA tests were performed to address the hypotheses put forth by this project. The first ANOVA attempted to measure whether

there are any sections of the “Mademoiselle O” chapter that contain a greater concentration of alliterative repetition in comparison to others. Any sections found to be significant in this respect were then be analyzed for content, looking specifically to the particular themes they contain. The second ANOVA attempted to capture any changes in the concentration of alliteration over the progressive series of drafts. Any significant reduction in the amount of alliteration found in later drafts resulted in an investigation as to whether Nabokov was able to use repetition towards its potentially creative end—for the purpose of working through and transforming conflicted material into a more symbolized form. Conversely, any significant increase in concentrations of alliteration revealed over the course of the drafts generated an analysis and discussion revolving around the question as to whether Nabokov may have been able to put alliterative repetition to a different use—as a means to ensure that both he and his work were better remembered by his readers.

Data Set

The complete data set consists of three English language “drafts” of the “Mademoiselle O” chapter. The first draft is defined as the 1943 article published in *The Atlantic Monthly* under the title of “Mademoiselle O.” It will be referred to as Draft 1 or AM. The second draft consists of Chapter 5 from *Conclusive Evidence* published in 1951. This will be referred to as either Draft 2 or CE. And finally, the third draft consists of Chapter 5 from *Speak, Memory*, initially published in 1966. It will be referred to as either Draft 3 or SM. All three drafts are included in the appendix section of this document.

As mentioned, several other drafts exist in addition to the three defined above. However, these remaining versions were all translated and published into languages other

than English. The complete order of publishing for the “Mademoiselle O” chapter is as follows: 1936, *Mesures*, French; 1951, *Conclusive Evidence*, English; 1954, *Drugie berega*, Russian; 1966, *Speak, Memory*, English. In order to simplify the process of identifying and measuring any alliterative repetition found within the autobiographical text, this project will address only English language versions of Nabokov’s narrative.

Each draft has been separated into seven distinct segments in order to establish a clear differentiation of themes found within. This divisions follow those that Nabokov specifically established, for he divided all three drafts into relatively uniform sections. Inevitably, however, there were slight variations between the drafts. Therefore, a single guideline was established to clarify the bounds of the sectioning. The section divisions Nabokov applied to his final draft, SM Draft 3, were used as this guideline. These divisions, then, were applied to all drafts.

Drafts

“Mademoiselle O” was selected specifically because it was the very first chapter Nabokov wrote in his autobiographical effort, the original and very first article published in French in *Mesures* in 1936. The matter of primacy can and should be considered in this context, for it may be that Nabokov chose this particular topic first in part due to its saliency to his life narrative. The possible reasons as to Mademoiselle’s importance are explored elsewhere in the document. However, the fact remains that Mademoiselle was the first chapter written, and so “Mademoiselle O” was thought to be an appropriate choice to represent Nabokov’s autobiographical work.

Because “Mademoiselle O” was written first, the most amount of time passed between the first and last drafts of this particular chapter. As such, this increased time

would have allowed for the longest opportunity for incubation to take place between first and last drafts. In addition, Nabokov initially wrote this first article on the chapter in French, a language that happened to be Mademoiselle's native tongue. Thus an extra iteration was added to this particular chapter's draft sequence when compared to other chapters. Again, in keeping with the theory that repetition may provide for the possibility of a working through, it is thought that this additional draft may have also increased the probability for some transformation to occur across drafts, again maximizing the likelihood that any change will be able to be observed in this particular chapter.

Limiting the project to a single language an obvious advantage when exploring the use of repetition through alliteration. An alliterated sound found in neighboring English words is unlikely to result in an accurate translation in Russian or French that is also able to carry forward the alliteration into its corresponding French or Russian words. It may be that Nabokov incorporated alliteration as well as other types of repetition into his foreign language drafts. However, for the purposes of this project, it was determined that the scope of would remain limited to English language drafts so that any transformation occurring over the course of the drafts could be clearly and easily measured.

Sections

Nabokov divided all three drafts into clearly numbered all sections. Both the CE Draft and the SM Draft of "Mademoiselle O" contain seven separate sections such that the subject divisions remain stable from one version to the next. Section themes are outlined in the table below.

Table 1*Sections, Themes and Draft Paragraphs*

Section	Description of Themes	Draft Paragraphs
1	General descriptions of Mademoiselle Nabokov's first meeting with Mademoiselle on the train platform	AM Draft 1: paras 1-7 CE Draft 2: paras 1-6 SM Draft 3: paras 1-8
2	Description of Nabokov's favorite solitary activity—drawing and coloring—explicitly excluding mention of Mademoiselle	AM Draft 1: paras 8-12 CE Draft 2: paras 7-10 SM Draft 3: paras 9-12
3	Daytime hide-and-seek episode where Nabokov hides from Mademoiselle	AM Draft 1: — CE Draft 2: paras 11-12 SM Draft 3: paras 13-15
4	Details of Mademoiselle's very specific mannerisms, particularly those related to her hands	AM Draft 1: paras 13-14 CE Draft 2: paras 13 SM Draft 3: paras 16
5	Descriptions of Mademoiselle's ability to comfort Nabokov—in the summertime pastime of her reading stories aloud, or in her private nighttime reading when only the light from her room would comfort VN in his insomniac terrors Narrative of Nabokov's terrifying nighttime hide-and-seek experiences	AM Draft 1: paras 15-25 CE Draft 2: paras 14-24 SM Draft 3: paras 17-28
6	Depictions of the later years of Mademoiselle's tenure, when her lessons were fewer and her emotional sensitivities were intensified	AM Draft 1: paras 26-32 CE Draft 2: paras 25-32 SM Draft 3: paras 29-36
7	Nabokov's visit made to Mademoiselle long after he was grown and she in retirement	AM Draft 1: paras 33-37 CE Draft 2: paras 33-37 SM Draft 3: paras 37-42

It is important to note that AM Draft 1 from *The Atlantic Monthly* contains only five sections. The section describing Nabokov's daytime hide-and-seek game had not yet been written or introduced. In addition, the section describing Nabokov's solitary drawing practice was conflated with the section that portrayed some of Mademoiselle's very specific hand gestures and mannerisms. In later drafts, these two themes existed separately from one another. Because there is some discrepancy between the content of the sections across each of the drafts, those sections defined by the final SM Draft 3 served as the guidelines for this project and was applied to all drafts here. Above are specific determinations, detailing which section contains which paragraphs.

Data Analysis

First, each of the three "Mademoiselle O" drafts was divided into seven sections. Section distinctions followed the breaks found in Nabokov's final draft of the document, SM Draft 3. This was done for the purposes of maintaining consistency and uniformity across drafts so that section topics from one draft would correspond to the topics from the same section number found in all another drafts. Because Nabokov revised his drafts, adding and deleting material in all, some of these applied sections contradict the original numbering Nabokov assigned when writing each particular draft. For example, Nabokov's original Section 3 from AM Draft 1 was labeled Section 5 here. Also, it is important to note that for this purposes, AM Draft 1 was not assigned a Section 3. Because Nabokov added that particular narrative in Draft 2, the AM Draft 1 did not contain that material and therefore could not be labeled as such.

Second, paragraphs were assigned specific numbers so that any changes in alliterative phrases could be tracked to specific paragraphs across the course of

Nabokov's revision process. Again, as in the case above, numbering assignment was determined by Nabokov's SM Draft 3, keeping with the idea that since SM was Nabokov's final draft, it is most likely that Nabokov felt most satisfied with that particular narrative and its edits. As in the case with the sections, certain paragraph numbering in Drafts 1 and 2 differed from Nabokov's original structure. For example, Nabokov added two paragraphs to SM Draft 3, Section 1 (paragraphs 3 and 4) thus totaling the number of paragraphs in Draft 3, section 1 to equal eight. However, CE Draft 2, Section 1 only contains six paragraphs. Therefore Nabokov added two paragraphs to Draft 3 that did not exist in drafts 1 or 2. The labeling in both AM Draft 1 and CE Draft 2 was therefore altered to reflect this difference. In CE Draft 2, Section 1, for example, the new ordering is as follows: para 1, para 2, para 5, para 6, para 7, para 8. In addition, there were instances when Nabokov deleted paragraphs found in earlier drafts and since these did not appear in SM Draft 3, the paragraphs required an additional number assignment. In AM Draft 1, Section 1, for example Nabokov wrote a second paragraph that he subsequently cut in CE Draft 2. Therefore, the additional paragraph in AM Draft 1, Section 1 was given the label am1.5 so as to indicate to which draft it belonged as well as its proper placement in ordering. So in the AM Draft 1, Section 1, the new ordering is as follows: para 1, para am1.5, para 2, para 5, para 6, para 7, para 8. In this manner, it was ensured that the numbering for all paragraphs enabled each to correspond to their equivalents across all drafts.

Third, each draft was closely analyzed and all alliterative phrases were identified according to the guidelines stated below. All alliterated phrases were then added, and totals were determined for each paragraph in all drafts, for each section in all drafts, and

for each draft. In addition, all words used in each alliterated phase were counted and calculated for each section. Only words that actually contained an alliterated sound were identified and counted, such that incidental words, e.g. words such as “and” or “the” or words that also inhabited the phrase but did not house an alliterated sound, were not included in the tabulation. Therefore, the phrase “jelly of her jowl” (Nabokov, 1989, p. 96) would contain two alliterated words.

Operational Definitions

An operational definition of alliteration was constructed for the purposes of this project. Again, please note that here assonance and consonance were both collapsed under the heading of alliteration such that no distinction was made between the two.

Alliteration: The repetition of the same sounds in initial consonants of words or in stressed syllables in any sequence of neighboring words; the repetition of identical or similar vowel sounds in the stressed syllables of neighboring words

Examples

Following are several selections from “Mademoiselle O” that best exemplify the operational definitions above.

“limb of every limpid letter” (Nabokov, 1989, p. 105)

“frightful nightmares” (Nabokov, 1989, p. 108)

Too there are graded examples of alliteration, ones not quite as clear as those presented above, or examples that have several alliterated sounds being enacted at once. Consider the following passage:

And, really, her French was so lovely! Ought one to have minded the shallowness of her culture, the bitterness of her temper, the banality of her mind, when that pearly language of hers purred and scintillated, as innocent of sense as the alliterative sins of Racine's pious verse? My father's library, not her limited lore, taught me to appreciate authentic poetry; nevertheless, something of her tongue's limpidity and luster has had a singularly bracing effect upon me, like those sparkling salts that are used to purify the blood. (Nabokov, 1989, p. 113)

"Pearly... hers... purred" is a mix of alliterated *p* sounds and assonant *ur* sounds.

"Scintillated... innocent... sense... sins... Racine's... pious... verse" is a complex amalgamation of the assonant *in* sounds toward the front of certain words such as "scintillated," "innocent," "sense," "sins;" in addition there is the consonant *s* sound placed toward the ends of words such as "Racine," "pious" and "verse." Following is another graded example:

All seemed for a moment laden with that strange significance which sometimes in dreams is attached to a finger pressed to mute lips and then pointed at something the dreamer has no time to distinguish before waking with a start. (Nabokov, 1989, p.116-117)

Again a complex mixture of repeated sounds peppers the sentence. The *s* sound at the front of certain words such as in "strange significance" also ties to the later *s* sound in "pressed." The *p* in "pressed" connects to the *p* in "lips" and to the *p* in "pointed." This then flows into the *d* sounds of "dreamer" and "distinguish." While these examples of more complex alliterations may be fewer in number, they are worth consideration since Nabokov's autobiography was noted for its lyricism and poeticism.

Clarifications

Certain distinctions need to be made so that the operational definition of alliteration is made to be as clear as possible. As mentioned above, alliterated phrases may include more than one alliterated sound. An example includes: “besprinkled with brown ecchymotic spots” (Nabokov, 1989, p. 104). Here, both the *b* sound as well as the *ot* sound are alliterated. A second example includes: “peeling rather than sharpening a pencil, the point held toward her stupendous and sterile bosom swathed in green wool” (Nabokov, 1989, p. 104). In this example, the multiple *p* and *s* sounds are alliterated. While *b/ot* and *p/s* are differently alliterated sounds, they will be considered in the context of the whole phrase. Therefore, if more than one alliterated sound is incorporated into a single phrase, that phrase will only be counted as a single instance of alliteration.

Nabokov often included proper names as a part of his texts, not just of major characters but also of minor characters or of beloved animals. Some of these proper names too are alliterated. Examples here include: “Zoyka and Zinka” (Nabokov, 1989, p. 99) and “Monsieur de Marante” (Nabokov, 1989, p. 108). While it is tempting to believe that these names were all predetermined, in fact Nabokov often changed the names of minor, and not so minor characters, over the course of revising his drafts. In Draft 1, for example, Nabokov’s Russian tutor was named Leonidas Orlov, while in Drafts 2 and 3, Nabokov used the name Lenski. Perhaps Nabokov changed the names in part due to a clarification of memory, but other possibilities for any changes should also be considered. Indeed, the Draft 1 sentence “I can hear and see Orlov unflinchingly going on with his soup” (Nabokov, 1943, p. 72) was revised to read “I can hear and see Lenski Frenchlessly and unflinchingly going on with his soup” (Nabokov, 1951, p. 75) in Drafts 2 and 3. It

should not be missed that that “Lenski Frenchlessly... unflinchingly” is an alliterated phrase whereas “Orlov unflinchingly” is not. Because the origins of Nabokov’s chosen proper names are unclear, they will be considered as any other word would be—as words Nabokov selected for both purposes of their literal value as well as for their lyrical value. Therefore any alliterated phrases that include proper names will be identified and counted as such in this project. “Lenski Frenchlessly... unflinchingly” was identified as one such alliterated phrase.

Several aspects of Nabokov’s literary style do not fall wholly under the purview of the operational definition stated above, though many of these techniques, devices or methods of writing may relate to some aspect of the operational definition and indeed may too contribute to the rhyme, rhythm, and repetition found within the text. Following are fine distinctions and examples that will *not* be incorporated into the identification of alliterated phrases in the text of Nabokov’s autobiography for the purposes of this thesis.

Subsequent repetitions of the exact same words will not be included under this operational definition, even though these sorts of repetitions can and often are considered to be alliteration. Again writing about Dickens’ *Bleak House*, Nabokov stated: “*Jarndyce and Jarndyce* is, in a way, an absolute alliteration reduced to the absurd” (Nabokov, 1980, p.121). For these purposes, this sort of repetition will simply be considered as just that, as a repetition. Examples from Nabokov’s text include: “Giddy-eh? Giddy-eh?” (Nabokov, 1989, p. 98), and “housefront to housefront” (Nabokov, 1989, p. 111). However, if the same word is repeated as a part of a larger alliterated phrase, then the phrase will be defined as an alliteration. An example is: “green soaked greenery in a greener green” (Nabokov, 1989, p. 106). In the latter example, “green” is repeated, but it

is done so in the context of various “green” sounds; therefore “green... greenery... greener green” was identified to be an alliterated phrase.

Over the course of editing and revising his drafts, Nabokov included increasing numbers of French words, sayings and phrases in his text. Some of these French terms may be alliterated. Examples include: “*Ah, la fessée que je vous ai flanquée*” (Nabokov, 1989, p. 107) and “*A celle qui a toujours su se faire aimer et qui ne saura jamais se faire oublier*” (Nabokov, 1989, p. 118). Since it was previously determined that foreign language texts would not be included in this project so as to contain the scope of this project, that same delimiter will be carried over into this context as well. Therefore, any potential alliteration found in foreign language words included in these three English language texts will be excluded from the operational definition for these purposes. However if the phrase contains a combination of French and English words, such as “*Oh! O au’ eaux!*” (Nabokov, 1943, p. 67), then the phrase will be identified as an alliteration since, ostensibly, Nabokov has a choice as to which words he pairs together and he may likely choose the words based on their alliterative value.

And finally, Nabokov utilized several other devices for the purposes of creating a rhythmic effect in his texts, such as in the repetition of certain groups of words to establish a repetition of rhythmic structures, but did so without using alliteration. For example, the alliterated “flip of finger and thumb” (Nabokov, 1943, p. 67) found in both the first and second drafts of “Mademoiselle O” morphed into the phrase “tweak-and-shake of finger and thumb” (Nabokov, 1989, p. 98) in the final draft. By repeating this structure of a one syllabled word + and + one syllabled word, Nabokov achieves a similar effect to the original alliteration without including the alliteration itself. Though the

rhythm carries over across the drafts, the alliteration does not, and so the latter phrase will not be identified as alliteration or counted as such. Instead it is a more sophisticated means of establishing rhythm and therefore might be considered as an advance in the process of symbolization.

CHAPTER V: RESULTS

This project tests two main hypotheses concerning the role that alliterative repetition may have played in Vladimir Nabokov's process of creating and revising his narrative autobiography. The first of these proposed that in a comparison of all "Mademoiselle O" chapter sections, there might be sections that contain higher concentrations of alliteration. If this was found to be so, then it was also proposed that those particular sections with greater concentrations of repetition would likely contain material that revolved around themes of loss and exile. Essentially, it was suggested that by attending to Nabokov's use of alliteration in his autobiography, those themes that were especially salient to Nabokov could be identified by way of noting those places where alliteration was most concentrated—keeping in mind the theory that repetition is likely to appear in areas of conflict. Considering the formative events that comprised Nabokov's life, those major themes may be directly related to events of exile and loss.

The second hypothesis proposed that a comparison of progressive drafts might reveal a change in the overall quantity of alliteration found in each draft as a result of the edits and revisions Nabokov made over the course of writing his autobiography. If later drafts were shown to contain a reduction of alliteration when compared with earlier drafts, then it was suggested that the alliterative repetition could be seen as having performed a transformative effect on the content material—thus enabling Nabokov to achieve a degree of working through of that conflicted material such that the repetition was reduced in later drafts. However, if it was revealed that later drafts contained greater quantities of alliteration when compared with earlier drafts, then it was suggested that perhaps the repetitive alliteration might have served a different function than that stated

above. It was suggested that repetition may have been a means Nabokov employed to increase the likelihood that he and his work would be better remembered by his readers—acting as a kind of solution to the dilemma of loss and being lost to the other. If such a notion contains any possibility of truth, then an increase in the percentage of alliterated words used in later drafts would result when comparing earlier and later drafts.

Overall, totals for the number of words used in alliterated phrases were calculated for each section of each draft. An analysis of skewness and kurtosis determined that the distribution was a normal distribution (see Table 2).

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Dev.
Number of Alliterated Words	21	.00	164.00	64.5714	43.31809

Skewness

	Skewness Statistic	Skewness Std. Error
Number of Alliterated Words	1.015	.501

Kurtosis

	Kurtosis Statistic	Kurtosis Std. Error
Number of Alliterated Words	4.72	9.72

Hypothesis I: Differences Across Sections

Repeated measures ANOVA

To test the first hypothesis, drafts were collapsed such that an overall average number of alliterated words was calculated for each section. Following, a one way, repeated measures, within subjects analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted in order to determine whether any of the seven sections contained a significantly different quantity of alliteration from others. The independent variable was section and the dependent variable was the total number of alliterated words. Table 3 below presents the estimated means and standard deviations for the average numbers of alliterated words found in each of the Sections 1 through 7.

Indeed the ANOVA indicated a significant main effect of section (see Table 4; Huynh-Feldt Type III Sum of Squares = 35884.476; Mean Square = 6002.459; $F = 53.865$; Sig = .000; $p < 0.001$).

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations: Averaged Number of Alliterated Words per Section

Section Number	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
S1	85.3333	16.50256	3
S2	34.0000	4.00000	3
S3	21.3333	19.13984	3
S4	30.0000	2.64575	3
S5	150.6667	12.22020	3
S6	57.6667	2.88675	3
S7	73.0000	1.73205	3

Figure 1

Profile Plots: Section Means of Alliterated Words

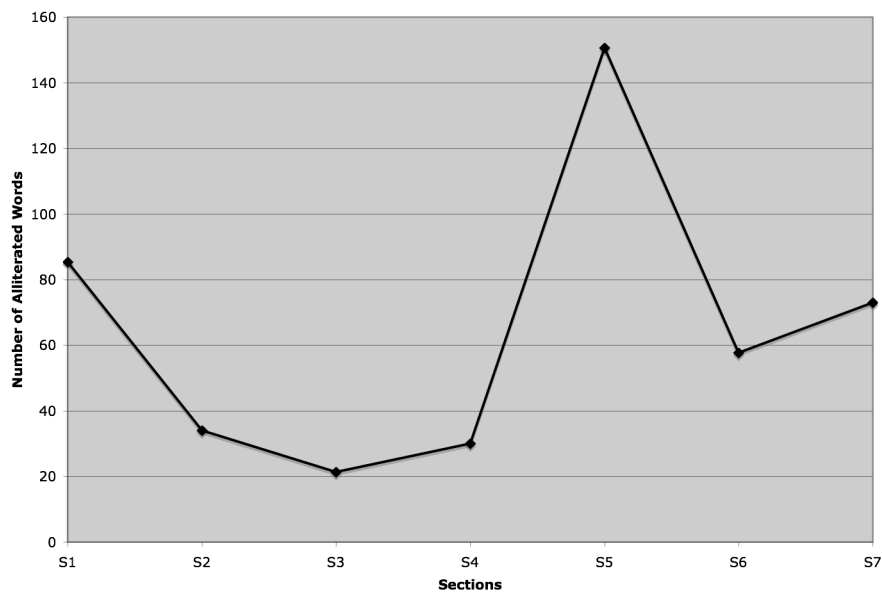


Table 4

Huynh-Feldt ANOVA: Differences Between Sections in Quantity of Alliterated Words

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
Huynh-Feldt	35884.476	5.978	6002.459	53.865	.000
Error Huynh-Feldt	1332.381	11.957	111.435		

Table 5

Effect Sizes: Differences Between Sections in Quantity of Alliterated Words

Source	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power (computed using alpha = .05)
Huynh-Feldt	.964	322.022	1.000

Pairwise comparison.

A view of Figure 1 of the Profile Plots: Section Means of Alliterated Words demonstrates that the sections do vary significantly from one another. In order to determine the details of the significant differences, a post hoc Tukey test of Honestly Significant Difference (HSD) was performed in order to provide a pairwise comparison. Thus each section was compared to all other sections in order to assess and identify which sections actually differed significantly from each other. Table 6 reveals all comparisons and the significance levels for each comparison, the * denoting the mean differences that are significant at the .05 level. As is clear, Section 5 is the only section to

differ significantly from all other sections. Therefore an analysis of its contents will follow in the discussion chapter. Section 7 differed significantly from Sections 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6, the only exception being Section 1. Though it was not set apart from all other section, it was determined that its difference from five of the six total sections was sizeable enough to warrant inclusion in the discussion as well. And finally, Section 3 was shown to differ from the fewest number of sections, revealing a significant variation only from Sections 5 and 7. In the end, it too will be included in the later discussion.

Table 6*Tukey HSD Pairwise Comparison of Section Means*

I section J section	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Significance (adjustment for multiple comparison: least significant difference)
1 2	51.333*	7.311	.020
3	64.00	17.898	.070
4	55.333*	8.743	.024
5	-65.333*	8.172	.015
6	27.667	9.262	.096
7	12.333	10.269	.353
2 1	-51.333*	7.311	.020
3	12.667	12.785	.426
4	4.000	1.528	.120
5	-116.667*	6.667	.003
6	-23.667*	2.848	.014
7	-39.000*	3.215	.007
3 1	-64.000	17.898	.070
2	-12.667	12.785	.426
4	-8.667	12.574	.562
5	-129.333*	10.171	.006
6	-36.333	9.939	.067
7	-51.667*	10.088	.036
4 1	-55.333*	8.743	.024

Table 6 continued

2	-4.000	1.528	.120
3	8.667	12.574	.562
5	-120.667*	7.753	.004
6	-27.667*	2.906	.011
7	-43.000*	2.517	.003
5 1	65.333*	8.172	.015
2	116.667*	6.667	.003
3	129.33*	10.171	.006
4	120.667*	7.753	.004
6	93.000*	5.508	.003
7	77.667*	6.936	.008
6 1	-27.667	9.262	.096
2	23.667*	2.848	.014
3	36.333	9.939	.067
4	27.667*	2.906	.011
5	-93.000*	5.508	.003
7	-15.333*	1.453	.009
7 1	-12.333	10.269	.353
2	39.000*	3.215	.007
3	51.667*	10.088	.036
4	43.000*	2.517	.003
5	-77.667*	6.936	.008
6	15.333*	1.453	.009

* the mean difference is significant at the .05 level

Hypothesis II: Differences Across Drafts

Differences Across the Whole of the Drafts

To test the second hypothesis, the sections were collapsed such that a total of alliterated words were determined for each draft. Following, a one way, repeated measures, within subjects analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted in order to determine whether any of the draft versions contained a significantly different quantity of alliteration from others. The independent variable was draft and the dependent variable was the total number of alliterated words. Table 7 below presents the estimated means and standard deviations for the average numbers of alliterated words found in each draft.

The ANOVA indicated that there was no significant effect of draft (see Table 8; Sphericity Assumed, Type III Sum of Squares = 312.286; Mean Square = 156.143; F = 1.406; Sig = .283; $p > 0.05$).

Table 7

Means and Standard Deviations: Total Number of Alliterated Words per Draft

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
AM Draft 1	63.5714	48.52098	7
CE Draft 2	60.4286	40.02023	7
SM Draft 3	69.7143	47.40153	7

Figure 2

Profile Plots: Draft Means of Alliterated Words

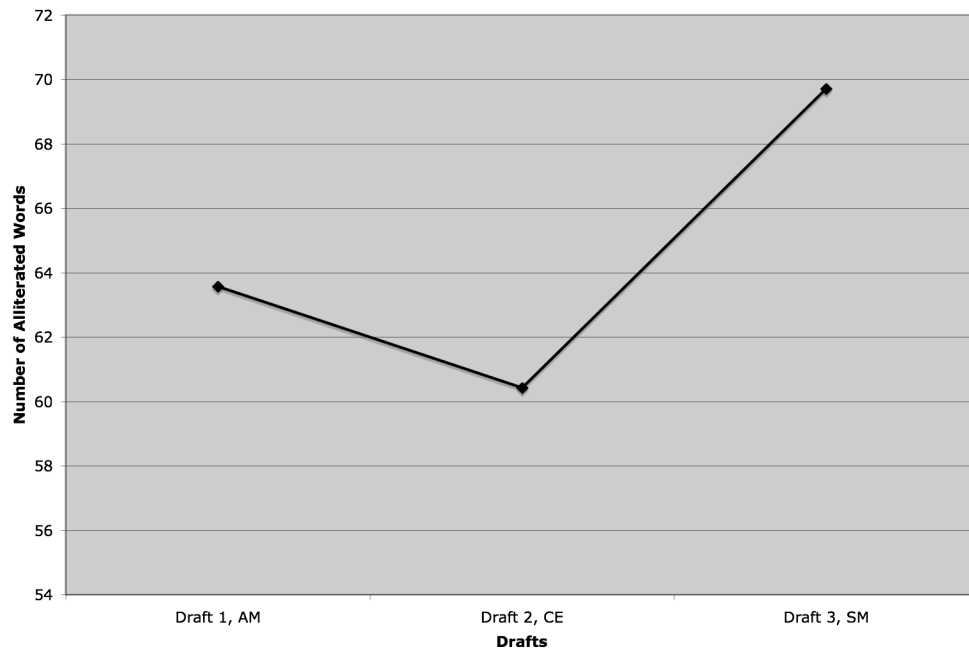


Table 8

ANOVA Mauchly's Test of Sphericity: Differences Between Drafts in Quantity of Alliterated Words

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
Sphericity Assumed	312.286	2	156.143	1.406	.283
Error Sphericity Assumed	1332.381	12	111.032		

Table 9

Effect Sizes: Differences Between Drafts in Quantity of Alliterated Words

Source	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power (computed using alpha = .05)
Sphericity Assumed	.190	2.813	.244

Pairwise comparison.

Even though the effect of draft on the quantity of alliterated word totals was not significant, the profile plots in Figure 2 revealed some increase in the number of alliterated words when comparing CE Draft 2 to SM Draft 3. Therefore, a post-hoc pairwise comparison was performed. Again, there were no significant differences shown when comparing the alliteration totals across drafts. However, there was a trend revealed in the comparison of CE Draft 2 and SM Draft 3 (see Table 8; sig = .055). Despite the lack of significance, the upward trend proved interesting enough to warrant some commentary in the discussion chapter to follow.

Table 10

Tukey HSD Pairwise Comparison of Draft Means

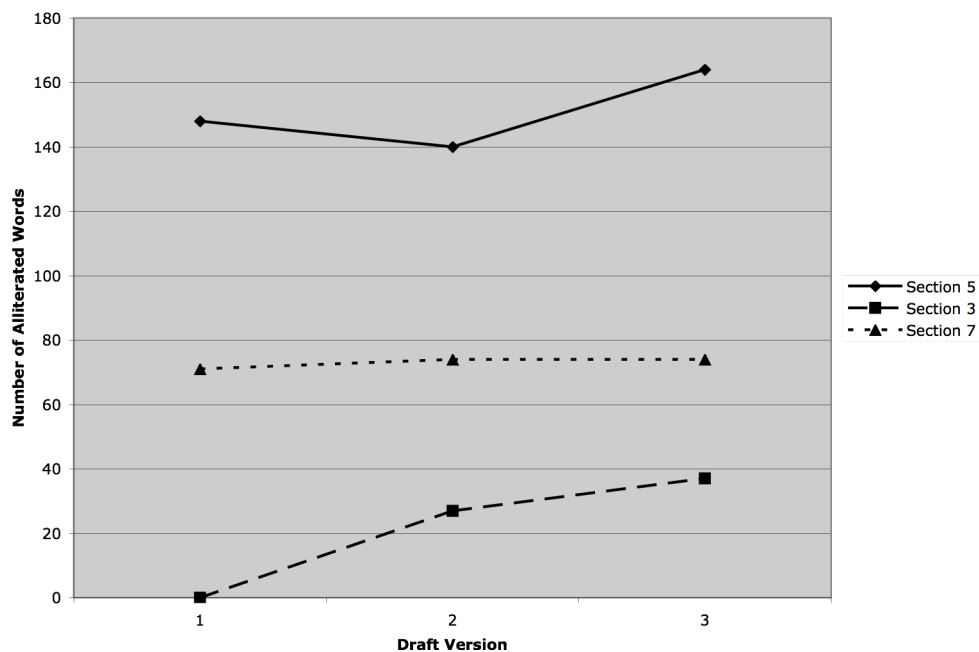
I section J section	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Significance (adjustment for multiple comparison: least significant difference)
1 2	3.143	6.613	.651
3	-6.143	6.010	.346
2 1	-3.143	6.613	.651
3	-9.286	3.914	.055
3 1	6.143	6.010	.0346
2	9.286	3.914	.055

Differences across sections 3, 5 and 7.

A second aspect of the second hypothesis was raised—the possibility that a significant change across the drafts sections 3, 5, or 7 may exist. In this context, a true statistical measure could not be calculated because only one data point for each draft of each section stands. As such, no tests could be performed. The Figure 3 Profile Plots reveal the changes in each section across drafts. While the sections appear to be relatively stable where the number of alliterated words found across drafts is concerned, Figure 3 should not be confused for a statistically significant measure. Rather, it is simply a visual device. To the contrary, it is thought that this matter should be considered in greater depth in the future since the measure is not possible at this time.

Figure 3

Profile Plots: Number of Alliterated Words by Section and Draft Version



Conclusion

In the end, a test of the hypotheses presented demonstrated mixed results. The first hypothesis proved to hold some merit, for there were significant differences found when comparing all section totals of alliterated words. Section 5 varied significantly from all six other sections in the “Mademoiselle O” chapter. Section 7 too differed significantly from five out of the six other sections. And finally Section 3 differed from the fewest number of other sections, varying only from Sections 5 and 7. Therefore it was determined that all three of these sections warranted a closer analysis of their contents and themes.

With respect to the second hypothesis, no direct support was found. In comparing the alliteration totals from all three drafts, there were no significant differences revealed. Despite this, however, there are reasons not to eliminate the possibility of this hypothesis outright. Though it did not meet criteria for significance, there was an upward, increasing trend observed in the comparison between Draft 2 and Draft 3. And so while the results were not significant in this case, a discussion of that lack of significance will also incorporate some speculations concerning this upward trend.

CHAPTER VI: DISCUSSION

But then, in a sense, all poetry is positional: to try to express one's position in regard to the universe embraced by consciousness, is an immemorial urge. The arms of consciousness reach out and grope, and the longer they are the better. Tentacles, not wings, are Apollo's natural members. (Nabokov, 1989, pp. 217)

With this project, I set out to examine if and how Nabokov was able to transform his autobiographical narrative. It was proposed that he may have been able to do so with the assistance of repetition, and the following pages will offer an in depth exploration of the results revealed by the tests at hand. Yet before such an examination proceeds, there remains one last matter of context—an overall question as to the formation and purpose of such an autobiographical narrative, not to mention the effect that trauma might have on this type of narrative. Therefore, a brief discussion about autobiographical narrative will further orient these matters.

Autobiographical Narrative

An autobiography is a written story that encompasses the events of an individual's remembered life. Nabokov set out to gather his lost, fading memories into an autobiography so that he might shelter them within a single entity. Having done so, he discovered “conclusive evidence of my having existed” (Nabokov, 1989, p. 11). Of all the things that could be said of an autobiography, it is invariably an attempt to tell the story, a story, of the self and one's own existence. Inevitably, an exploration of this topic

again raises questions. What is the drive behind an effort to document one's life? What is this desire to have others' know about the narrative of one's life?

As seen earlier, Nabokov revealed his motivations in the very his first words he placed on this project's page. Again, Nabokov wrote:

I have often noticed that after I had bestowed on the characters of my novels some treasured item of my past it would pine away in the artificial world where I had so abruptly placed it. Although it lingered on in my mind its personal warmth, its retrospective appeal, had gone and presently it became more closely identified with my novel than with my former self where it had seemed to be so safe from the intrusion of the artist. Houses have crumbled in my memory as soundlessly as they did in the silent films of yore, and the portrait of my old French governess whom I once lent to a youthful hero of mine is already hardly discernable, now that it is engulfed in the description of a childhood entirely unrelated to my own. The man in me revolts against the fictionist, and here is my desperate attempt to save what is left or poor Mademoiselle O. (Nabokov, 1943, p. 66)

Here, Nabokov introduced any number of notions integral to the process of constructing an autobiography, chiefly the interconnections between the self, memory, identity and narrative.

Autobiographical Self

The concept of an autobiographical self is a complicated one, such that many have wondered about questions concerning the nature and purpose of consciousness, existence, identity and selfhood. Some theoreticians have even concluded that there are multiple

versions of the self, or lenses through which the self can be viewed. For example, in *The Remembering Self* (1994), Neisser and Fivush argued that the self can be rendered in a variety of ways to account for a variety of different aspects of its functioning, including the ‘ecological’ or ‘biological’ self, the ‘interpersonal’ self, the ‘private’ self, the ‘conceptual’ self, and finally the ‘temporally extended’ self (p. vii). Considering that just this one theory covers a variety of perspectives, then even the briefest review of all the relevant perspectives would prove a difficult undertaking for these purposes. In addition, such a review would present too many contradictions and questions to begin to address here. Therefore, perhaps instead of asking what the self *is*, it would be beneficial to consider another way to conceptualize the self—via its narrative construction. Roy Schafer explored just such matters and concluded:

We are forever telling stories about ourselves. In telling these self-stories to others we may, for most purposes, be said to be performing straightforward narrative actions. In saying that we also tell them to ourselves, however, we are enclosing one story within another. This is the story that there is a self to tell something to, a someone else serving as audience who is oneself or one’s self... On this view, the self is a telling. From time to time and from person to person, this telling varies in the degree to who it is unified, stable, and acceptable to informed observers as reliable and valid. (Schafer, 1980, p. 35)

Whatever the self may be, whatever part is manifestly expressed or unwittingly repressed at any given time, the self might be viewed as a *telling*. It is a process engaged in a specific sort of agentic doing. It is a narrating self. Viewing the self as a process in action allows for some leeway when considering the difficulties inherent in pinning down a

single story that equals the self. In this sense, the concept of an agentic, narrating self becomes a useful possibility when considering a self that is able to tell multiple, and even incongruous narratives at the same time.

Accompanying the concept of the “self as a telling,” Jerome Bruner construed the self as a collection of stories being told. Bruner asserted that narratives about the self accrue into assemblages, standing with other narratives so that together they constitute a narrative body (Bruner, 1991). With the idea of a narrating self, the concept of an agent who can tell a number of different stories, or who can take a number of actions for any number of reasons in any number of contexts, becomes more tenable. Thus the narrative body becomes a constantly shifting composition.

Not only can an agentic, narrating self hold differing narratives, the agentic self also allows for the development and change of that self across time. Antonio Damasio (1999) proposed that the autobiographical self hinged upon its ability to reactivate select sets of autobiographical memories formed over the course of years as needed. He believed, in part, our ability to store and recall autobiographical memories constitutes our sense of an historical, extended, conscious self. Therefore, he concluded that “extended consciousness” served as an underpinning for the self and for one’s identity. He wrote:

Extended consciousness, then, is the capacity to be aware of a large compass of entities and events, i.e. the ability to generate a sense of individual perspective, ownership and agency, over a larger compass of knowledge... The sense of autobiographical self to which this larger compass of knowledge is attributed includes unique biographical information. (Damasio, 1999, p. 198)

Inevitably, the course of accumulating these multiple, autobiographical experiences, memories and narratives requires that a person must incorporate them into the standing compositional body of existing narratives. Therefore, that compositional body must change in some fashion in order to accommodate and/or assimilate the old and the new. Due to these constant changes, as well as to the selective reactivation and recall of past autobiographical memories, one's sense of self may be slightly different at any given time. It becomes a process ever under construction. Nabokov rewrote and revised his autobiography on multiple occasions, each time remembering new events, and incorporating newly discovered facts about him and his family into the existing narrative. In addition, Nabokov used his current vantage (provided by the events active at the time of each revision) as a new reference point from which he could reflect onto the past. Consequently, with each revision, Nabokov painted slightly different images in the name of creating a more "accurate" picture. As readers, we accept these various shifts in his story as seamless transitions. We do so because we conceive of the self as an extended, narrating self, one that allows for change over time.

Considering all these tellings and retellings, the narrating body may also be created by multiple tellings of the same narrative. As he stated, Nabokov endowed many of his fictional characters with those themes and conflicts that originated with him. This practice may have been yet another means Nabokov employed to revise his own autobiographical narratives, though in a far less explicit manner. Repetition, as Freud stated, is a means of both remembering and of transforming narrative that are seminal to the construction of self. And as with distinct narratives, each revision of the same narrative can be internalized anew. It is important to note that a new or revised narrative

does not necessarily have to replace its predecessor. Rather, it could be that multiple versions of the same story (along with countless distinct stories) potentially offer a multifaceted image of the self—as well as of others, and of the self and others in the world.

The Function of an Autobiographical Self

All of these qualities—agency, extended self, narrative compilations, revision and repetition—are of great importance in a narrating self. However, these points also raise the question as to why a narrating self might be of use. Regarding this point, Damasio, Bruner and Schafer agreed: for the purposes of flexibility and adaptation.

When a person makes decisions, he often does so with several things in mind: past experiences, present circumstances, anticipation of change, and expectations for the future. A greater flexibility in decision-making and response possibilities increases an individual's chances of faring well when he encounters novel situations. One of the ways an individual develops flexibility is through rehearsal. If he can envision himself in various circumstances, then he also might be able to visualize varied scenarios of what might happen there, playing with as many possibilities as can be imagined. In a sense, all of this playing amounts to a multitude of stories being told about oneself and to oneself. And theoretically, the greater number of stories a person can tell with the most amount of variance, the more prepared he is to meet the unexpected. Damasio wrote that: “the rich imaginings of our minds do prepare ‘multiple drafts’ for our organism’s life script” (Damasio, 1999, p. 225). He was also explicit about his thoughts as to how autobiographical “multiple drafts” benefit us. He stated:

Certain processes are driving us all the time. It is the drives that keep us alive. In life we always run the risk of disease and death, but our bodies work to maintain homeostasis in order to keep us functioning and alive and healthy. So then of what use is imagination? The drive to imagine and recombine images has to do with preparation. The more prepared one is in facing any one situation, the greater the chances are of surviving that situation. Therefore, such preparation for many different situations offers a decided advantage toward keeping us alive. For this instinct of preparation to work well, one needs many operations for the plans, as well as constant rehearsal of these operations. To prepare, to rehearse, we constantly tell narratives to our self about our self. At different points, this narrative will change based on our desire for food, sex, etc. But the narrative is always there, keeping us ready for action. (Damasio, 2003)

All these feats call for a process capable of incorporating these actions, one that can accommodate all the various narrative episodes in one body. Bruner stated: “Episodic self-accountings do not provide us the means for fitting into a wider cultural surround, or even for becoming acquainted with the cultural affordances on which our existence depends. All of this requires a more extended form of learning” (Bruner, 1996, pp. 165-166). Damasio’s autobiographical self would provide for this extended form of learning. Schafer’s narrating self may be seen as keeper and teller of all of one’s episodic narratives, thus storing a range of possibilities to draw upon when facing future and inevitably unfamiliar encounters in life.

If Nabokov gave his memories away to any number of his fictional characters, then each of his fictions might be cast as a sort of pseudo-autobiography. All of these

would amount to multiple tellings of the same sorts of stories. Perhaps these served as one of Nabokov's efforts to create a more adaptable, flexible and narrating self. Indeed Nabokov wrote that there was a purpose to this blurring of the line between artist and the man. And in Nabokov's fiction *Look at the Harlequins!* (1974), his novelist-narrator Vadim Vadimovitch also stated: "only the writing of fiction, the endless re-creation of my fluid self, could keep me more or less sane" (p. 97). With the mention of sanity, Nabokov also hinted that there may have been another motivation for these multiple retellings. Perhaps the construction of all these narratives helped Nabokov to remain sane in the face of those events that constituted his actual life. Perhaps this process allowed him to retain some hope for transformation and change when those losses he experienced were so final and permanent. Perhaps Nabokov too discovered something of narrating's most important function—the potential to retrieve us from the seeming finality and trauma of loss.

Traumatic Narrative

Hayden White (1980) pointed to narrative's function of translating a "knowing into telling," where an individual creates "assimilable to structures of meaning" that are comprehensible to others (p. 5). In these self-narratives, it is the expression and articulation of affects that serve as the foundation for the creation of a vital, agentic narration of self-experience. In order to construct such a narrative about one's experience, an individual often must create some distance from the actual experience in order to reflect back onto events. In this way, some degree of differentiation is achieved between various affects, between various figures in the story, and between the progressions of

events. Thus, affect is translated from bodily experience into language, taking the form of symbolic meaning.

But what of traumatic narratives? Many scholars from both the past and the present cite dissociation as a chief defense in a victim's process tolerating trauma. Henry Krystal (1978) wrote that: "the final common path of traumatization was the development of overwhelming affects" (p. 91), one that ultimately resulted in: "disturbances [in psychic functioning]...consisting of affect dedifferentiation, deverbalization, and resomatization" (p. 96). Dori Laub (1993, 2005) noted in his research with Holocaust survivors that trauma profoundly affects an individual's memory. He stated that many individuals spoke of living in two different worlds—one of the present and the other of their past, traumatic memories. He wrote: "very often they do not wish, or are completely unable, to reconcile these two different worlds. The memory [of the traumatic event] is thus timeless, the experience is frozen. It is automatic and purposeless, bereft of meaning" (2005, p. 311). Because of its timeless existence, trauma may continue to exert its influence on the victim's life over time. Frozen, immutable memories of trauma are unable to be incorporated into the symbolic, ongoing, autobiographical narrative of the past, present and future self. As Van der Kolk observed:

Traumatic experiences are initially imprinted sensations and feeling states and are not collated and transcribed into personal narratives... Our interviews with traumatized people as well as our brain imaging studies with them seem to confirm that traumatic memories come back as emotional and sensory states with little capacity for verbal representation... they may be encoded differently from memories for ordinary events... perhaps because extreme emotional arousal

interferes with hippocampal memory functions... This failure to process information on a symbolic level, which is essential for proper categorization and integration with other experiences, is at the very core of the pathology of PTSD. (Van der Kolk, McFarlane & Weisaeth, 1996, pp. 296, 282)

If trauma exacts such powerful effects on an individual's experience, inevitably, as Van der Kolk stated, the individual's self-narrative is affected as well. Laub (1993) observed that traumatic narratives often contained absent, silent spaces where it seemed no events or experience had been recorded in the individual's history. While considering these silent spaces, Laub stated:

Much of knowing is dependent on language—not only our knowing trauma through hearing the victims' language, but the ability of victims to grasp and recall their experiences through the process of formulating them in language. Because of the radical break between trauma and culture, victims often cannot find categories of thought or words for their experience. That is, since neither culture nor experience provide structures for formulating acts of massive aggression, survivors cannot articulate trauma, even to themselves. (Laub and Auerhahn, 1993, p. 288)

If affects and experience serve as a foundation for autobiographical narratives, then denied, split off or fragmented affects may manifest in a similarly denied, split off or fragmented narrative forms. In Nabokov's case, one can observe how he fragmented his traumatic memories in the telling of his father's assassination. In his memoir, Nabokov struggled to find words that could describe the event, though it was clear that he did have strong feelings about it. His earlier quoted journal entry from that night described his

reaction. There he wrote: “the sole thing clear and significant and alive was the grief, tenacious, suffocating, compressing my heart” (Boyd, 1993a, p. 191). But in his actual autobiography, Nabokov did not express his sentiment, memories or feelings about the event. Instead he only left an absence.

Nabokov wrote of the moment his mother received the phone call informing the family of his father’s death on page 49 of *Speak, Memory* (1989).

On the night of March 28, 1922, around ten o’clock, in the living room where as usual my mother was reclining on the red-plush corner couch, I happened to be reading her Blok’s verse on Italy—had just got to the end of the little poem about Florence, which Blok compares to the delicate, smoky bloom of an iris, and she was saying over her knitting, ‘Yes, yes Florence does look like a *dimniy iris*, how true! I remember—’ when the telephone rang.

After 1923 when she moved to Prague... (Nabokov, 1989, p. 49)

Directly following his description of the phone call, Nabokov immediately skipped the action of the narrative forward a year, such that his characters literally inhabit a different time and space. By moving his narrative focus ahead, Nabokov implied that the content of the call contained nothing of import. Thus the scene appeared to be another routine evening, one lacking any special significance. In truth, however, March 28th was the date of his father’s assassination. With this additional information, the scene takes on quite a different meaning. Yet Nabokov may have unwittingly orchestrated his presentation such that his readers were left with an inaccurate accounting of events. He only hinted at the loss several paragraphs later when portraying a much later picture of his mother in Prague:

With great clarity I can see her sitting at a table and serenely considering the laid-out cards of a game of solitaire: she leans on her left elbow and presses to her cheek the free thumb of her left hand, in which, close to her mouth, she holds a cigarette, while her right hand stretched toward the next card. The double gleam on her fourth finger is two marriage rings—her own and my father’s, which, being too large for her, is fastened to hers by a bit of black thread. (Nabokov, 1989, p. 50)

124 pages later, Nabokov finally identified that his father’s death took place on March 28, 1922 (Nabokov, 1989, p. 173). Even there, however, he simply listed the date of his father’s death as a fact among others. The long gap between Nabokov’s description of events and his identification of its contents may speak to the degree of distress he felt around the death. The closest Nabokov came to approaching some representation of the loss was 144 pages later when he relayed a boyhood memory of his father’s participation in a duel. There, he described his terror at the thought of losing his father, as well as his desperate relief to discover father’s definitive safety. He wrote:

I knew at once that there would be no duel, that the challenge had been met by an apology, that all was right. I brushed past my uncle and reached the landing. I saw my mother’s serene everyday face, but I could not look at my father. And then it happened: my heart welled in me like that wave on which *Buyniy* rose when her captain brought her alongside the burning *Suvorov*, and I had no handkerchief, and ten years were to pass before a certain night in 1922, at a public lecture in Berlin, when my father shielded the lecturer (his old friend Milyukov) from the bullets of two Russian Fascists and, while vigorously knocking down one of his

assassins, was fatally shot by the other. But no shadow was cast by that future event upon the bright stairs of our St. Petersburg house; the large cool hand resting on my head did not quaver, and several lines of a difficult chess combination were not blended yet on the board. (Nabokov, 1989, p 193)

Ultimately, Nabokov did present all of the information about his father's death: the date, the notification to the family, the impact of the loss on his mother, and his own reactions to the loss. Yet Nabokov presented this information in fragments scattered across the whole of his narrative endeavor, such that the meaning and impact of the event was nearly lost.

On trauma, Laub (1993) concluded:

The most tangible form of knowing trauma is, in its crudest, undigested, and unassimilated version, like a split off foreign body, casting a perpetual shadow on life events and therapeutic trials. This is the form of knowing that tends to characterize victims. (Laub, 1993, p. 299)

In Laub's conception, the silent space in a narrative is not a Winnicottian space, ripe with potential and poised for play. Rather it is a frozen space, one detached and isolated from the ongoing narration of the self. This strategy of isolation serves as an understandable attempt to protect the whole of the narrating self from the debilitating effects of unfathomable catastrophe. However Laub (1993, 2005) observed that these isolated memories were not experienced as having moved into the past. When touched upon, these memories were re-experienced again as if the initial event were happening right then and there. Within the conception of the autobiographical narrative, perhaps the traumatic memory was not moved into the past because it was never originally encoded

into language or assimilated into the extended, narrating action of the self. Rather, as Laub and Van der Kolk suggested, it may have been isolated apart from the overall narrative process. Conversely, then, perhaps it might be that the process of creating a narrative about the trauma allows events, experiences and affects to be moved into the past. Indeed, experience must be reflected upon from some slight distance if it is to be represented in language. Placing traumatic events into this context of an extended narrating self may ultimately provide a traumatized individual with enough distance to reflect back upon the memory as something having happened in the past, thus moving it into its appropriate place. And perhaps the creation of an autobiographical narrating self, along with its repeated revision, offers just such an opportunity.

Discussion of Results

Nabokov used the creation of his autobiographical narrative as a means to create a continuous sense of self, to collect that which he felt had been lost. It has been proposed that revision and repetition may have been one tool Nabokov used to work through and transform some of those areas he may have found blurry or dissatisfying. In addition, I suggested that repetition may have also been a means Nabokov used to transform conflicted or traumatic material such that those stories were able to be better integrated into the whole of his extended, narrating, autobiographical self.

This project set out to investigate whether repetition and revision may have affected any change across the drafts of Nabokov's autobiographical narrative. The following section explores the results of those hypotheses tested, as well as their possible meanings.

Hypothesis I: Concentration of Alliteration

The first hypothesis in this project raised the question as to whether any of the individual sections from “Mademoiselle O” contained significantly higher or lower concentrations of alliterative repetition in comparison to other sections. If a greater concentration of alliterative repetition in certain sections of the chapter were revealed, then it was suggested that the contents of these sections could and should be closely examined. It was thought that a greater concentration of alliterative repetition might serve as a marker to flag themes revolving around loss and exile, these themes chosen specifically because they were some of the most conflicted and uncertain matters in Nabokov’s life history. Any sections found to contain these elevated concentrations of alliterative repetition would then be examined to see if and how the detail of those particular themes encompassed the subjects of loss and exile.

In order to analyze this hypothesis, all alliterative repetition was identified in each of the documents and an amount was tabulated for each section. Following, a statistical comparison was performed in order to assess whether any significant differences existed between sections. Indeed, this project revealed significant results where the concentration of alliteration was concerned. When compared with all other sections in the document, Section 5 proved to contain the greatest number of alliterative words and phrases. In a pairwise comparison, this was the only section shown to be significantly different from all other sections at the .05 significance level. Additionally, the tests also revealed significant results for Section 7. While Section 7 did not differ significantly from all six sections, it did vary significantly from five of the other six sections and thus is considered to be worthy of exploration. Conversely, Section 3 proved to differ from the fewest

number of sections in that pairwise comparison, varying significantly only from Sections 5 and 7. Otherwise, it contained no significantly different amount of alliterative repetition when compared to the remaining four sections. Therefore, it was determined that these three sections warranted a closer look at their contents in order to examine and analyze the specific nature of the themes found within.

Greatest Significance in Concentrations of Alliterative Repetition.

Section 5: Desymbolized, nighttime hide-and-seek.

Across all drafts, the section that contained the greatest number of alliterated words and phrases was certainly Section 5, one devoted to Nabokov's deep and clearly conflicted dependence upon Mademoiselle. There he detailed the soothing quality of her dulcet voice as she read novels to him on the veranda, perhaps a formative event in the life of a young writer. And too he explored his confused reaction to her unfamiliar otherness, to her foreign "hothouse" of a room when compared to his own family's "well-aired" home (Nabokov, 1989, p. 107). But by far, the greatest part of the section was devoted to Nabokov's nightly battle with insomnia and his ensuing terror. He wrote:

No matter how great my weariness, the wrench of parting with consciousness is unspeakably repulsive to me. I loathe Somnus, that black-masked headsman binding me to the block; and if in the course of years, with the approach of a far more thorough and still more risible disintegration, which nowanights, I confess, detracts much from the routine terrors of sleep, I have grown so accustomed to my bedtime ordeal as almost to swagger while the familiar ax is coming out of its great velvet-lined double-bass case, initially I had no such comfort or defense: I

had nothing—except one token light in the potentially refulgent chandelier of Mademoiselle’s bedroom, whose door, by our family doctor’s decree (I salute you, Dr. Sokolov!), remained slightly ajar. Its vertical line of lambency (which a child’s tears could transform into dazzling rays of compassion) was something I could cling to, since in absolute darkness my head would swim and my mind melt in a travesty of the death struggle. (Nabokov, 1989, p. 108-109)

Nabokov’s nightly “disintegration” was to be a recurring process that haunted him throughout his life, for it was well known that he struggled with insomnia into old age. As he portrayed it above, sleep was a struggle with death. And in this picture, it seemed that Nabokov was most terrified by his anticipation and experience of feeling utterly abandoned. Nabokov wrote that only the illumination from Mademoiselle’s candle kept the night’s anxiety at bay. However, once she blew that flame out, it was as if she had literally disappeared. With his description, it becomes clear that Nabokov was unable to create and hold an image of Mademoiselle in his mind during her brief absences. Not even a memory of her could keep him until morning. Instead, the loss of contact with the object dominated the entirety of his experience. Without an actual, concrete representation of the other—in this case the literal light from the flame of her candle—Nabokov was left with nothing to comfort him through the dark of night.

The alliterative repetition found in this passage may have marked Nabokov’s attempt to return to a pre-traumatic, perhaps even fantasized state in which it was his separation from others that played the part of the bad dream. In the case of loss and trauma, Freud and Loewald both noted that the active rearrangement of a repeated past dynamic may allow for a greater organization of ego and structure. In this instance where

the nightly repetition of loss was so absolute, however, it seems that Nabokov was unable to transform the pieces into anything constructive beyond unqualified loss. Thus, we can read this as Nabokov's example of a desymbolized loss, an experience in which he had not yet achieved the capacity for object constancy. In other words, Nabokov had not yet discovered his ability to use a symbol to represent the object in its absence. As the theory goes, a symbol could have served him in the course of an inevitable, temporary loss of the actual thing itself, in this case, that thing being Mademoiselle.

Considering Nabokov's history of such complete and total losses suffered, it is not surprising that Nabokov's fears of losing his principal loomed so large in his field of attention. The assassination of his father, the loss of his brother in the concentration camps, the totality of exile and the inability to ever return to his country of origin could have all proved circumstances to absorb tremendous amounts of psychic energy. Earlier it was suggested that Nabokov might have even devoted his creative life to exploring, understanding and working through such matters. The histories of his characters are littered with exile and significant object loss, such that these losses influenced each character's eventual fate—perversion, madness, or death, being but a few outcomes.

Therefore, it should not be a surprise that the results reveal the greatest concentration of alliteration to stand in this particular section—that with the least symbolized depiction of loss. Following the arguments that have been put forth thus far, one might surmise that, at the time, these were the particular themes that still called for a measure of working through before they could have been resolved to any satisfying degree. The question as to whether Nabokov was able to take advantage of the potential benefits any revision of this document may have offered remains to be discussed.

Section 7: Final goodbyes.

The results from this study also revealed that Section 7 from the “Mademoiselle O” chapter contained a relatively significant concentration of alliteration. Again, it was shown to differ significantly from all other sections but Section 1. Because of this, Section 7 was closely examined and a detailed analysis of content was conducted.

In this final section to the chapter, Nabokov sketched a scene where he, a young man at university, traveled some distance to visit his old governess on one last occasion. Again, having consistently depicted such a negative picture of Mademoiselle, Nabokov’s decision to return to her after so many years was a curious one. Yet a final goodbye easily falls under a theme that encompasses loss, and even speaks to Nabokov’s potential difficulty parting with meaningful figures. It could be said that Nabokov’s separation from Mademoiselle was unresolved, for the return visit may point toward his struggle to let her go despite all the years spent apart from her. After all, he continued to return to her even long after her death by writing about her in his memoirs, for here he created a version of Mademoiselle whom he could revisit over and over again.

In order to adequately address this scene, perhaps it is best to first review Nabokov’s description of his initial encounter with her. It was there that he established a foundational meaning of Mademoiselle as symbol. As was previously discussed, Nabokov first characterized Mademoiselle by remarking upon her strangeness, portraying her as the ultimate other from a foreign land. Yet as she arrives in Russia, Nabokov too depicted himself as returning back to Russia after having spent a year abroad. In juxtaposing both their arrivals along side one another, Nabokov depicts them both as exiles. With Mademoiselle’s first steps onto foreign soil, Nabokov anticipated his own

future steps onto different foreign soils, foreshadowing his future exile from his homeland. He wrote:

I was not quite six, but that year abroad, a year of difficult decisions and liberal hopes, had exposed a small Russian boy to grown-up conversations. He could not help being affected in some way of his own by a mother's nostalgia and a father's patriotism. In result, that particular return to Russia, my first *conscious* return, seems to me now, sixty years later, a rehearsal—not of the grand homecoming that will never take place, but of its constant dream in my long years of exile. (Nabokov, 1989, p. 96-97)

As both Mademoiselle and Nabokov arrived on their trains, they did so by way of quite different rails originating from quite different circumstances. Perhaps Nabokov's arrival represented one of his first awakenings as to his family's intact unity, something that would later prove a far more fragile state of affairs. Nabokov implied that his awareness of this possibility resulted from having overheard grownup conversations. These conversations would have hinted at anxious preparations for a quick leave taking should the circumstances require it. Certainly these were the sorts of circumstances capable of stirring a mother's nostalgia and father's patriotism. If Nabokov arrived into an awareness of the delicacy of his family's unity at the same time that an outsider, Mademoiselle, also arrived to join his family system, it might be that Nabokov interpreted her arrival as an interruption. Perhaps she came to represent the disruption of his family's togetherness, a minor intrusion that ushered in a series that would ultimately tear the family into pieces. If so, then it would not be out of the ordinary for Nabokov to experience some ambivalence around her arrival and presence.

Indeed Nabokov wrote about Mademoiselle with distain and contempt, yet he insisted on including her in his memoirs and even bestowed her an honored position as the first subject to be written about. Therefore, Mademoiselle may not have only come to represent a threat to the idealized family unity, but she may have also come to be associated with that intact family's final years of happiness. If so, the paradoxical representation would illuminate the conflict Nabokov so clearly expressed in writing about her arrival and her departure. Mademoiselle as representation of a time when Nabokov's core family was intact would have made Mademoiselle into a compelling figure for Nabokov. And at the same time, Mademoiselle as a harbinger of a more fragmented family future would have likely made her into a figure worthy of Nabokov's detest.

Turning back to the final section now, the paradoxical conception may shed more light onto Nabokov's final and very deliberate goodbye to his governess. Perhaps, in part, this last visit was a symbolic goodbye to the idyllic days of his family and his youth. After all, Nabokov's trip to see Mademoiselle in Switzerland was portrayed as taking place around the time that his father was killed, not to mention at a time when Nabokov actually was a man capable of "adult conversations." Also, by revisiting the final goodbye on multiple occasions through the drafts enabled Nabokov to discover one final tie to the past via Mademoiselle, one that appeared only in *Speak, Memory*—a memory related to his father. He wrote:

There is an appendix to Mademoiselle's story. When I first wrote it I did not know about certain amazing survivals... A pretty little keepsake drawn in 1895 by Ivan de Peterson, Peter's father, shows various events of life at Batovo vignetted

over an inscription in my father's hand: *A celle qui a toujours su se faire aimer et qui ne saura jamais se faire oublier*; signatures have been appended by four young male Nabokovs and three of their sisters, Natalia, Elizaveta, and Nadezhda, as well as by Natalia's husband, their little son Mitik, two girl cousins, and Ivan Aleksandrovich Tihotski, the Russian tutor. (Nabokov, 1989. p. 117-118)

During a visit to one of his cousins in 1960, the cousin showed him a drawing Nabokov's uncle had made during childhood, one that represented events and characters from his father's own idyllic childhood. That drawing included an inscription written in Nabokov's father's hand: "*A celle qui a toujours su se faire aimer et qui ne saura jamais se faire oublier*" (Nabokov, 1989, p. 118). It was as if all the signers felt compelled to endorse a confirmation of shared experiences, documenting and thus ensuring their existence. The translation roughly approximates to the following: "To she who always knew how to love and who shall never be forgotten."

With the discovery of this image, Nabokov discovered something more of his father, a keepsake Nabokov was only able to uncover with the help of time and revision. Nabokov's father scripted the words in his own hand as if to instruct Nabokov on the importance of memory and its function: to recall, revive, and restore that which has been loved. Thus Nabokov pointed us to the value of his repeated return to Mademoiselle, indicating that the repetition of revision served as a means to both remember those he loved, as well as a means to secure those beloved objects into his memory. This process of returning to Mademoiselle in word literally became a means by which Nabokov engaged a developmental process of creating and establishing the capacity for object constancy. Where he was once unable to even remember her during the course of one

night, he was now able to discover memories of lost loved ones with her aid. Thus, it became a way he was able to work through some of that loss that had proved so devastating.

The implication of Mademoiselle's function may be that through the repeated writing and revising of this story, Nabokov was eventually able to develop a capacity for grappling with uncertainty and ambiguity. He even achieved the ability to say goodbye to a figure for whom he may not have had the highest regard. Nabokov wrote a reflection on the final meeting:

Have I really salvaged her from fiction? Just before the rhythm I hear falters and fades, I catch myself wondering whether, during the years I knew her, I had not kept utterly missing something in her that was far more she than her chins or her ways or even her French—something perhaps akin to that last glimpse of her, to the radiant deceit she had used in order to have me depart pleased with my own kindness, or to that swan whose agony was so much closer to artistic truth than a drooping dancer's pale arms; something, in short, that I could appreciate only after the things and beings that I had most loved in the security of my childhood had been turned to ashes or shot through the heart. (Nabokov, 1989, p. 117)

Though the images he painted of her were quite sad, the image of “an aged swan” (Nabokov, 1989, p. 116) implied that there had been a previous beauty to her. Perhaps, in part, her hidden beauty was related to this function she may have been able to serve him. By using Mademoiselle in such a fashion, she became a transitional object, a safe enough image with which Nabokov could launch the project of uncovering and reclaiming his own historical narratives. By beginning his autobiographical effort with his memories

about her, Nabokov could be assured that whatever memories were first discovered would be distant enough from the most intense of his losses. Thus Nabokov would have been buffered from the threats of immediate pain and fragmentation that any intimate losses would have elicited. And with the distance, Nabokov decreased the risk of his prematurely abandoning the project as a result of the inevitable pain he was bound to encounter. As it was, Mademoiselle served him well in this regard, for Nabokov was able to begin and continue the project to its end, with multiple iterations and multiple translations between.

Least Significance in Concentrations of Alliterative Repetition.

Section 3: Symbolized, daytime hide-and-seek.

Finally, the least significance found in the comparisons between sections was revealed to be Section 3, the section that depicted the daytime hide-and-seek “game” Nabokov played on Mademoiselle. In the scene, Mademoiselle took Vladimir and Sergey on a short, unsatisfying walk around the snowy Vyra grounds directly following their mother’s departure for St. Petersburg. In a rage over being abandoned, Nabokov determined that his only revenge could be one taken out on Mademoiselle. Therefore, he promptly enlisted Sergey into abandoning Mademoiselle, continuing their outdoor adventure without her. Predictably and understandably, Mademoiselle became hysterical upon realizing their disappearance. However she collected herself well enough to fetch them back, sending a stable hand to retrieve the boys since she, in all of her rotund bulk, was unable to follow in pursuit. He wrote:

As I reconstitute it now, my mother had probably gone, with her maid and young Trainy, to St. Petersburg (a distance of some fifty miles) where my father was deeply involved in the grave political events of that winter. She was pregnant and very nervous. Miss Robinson, instead of staying to break in Mademoiselle, had gone too—back to that ambassador’s family, about which we had heard from her as much as they would about us. In order to prove that this was no way of treating us, I immediately formed the project of repeating the exciting performance of a year before when we escaped from poor Miss Hunt in Wiesbaden. (Nabokov, 1989, p. 102)

It was suggested at an earlier point in the paper that Nabokov’s depiction of the daytime hide-and-seek allowed him an opportunity to play with and achieve some understanding of losing and finding. Too it may have allowed him an opportunity to develop a sense of mastery and control where these matters were concerned. And, in a sense, the game became a means of regulating fantasy—a way to play with and control the various chess pieces in the game at hand. Here Nabokov took a more active stance with respect to his abandonment when compared to his insomniac scenarios, for here it was Nabokov who abandoned Mademoiselle, leaving her to suffer the fear and pain of loss. As such, he was the one to determine which players disappeared and /or reappeared at which points in the play. Thus, when Nabokov’s mother abandoned him to join her husband, Nabokov was immediately able to seek out a substitute, a transitional object, a safe someone with whom he re-enact the oedipal dynamic. With Mademoiselle, Nabokov created a game in which he did the leaving, similar to the way in which Freud’s grandson controlled the comings and goings of players in his Fort/Da game. As with the Fort /Da,

Nabokov's hide-and-seek became a vehicle through which Nabokov could safely explore and express the varied emotions elicited by abandonment. Notably Nabokov was able to reflect upon the enactment, observing that this game with Mademoiselle was in fact more closely related to his feelings of anger and wish for revenge elicited in response to his mother's leaving taking. It also was a means for him to elicit those same emotions in others as well. With his game, he discovered anger, terror, revenge, satisfaction, and pleasure. With the adventure, Nabokov discovered a means to both regulate and even play with affect.

As is clear, this daytime depiction of hide-and-seek resulted in quite a different picture than the nighttime version. In the nighttime version, Nabokov was unable to convert Mademoiselle into a transitional object even with the tool of alliterative repetition and multiple revisions. However, in this context, perhaps the new daytime version can be thought of as an extension and development of the nighttime version. Recall that the daytime version was not actually included in the first English draft, or even the first French draft for that matter. Rather, Nabokov added it to CE Draft 2. With the addition, Nabokov effectively demonstrated that the process of writing and re-writing allowed him to accomplish some degree of transformation where Mademoiselle's symbolic image was concerned. This daytime narrative indicates that Nabokov had achieved some object constancy with Mademoiselle's image, for in effect he must have been able to hold Mademoiselle in mind, otherwise he never would have been able to endure their separation as he ran off into the woods. In this sense, Nabokov's addition of second, symbolized version of the hide-and-seek scene could be viewed as an extension of the working through process of this theme as a whole. That Nabokov was capable of actively

rearranging pieces of the puzzle provides the evidence of his increased capacity to represent a more symbolized, abstract depiction of loss, whereas in the nighttime version, he struggled desperately to do so.

Considering the argument above, it is interesting to note that the daytime hide-and-seek section differed the least from the other sections when comparisons were made between the concentrations of alliterative repetition. Indeed, the only other sections shown to differ significantly in this respect were those discussed above, Sections 5 and 7, the nighttime hide-and-seek and the final goodbye. If this daytime version of hide-and-seek is a more symbolized version of the loss theme as proposed, then it would stand to reason that Nabokov may have actually processed some of the conflict and ambivalence involved in the matter. If so, and if repetition was a means for him to process this conflict, then the need for repetition would have been reduced once he worked through some of those powerful conflicts. If the theory stands, then, this section would have contained no greater concentrations of alliteration than did other sections. And indeed, this has been shown to be the case.

Hypothesis II: Change in Alliteration Across Drafts

Transformation: Change in the quantity of alliterative repetition.

The discussion above dovetails into questions raised by the second hypothesis. These questions revolved around whether a change in the amount of alliterative repetition in later drafts of the autobiography could be observed when compared to earlier drafts. It was proposed that if alliterative repetition was used in the service of transforming conflicted material, and if the various drafts served as a means for Nabokov to repeat,

work through, and re-work some of that unformulated autobiographical material involving themes of loss and exile, then latter drafts should contain a reduction in the amount of alliterative when compared to earlier drafts. However, a somewhat more speculative notion was also proposed where the potential change in alliteration was concerned. It was also proposed that if the final draft of Nabokov's autobiography was shown to contain an increase in the overall concentration of alliteration when compared to the former two drafts, then perhaps the increase might be explained by the author's attempts to install himself in the minds of his readers, an elegant solution to Nabokov's concerns of being abandoned and forgotten.

In the test of the hypothesis, the repeated measures ANOVA revealed no significant difference when comparing the overall concentration of alliteration found in each of the three draft versions of the document. The profile plots chart in the results section of this document shows that the overall concentration of alliteration decreased between AM Draft 1 and CE Draft 2, though not to any significant degree. However, the overall concentration increased between CE Draft 2 and SM Draft 3, thus revealing the greatest amount of difference between any of the two drafts in a pairwise comparison, though again not to any significant degree. Therefore both the first aspect of the hypothesis—that a reduction in the overall concentration of alliteration would indicate a successful working through of conflict—proved to be unfounded, as did the second aspect of the hypothesis—that involving a potential explanation of an increase of alliteration over the course of the drafts.

It is worth noting, however, that a trend was demonstrated in the results. While there was no statistical significance in the difference between Drafts 1, 2 and 3, the

pairwise comparison did reveal that after the concentration of alliteration decreased between AM Draft 1 and CE Draft 2, the concentration then trended upward toward an increase between CE Draft 2 and SM Draft 3. While there is not enough evidence to support significance, the trend does suggest that a further consideration of the matter is warranted. This particular exploratory study only examined one chapter of Nabokov's autobiography, and so there remains an open question as to what might be revealed if the data set included the whole of Nabokov's text.

As far as the results at hand are concerned, any one of several explanations might account for the lack of significance. For one, the literary device of alliteration exemplifies sound repetition at a high level of symbolization when compared to more desymbolized versions such as perseveration or clang associations, for example. In essence, earlier discussions conceptualize the function of repetition in terms of a continuum. Desymbolized versions of repetition would be situated at one end, where repetition manifests in terms of Freud's remembering and repeating, the remembered past brought into the present in the form of an act. Repetition functioning in the service of transformation would be situated toward the center of such a continuum. Thus repetition becomes an opportunity to actively rearrange and re-create conflicted or unformulated psychic material, possibly moving the narrative toward greater degrees of symbolization. Freud's *Fort/Da* would also play a part in the process of symbolizing psychic material as repetition has been conceptualized as a means to understand, work through and even master conflict. And finally, the most symbolized version of repetition would reside at the furthest end of the continuum, where repetition might continue if mastery has been achieved and pleasure is being derived from its continued use. Again, alliterative

repetition in this context would fall somewhere between the middle and high end of the spectrum.

Perhaps the trend can be related to this same continuum. If Nabokov has achieved some mastery in his use of alliteration in the final draft, then perhaps the observed increase in concentration of alliteration between CE Draft 2 and AM Draft 3 could represent Nabokov's joy taken in playing with language and sound. Alternatively, it should not be forgotten that the slight increase in the concentration of alliteration in SM Draft 3 might also suggest that repetition could function as a vehicle for internalization. Therefore this question as to whether alliteration may enhance a reader's capacity for remembering the author and his work should not be abandoned outright.

To this end, it may be interesting to consider one last statement made by Laub (2005) on the formation of narrative where trauma is concerned. It has been suggested by several researchers and theorists that in the frozen space of trauma, timeless, immutable affects and narratives prohibit symbol formation. Laub (2005) suggested that this phenomenon might also prohibit the development of an internalized other with whom a conversation about the self and about the traumatic events can be had. Laub (2005) felt that an internal narrative allowed events to be narrated to both self and to an internal "thou." He proposed that in massive psychic trauma there was a destruction of an internalized, empathetic other who is unable to hear or respond to the devastating effects this trauma had on the "I." He wrote:

The 'other,' the 'thou,' who is empathically in tune and responsive to one's needs, ceases to exist, and faith in the possibility of communication itself dies. There is no longer a 'thou,' either outside or inside oneself, a thou whom one can address.

An empathic dyad no longer exists in one's internal world representation. There is no one to turn to, even inside oneself. It is an utterly desolate landscape, totally void of life and of humanity, permeated by the terror of the state of objectlessness. (Laub, 2005, p. 315)

If trauma destroys an internal sense of the other, then perhaps the idea that Nabokov's efforts to conjure the other may not be not so far fetched. Nabokov's inability to hold an internalized version of Mademoiselle during the nighttime hide-and-seek episode may speak to the degree which an internal object can be destroyed in trauma. Yet the desire to repair this kind of destruction may also be measured by the repetition that followed, for every repetition can be viewed as an opportunity for repair. And perhaps part of what Nabokov was attempting to reinstate was a presence of that internal "thou."

Transformation: Change in the quality of alliterative repetition.

Throughout this work, the function of repetition was cast in several different roles: one that attempted to maintain stasis and return the material to previous pre-traumatic states; one that attempted to bind symbol to affect, thus providing a step toward greater symbolization; and finally one that attempted to transform conflicted or unformulated material so that a creative means of processing material was possible and perhaps even achieved. Ultimately, it was suggested that if repetition were to be employed in the service of transformation, and if repetition was successful in its use for this purpose, then the resulting material would likely contain a greater degree of symbolization when compared to previous iterations. In the context of this study, the transformative potential of alliteration was to be measured by the quantity of alliteration

found in the three drafts of Nabokov's autobiography. As was revealed, no such significance was found.

However, transformation does not have to be considered only in terms of quantity. Repetition and transformation can also be analyzed in terms quality. While there can be no definitive conclusions on this sort of matter in this particular project, an exploratory effort will follow, looking to see if any examples of more static forms of repetition might have evolved into material that possessed more active, creative or transformative properties. If there was an evolution in the quality of Nabokov's repetition, then there might be some evidence of a greater overall symbolization in the text, as well as a different usage of the alliterative repetition itself.

Sections and overall organization.

Generally speaking, it is clear that Nabokov altered the organization of the overall sectioning of the chapter, adding divisions in latter drafts in order to distinguish and refine themes. In fact, Jane Grayson (1977) reported in *Nabokov Translated* (p. 147) that the French version did not contain any section divisions whatsoever. Therefore, it is safe to say that Nabokov did improve upon the overall organization and structure of the chapter over the course of editing his drafts. It was likely the revision process that allowed him to further articulate and separate his subject matter into more autonomous and distinct subtopics. For example, in Section 2 of AM Draft 1, Nabokov wrote about two subjects—his love for the solitary act of drawing and Mademoiselle's particular gestures and mannerisms. In CE Draft 2, however, he separated these two matters, and even inserted a completely new narrative between the two as if to emphasize their division. There he inserted the Section 3 daytime hide-and-seek theme directly after his

description of his love for drawing. Nabokov moved the descriptions of Mademoiselle's mannerisms to follow the daytime hide-and-seek, so that the images of her bespeckled hands ultimately inhabited Section 4.

It seems apparent, too, that Nabokov's memory improved with each draft. Details became sharper over the progressions. Characters once shrouded in murky shadows were given names. Images appeared brighter and crisper with each draft. For example, the simple inclusion of carriage horses' names added in the final draft—"Zoyka and Zinka"—offered the narrative a greater sense of realism. With details, readers were able to see more, feel more, and know more of the world Nabokov portrayed. With detail, Nabokov was able to evoke more sensuous and redolent imagery. With details, readers were invited to inhabit a visceral experience of that world that Nabokov created. In addition, Nabokov included greater historical accuracies in latter drafts. These sorts of details ensured that the narrative was imbued with a sense of being rooted in a specific historical time and place. With the additions, the text was not only transformed into a writer's better remembered chronicle, it was also transformed into a more memorable experience for the reader. As was pointed out earlier, Nabokov valued "the supremacy of the detail over the general" (Nabokov, 1980, p. 373). In effect, the detail of these evocative images translated to a greater degree of symbolized material in the narrative. Freud would have argued that this effort toward creating an enhanced evocation of imagery was driven by the longing and striving toward a creative ideal, one ultimately driven by Eros.

One further point echoes those made above, a point concerned with the differences between memoir and autobiography. The earlier drafts of Nabokov's

narrative more closely resembled a personalized memoir whereas later drafts focused on an autobiographical account set in greater historical context. This shift in perspective reflects something of the differences found in the degree of symbolization between earlier and later drafts, where later drafts contained greater degrees of symbolized material.

In part this more nuanced perspective likely developed out of Nabokov's own changing perspective, for the drafts were written and revised over the course of 30 years. Nabokov's own history was continuing to be written as he revised this particular work. Consider that Nabokov published the first of his articles while he was still living in Europe, not yet arrived in America. At that time Nabokov was likely grappling with the palpable shadow of the war. On the other hand, the first English version of "Mademoiselle O" was published once he was settled in America, and in the same year that he was awarded the Guggenheim Fellowship (1943). The last of the magazine articles and *Conclusive Evidence* came out in 1951, a time when Nabokov had only recently been appointed to his permanent position at Cornell. And Nabokov was translating the final work into Russian in 1954 while also finishing his infamous *Lolita* (1955). Finally Nabokov would have been quite a renowned author in 1966 when he published *Speak, Memory*, and thus afforded the luxury of a full artistic freedom that only such success can offer.

All of these varied life circumstances and positions likely called upon different aspects of his identity—from the initial freshness of a beginner's mind, to the Russian recollections that brought him closer to the details of his actual memories, to the unique outlook of an experienced and established author. It would not be surprising to think, then, that Nabokov may have been able to remember different details during each of

those particular times in part as a consequence of the context in which he found himself. The various qualities of his ever developing identity as writer would have likely allowed for the recall of specific kinds of particulars at different times as well, thus influencing shifts in the focus of the autobiography over time. In the end, Nabokov slowly reworked his autobiography over the years, improving upon historical aspects of the piece, but always with the eye of advancing the literary elements and function of the narrative.

Additions to the progressive drafts.

There is further evidence to support the theory that Nabokov's revision process facilitated an improvement in the overall organization of and degree of symbolization found in the "Mademoiselle O" chapter over time. The most significant of these confirmations relates to the mirrored narratives of a daytime and nighttime hide-and-seek. Previously, the specific narrative revolving around Nabokov's lifetime of insomniac terrors was discussed in terms of desymbolization. It was argued that Nabokov struggled to convert Mademoiselle from concrete object to a transitional one, an object that could have been held in mind and thus employed to comfort him during his hours of aloneness. However, looking beyond Section 5 and to the chapter as a whole, it was also argued that Nabokov did progress toward some greater symbolization if the narrative where the hide-and-seek game was concerned. In CE Draft 2, Nabokov added a whole new narrative that detailed a daytime hide-and-seek game with Mademoiselle, one related to but qualitatively different from the nighttime version. It clearly offered Nabokov a safe vehicle through which he could play with ideas of losing, being lost, remembering and being remembered.

On a more subtle level, Nabokov made minor additions through out the text that shaped it into a more nuanced and individualized narrative while at the same providing it with a more universal appeal. Again, Nabokov included many more specific details about characters and events, incorporating more historically accurate aspects into the narrative. Thus Nabokov was able to move the document from a personalized reminiscence to a more analytical appraisal of his own personal story that was situated in a historical context. His ability to gradually integrate the stories of outside world with the stories of his personal life potentially demonstrated his growing capacity to apprehend and accept both self and other as existing in the same space, be it narrative space, temporal space, or physical space.

To a similar end, Nabokov also included a greater number of French phrases in latter drafts. Such touches contributed to the building of a unique and specific tone of this chapter, and enabled the readers to develop a better sense of Mademoiselle's character and voice. For example, as Nabokov wrote of Mademoiselle's landing at the train station, he added one of her supposed statements to the final draft: "There I was, abandoned by all, *comme la Comtesse Karenine*," she later complained, eloquently, if not quite correctly" (Nabokov, 1989, p. 98). With this, we as readers are able to gain an early sense of Mademoiselle's attachment to a maudlin persecution that colored so many of her interactions with others, hinting of her eventual dismissal. And the emphasis of the French phrasing also emphasized her otherness, suggesting that this may have played a role in her eventual departure. These French phrases, along with an increased inclusion of additional Russian terms such as *rodina* and *polushubok* in latter drafts, could be interpreted as a device Nabokov discovered to help him to deepen and sharpen his

memory for the particulars. Again, this increase of particulars in the drafts can be considered as an indication that Nabokov accomplished improved degrees of symbolization in the text, thus demonstrating an improved capacity to bind affect to symbol.

Deletions from the progressive drafts.

Not only did Nabokov add significant narratives to the text, he also deleted certain paragraphs as well—primarily from AM Draft 1. The most significant of these deletions involved the theme of Mademoiselle’s name:

This “O” oddly enough is by no means the abbreviation of something beginning with an “O.” It is not the initial of Olivier or Oudinet, but actually the thing itself: a round and naked name which seems about to collapse without a full stop to support it; a loose wheel of a name rolling downhill, hesitating, wobbling; a toothless yawn; a melon; an egg; a lake... Very soon, as soon as she had rashly imparted to us the power of speaking her language, looping the loop of her name became the means of enraging her beyond measure. We squeezed every drop out of that vulnerable vowel; we inflated it till our cheeks all but cracked; we punned it, we punted it; we bounced it like a ball that leaves planet-like spots on the ceiling; we imagined Mademoiselle’s father arriving in some watering place and people exclaiming: “*Oh! O au’ eaux!*” (Nabokov, 1943, p. 66)

As is clear, this paragraph was a means for playing with Mademoiselle’s name and image. Yet the play took on a childish tone, as if the passage were designed simply for the purpose of degradation and nothing more. In the subsequent CE Draft 2, however,

Nabokov deleted this paragraph. Perhaps this particular exclusion, then, could be viewed as a part of Nabokov's overall effort to see and portray Mademoiselle from an adult perspective rather than from that of a child. Later in Section 1 when Nabokov wrote of both their arrivals onto the train platform, the narrative also grew more mature and thoughtful with each draft. Consider the following revisions that Nabokov made to this particular area of the narrative:

From AM Draft 1:

“The winter she came was the only one of my childhood that I spent in the country. It was also a particularly severe one...” (Nabokov, 1943, p. 67)

From CE Draft 2:

“The winter she came was the only one of my childhood that I spent in the country. It was a year of strikes, riots and police-inspired massacres, and I suppose my father wished to tuck his family away from the city, in our quiet country place, where his popularity with the peasants might mitigate, as he correctly surmised, the risk of agrarian troubles. It was also a particularly severe winter...” (Nabokov, 1951, p. 59)

From SM Draft 3:

“That winter of 1905-1906, when Mademoiselle arrived from Switzerland, was the only one of my childhood that I spent in the country. It was a year of strikes, riots and police-inspired massacres, and I suppose my father wished to keep his family away from the city, in our quiet country place, where his popularity with the peasants might mitigate, as he correctly surmised, the risks of unrest. It was also a particularly severe winter...” (Nabokov, 1989, p. 97)

As time passed with each draft, it seems that Nabokov was able to reflect more deeply on the circumstances surrounding the events of their arrivals. With his reflections, he was able to depict a far more nuanced and historical view of the matter in the final draft. In SM Draft 3, Nabokov even added an additional paragraph to Section 1 (para 4) where he provided personal and intimate details of his journey back to Russia from the year abroad. It would seem that the repeated process of revision allowed Nabokov to revisit the memory over and over again, thereby unlocking deeper memories of the circumstances, and allowing a greater space for the elaboration and articulation of these remembered details. In the end, Nabokov was better able to represent a more mature and complex view of both those events—of Mademoiselle’s arrival as well as of those events that led to Nabokov’s temporary exile and consequent return. In the end, perhaps this more mature perspective allowed Nabokov to better understand the reasons behind and the necessity for his exile and return, not to mention the growing family’s need for a new governess.

Conclusion

In the end, the results of this study were mixed. A test of the first hypothesis yielded significant findings. Indeed there were sections that differed significantly in a comparison of the alliterative concentrations found in each of the “Mademoiselle O” sections. Section 5, the nighttime hide-and-go-seek game, proved to differ significantly from each of the six other sections. Section 7, the final goodbye to Mademoiselle, also differed significantly from all but one of the six other sections (the exception being Section 3). And there was an interesting result in the opposite direction, for Section 3, the daytime hide-and-go-seek theme, was only found to differ statistically from Sections 5

and 7 but no others. Therefore, a close examination of all three sections was warranted and revealed interesting outcomes where the themes of loss and exile were concerned. Overall, it did seem that the sections with more conflicted and less resolved narratives included more alliteration than did the sections that contained more symbolized, processed explorations of those same themes.

Conversely, a test of the second hypothesis revealed no significant change in the quantity of alliteration over the course of the progressive drafts in either direction— increase or decrease. Therefore, this project could neither establish alliteration as a definitive means to mark Nabokov's transformation of the narrative in a working through capacity, nor a means to mark Nabokov's solution to the conflict by ensuring that the writer's words were better lodged into the reader's memory. However, a trend was revealed and therefore the concept should not be dismissed outright. Rather it suggests that further study in this area might reveal some interesting findings. As was pointed out, this trend may relate to the *quality* of the alliterative repetition found within Nabokov's autobiography, not simply the quantity.

Throughout the discussion above, it was observed that Nabokov transformed his narrative by “remembering” certain forgotten scenes and “finding” lost objects. It was suggested that this was possible with the aid of repetition in its various forms, both alliteration and revision, even if that transformation was not directly observable through the measures defined. AM Draft 1 contained the desymbolized, nighttime hide-and-seek game that depicted Nabokov's intense and constant fear of abandonment and loss. And so while Nabokov may not have significantly transformed this particular section of the text over the course of the progressive drafts, he did “remember” (discover) the daytime hide-

and-seek game in CE Draft 2, a far more symbolized version of a similar scene. There, Nabokov demonstrated a greater facility and comfort in playing with ideas about loss and being lost, one that resembled Freud's descriptions of the Fort/Da game. It was proposed that his ability to do so was related to his revisitation of the theme through his revision process. Similarly, in returning to the subject matter in the Russian language draft (what would be Draft 2.5) and then again in SM Draft 3, Nabokov was ultimately able to discover the lost object: his father.

All of Nabokov's forgetting and remembering, losing and discovering, hiding and being found clearly resembles Winnicott's descriptions of how children play with notions of object permanence. In "Communicating and Not Communicating" (1990), Winnicott compared the artist for whom there is "the still more urgent need not to be found" (p185) to a child whom:

establish[es] a private self that is not communicating, and at the same time want[s] to communicate and to be found. It is a sophisticated game of hide-and-seek in which it is a joy to be hidden but disaster not to be found. (Winnicott, 1990, p. 185)

With this quotation, it becomes clear that Winnicott's thinking about matters of creativity and play should be made use of to further illuminate repetition's role in the creation and revision of Nabokov's autobiography. Future iterations of this project will certainly include a chapter on just such matters. Indeed, creative process in general can be cast in terms of a "potential space" (Winnicott, 1971) such that an artist can begin to play with and explore the various themes, ideas, feelings and experiences he deems significant to him. As has been noted in Nabokov's case, these themes often have personal relevance,

and his creative practice might have served as a vehicle through which he could repeatedly return to these matters time and again—in order to understand, work through and even play with those components that were so seminal to his being.

Further, Winnicott also theorized that imagination, play, creativity all hinged upon the overlapping presence of two individuals. One can begin to see how this notion relates to concepts of attunement, to rhythm, as well as to ideas about an autobiographical, narrating self. With the notion of a self-telling, the potential space created for the purposes of constructing an autobiographical narrative not only calls for a teller, but it also calls for a “someone not oneself” (Winnicott, 1971, p.63) to whom the story can be told. The presence of two creates the space in which an individual can potentially begin to tell his most fundamental narratives, told both to the self as well as to an other, most eager listener. And finally Winnicott connected these concepts to larger notions about the individual in the world. He stated: “The place where cultural experience is located is in the *potential space* between the individual and the environment (originally the object). The same can be said of playing. Cultural experience begins with creative living first manifested in play” (Winnicott, 1971, p. 100).

Clearly, this foreshortened discussion of Winnicott’s concepts only hints at the kind of discussion that an exploration of these matters could bring bear upon the process by which Nabokov created and revised his autobiographical narrative. In fact, the mention of Winnicott and his notions about the connections between potential space, play and creative process also point to an additional lack that this project does not address—the question of how symbolization and creativity are generally conceptualized by

psychoanalytic theory. For example, Freud originally connected creativity with the higher order defense of sublimation. In *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930) he stated:

Another technique for fending off suffering is the employment of the displacements of libido which our mental apparatus permits of and through which its function gains so much in flexibility. The task here is that of shifting the instinctual aims in such a way that they cannot come up against frustration from the external world. In this, sublimation of the instincts lends its assistance. One gains the most if one can sufficiently heighten the yield of pleasure from the sources of psychical and intellectual work. When that is so, fate can do little against one. A satisfaction of this kind, such as an artist's joy in creating, in giving his phantasies body, or a scientist's in solving problems or discovering truths, has a special quality which we shall certainly one day be able to characterize in metapsychological terms. At present we can only say figuratively that such satisfactions seem 'finer and higher'. (Freud, 1930, p. 79)

Among other things, Freud's statement suggested that sublimation is a sort of process, one of uniting and binding, and one whose value lies precisely in its ability to transform the instinct. In this sense, creative process itself can be seen as yet another a means by which loss can be worked through, thereby enabling the development of a more mature and more symbolized narrative. Exactly how and in what form repetition might fit into these conceptions will remain for a later iteration of this project.

Upon reading these concluding remarks, one's commonsense should dictate that this project has far more ground yet to cover. Anchoring the concepts of repetition as well as Nabokov's creative, autobiographical process in an overarching view of

psychoanalytic conceptions of creative process would do much to strengthen and deepen an understanding of the results yielded here. A similar point can be made with respect to Winnicott and his conceptions of play. As far as this project is concerned, however, these matters will not be taken up in depth here. Such is the nature of an exploratory effort; it is one that attempts to hold open the space for possibility before that space is foreclosed—perhaps even by that which Nabokov termed “commonsense.” He wrote:

And so I suggest, just for the fun of the thing, taking that private bomb and carefully dropping it upon the model city of commonsense. In the brilliant light of the ensuing explosion many curious things will appear; our rarer senses will supplant for a brief spell the dominant vulgarian that squeezes Sindbad’s neck in the catch-as-catch-can match between the adopted self and the inner one. I am triumphantly mixing metaphors because that is exactly what they are intended for when they follow the course of their secret connections—which from a writer’s point of view is the first positive result of the defeat of commonsense. (Nabokov, 1980, p. 372-373)

While I am not capable of mixing such elegant or interesting metaphors as Vladimir Nabokov, I was hopefully able to reveal some secret connections between repetition and transformation hidden within his autobiography. And so too, like Nabokov’s autobiographical effort, this is a project still in process, a narrative that continues to be created, and one that will find many more surprises to be illuminated by the light of repetition and return.

CHAPTER VII: CONCLUSION

For me a work of fiction exists only insofar as it affords me what I shall bluntly call aesthetic bliss, that is a sense of being somehow, somewhere, connected with other states of being where art (curiosity, tenderness, kindness, ecstasy) is the norm. (Nabokov, 1991, p. 314-315)

Vladimir Nabokov built his life around the pursuit of artistic and aesthetic bliss. He treasured it above nearly all else. From his statement, one might conclude that he pursued this bliss as a means of discovering and even creating “other states of being”—an attempt to sustain his existence in “curiosity, tenderness, kindness, ecstasy.” Perhaps these states were other than the daily norm, or other than memories of past loss. To create such an existence, Nabokov invoked fictional worlds. And by doing so, he gave his audience access these worlds, and to a precious opportunity to discover and briefly exist in these states themselves.

As an artist, Nabokov was well known for his aspirations to create a unique, autonomous, and unparalleled creative product. He strove to create something utterly and completely new. In his autobiography, however, Nabokov was unable to fall back on the luxury of invention. There, he was forced to reckon directly with the ghosts from his past. In this project I have argued that Nabokov attempted to transform these ghosts into ancestors by way of repetition, and of the multiple revisions he made to his text. And as we have seen in the discussions on his hide-and-seek games and other areas of the text, some of his efforts to understand and work through these sorts of losses were more

successful than others. In addition, Nabokov wrote specifically about the topic of transformation in *The Gift* (1963): “Actually, of course, any genuinely new trend is a knight’s move, a change of shadows, a shift that displaces the mirror” (Nabokov, 1963, p. 378). This Knight’s Move may have become central to his work in part due to his past experiences. It would seem that Nabokov heralded creative practice, and fiction writing in specific, as a means to bypass his experiences of loss, frustration, disappointment and instead experience more desirable states. To achieve this end, Nabokov may have displaced those more negatively tinged experiences into the lives of his characters. In these fictional universes, he had the potential to design, discover, explore and control the outcomes of their fates. Thus he may have discovered a means to work through some of those losses.

Surprisingly, it might have been the particular circumstance of exile that facilitated Nabokov’s ability to create his intricate, elaborate, substitute worlds. The unfamiliar lands he encountered may have moved his perspective just enough to allow for a view through a slightly different lens. Earlier, it was argued that Nabokov enchanted the components of ordinary life as a direct consequence of having been exiled. The ordinary became remarkable, worthy of attention and note. Thus the mundane details of life served as prima material, hijacked by Nabokov’s imagination and refashioned into his extraordinary creations. Recall how Nabokov wrote:

The art of writing is a very futile business if it does not imply first of all the art of seeing the world as the potentiality of fiction. The material of this world may be real enough (as far as reality goes) but does not exist at all as an accepted entirety: it is chaos, and to this chaos the author says “go!” allowing the world to flicker

and to fuse. It is now recombined in its very atoms, not merely in its visible and superficial parts. The writer is the first man to mop it and to form the natural objects it contains. Those berries there are edible. That speckled creature that bolted across my path might be tamed. That lake between those trees will be called Lake Opal or, more artistically, Dishwater Lake. (Nabokov, 1980, p. 2)

In Nabokov's case, the imaginary may have been a response to trauma. These losses may have necessitated the invention of a new set of techniques and skills in order to replace those that were no longer useful in these new countries. Accordingly, Nabokov transformed the details of arbitrary events into flickering, dynamic, complex and unpredictable worlds. In turn, these imagined worlds provided him with some alternative to the experience of trauma, a way to work through his fears of loss, abandonment and death. And these fictional worlds won him an audience, companions who would devotedly accompany him through his life's journey, and, in fact, beyond into perpetuity.

Indeed, the audience became a key to Nabokov's efforts. This is true of all artists and their work. In this project it was suggested that Nabokov's creation of artful fiction might have covertly worked to address and transform a dilemma out of which it was created. Perhaps certain of Nabokov's creative efforts may have allayed his fears of losing or being lost by increasing his chances of being remembered by his readers. Popular opinion reflects this hypothesis for a successful piece of art, it is said, immortalizes both product and artist, ensuring that audiences remember them.

Paradoxically, however, the concept of immortalization means that a living, breathing, tenuous existence becomes a memorialized artifact, a thing. The dynamism of it dies. Thus the creative product may only point to a history of a creative process having

happened, a record marking what was once alive. And so if a piece of artwork is deemed timeless, then it may no longer subject to the delicate conditions of mortality. While it may be immortal, it may also no longer be alive. Luckily, the audience again arrives to the rescue. If a piece of art is compelling enough, it might have an ever-renewing audience. For Nabokov, this meant there would always be a fresh mind about to discover the magic of his words. So while a piece of work may be complete and finalized, a new reader's discovery of those words can bring them back to life. As if in response, Nabokov wrote:

Up a trackless slope climbs the master artist, and at the top, on a windy ridge, whom do you think he meets? The panting and happy reader, and there they spontaneously embrace and are linked forever if the book lasts forever. (Nabokov, 1980, p. 2)

As if this was not enough, Nabokov may have found yet another means of ensuring that his texts remained alive and enlivened for as long as possible—through translation and repeated revision of the drafts. With the promise of revision, a narrative forever remains subject to transformation. And where Nabokov's autobiographical narrative was concerned, the urgency of keeping that narrative alive may have been heightened. If Nabokov believed that the completion of a narrative resulted in stasis, then he may have feared a premature end to his self-narrative. Thus, the life of the very self itself would have been threatened. With his multiple revisions and translation efforts, however, Nabokov may have discovered another solution to keep his narrating self alive. The multiple translations and publishings suggest that this particular narrative was potentially subject to revision for as long as Nabokov still lived. So while revision may

align itself with uncertainty and change, it is a kind of uncertainty that may allow for the continuation of life lived, an exciting but delicate precipice to be sure.

It appears that Nabokov made every effort to assail a war upon those losses he was forced to endure over the course of his life. This project suggests that he discovered and employed specific techniques—alliterative repetition, revision—to work through those losses. In addition, it is suggested that he may have used these same techniques to combat his anxieties and fears about loss. He may have used them as a means to increasing the likelihood of being better remembered by his audiences. And finally, Nabokov may have employed repetition, revision and translation as a way to ensure his various narratives retained the vitality of aliveness. It was through these methods that Nabokov created his “other states of being... (curiosity, tenderness, kindness, ecstasy)” (Nabokov, 1991, p. 314-315).

Though Nabokov may have mastered the creative art of writing in response to loss, a truth of all loss remains: the impossibility of retrieving or undoing those lost circumstances or loved ones. One’s best hope might be a compromise—to understand, repair and live with the wounds as best as possible. As Loewald wrote: “Those who know ghosts tell us that they long to be released from their ghost life and led to rest as ancestors” (2000, Loewald, p. 249). While Nabokov never abandoned his efforts to fight the pain of loss, he may have been able to come to terms with some disappointment where loss was concerned. Writing about his process of translating *Lolita* (1951) into Russian, Nabokov confessed both his hopes and his disappointments with the effort. He wrote:

The history of this translation is a history of disillusionment. Alas, that “wondrous Russian tongue” that, it seemed to me, was waiting for me somewhere, was flowering like a faithful springtime behind a tightly locked gate, whose key I had held in safekeeping for so many years, proved to be nonexistent, and there is nothing behind the gate but charred stumps and a hopeless autumnal distance, and the key in my hand is more like a skeleton key. (Nabokov, Rivers & Nicol, 1982, p.190)

While the loss of hope can feel so deeply disappointing, it may allow for a much more comfortable relationship with actuality than would a constant effort to sustain and support the anticipation of an impossible return.

Nabokov was never able to reinstate his idyllic past into what it once was. Perhaps not so surprisingly, various biographies reveal that Nabokov’s dreams of the past may have been mostly that—idealizations that never existed in that particular form in the first place. Regardless, he invented various Knights’ Moves to combat loss and these tools, this artistic process, became his world. Where creative process is concerned, there always stands the question: Is art reparative or redemptive? Can the process of pure artistic play redeem the unavoidable losses sustained over the course of a human life? It may be that creative process cannot return its owner to his original, idealized or longed for state of being. Yet creative process may offer something else—the opportunity to transform a narrative of loss into one that is more tolerable and even engaging to its creator. Perhaps, then, this transformed narrative becomes one that possesses the capacity to give one’s life significance and meaning.

**APPENDIX: “MADEMOISELLE O” CHAPTERS WITH IDENTIFIED
ALLITERATED PHRASES**

Across each all documents, all alliterated words are bolded and all alliterated phrases are bracketed, e.g.: [**jelly** of her **jowl**].

AM, Draft 1

From: Nabokov, V. (1943). *Mademoiselle O*. *The Atlantic Monthly*, 171:1, 66-73.

Mademoiselle O

1

I have often noticed that after I had bestowed on my characters some treasured item of my [**past** it would **pine** away in the artificial world where I had so **abruptly placed** it]. Although it lingered on in my mind its personal warmth, its retrospective appeal, had gone and presently it became more closely identified with my novel than with the [**fold**s of my **former self**] where it had seemed to be so safe from the intrusion of the artist. Houses have crumbled in my memory as soundlessly as they did in the silent films of yore, and the portrait of my old French governess whom I once lent to a youthful hero of mine is already hardly discernible, now that it is engulfed in the description of a childhood entirely unrelated to my own. The man in me revolts against the fictionist, and here is my desperate attempt to save what is left of poor Mademoiselle O.

This “O” oddly enough is by no means the abbreviation of something beginning with an “O.” It is not the initial of [**Olivier or Oudinet**], but actually the thing itself: a round and [**naked name**] which seems about to collapse without a full [**stop to support it**]; a loose wheel of a name rolling downhill, hesitating, wobbling; a toothless yawn; a melon; an egg; a lake. What lake? The lake near which she had spent most of her life, for she was born in Switzerland, of wholly French parents, as she proudly would add. But this did not improve matters. Very soon, as soon as she had rashly imparted to us the power of speaking her [**language, looping the loop**] of

p. 66

her name became the means of enraging her beyond measure. We squeezed every drop out of that [**vulnerable vowel**]; we inflated it till our [**cheeks all but cracked**]; [we **punned it, we punted it**]; we [**bounced it like a ball**] that leaves planet-like spots on the ceiling; we imagined Mademoiselle’s father arriving in some watering place and people exclaiming: [**“Oh! O au’ eaux!”**] In her favorite book, the [**squat, salmon-pink**] Larousse dictionary (with that red-curling maiden blowing the fluff off a dandelion on the cover), the first name listed under “O” happened to be that of “Francois, Marquis d’O, b. and d. in Paris, Superintendent of finances under Henry III”; him we elected for Mademoiselle’s ancestor, and she would have gladly adopted the legend herself had we not scoffed at the paradox of a nought handling millions.

A large woman, a very stout woman as round as her name, Mademoiselle rolled into our existence as I was about to be eight. There she is. I see her so plainly: her abundant dark hair which is covertly graying, the three wrinkles on her austere forehead, her [**beetling brows**], the steely eyes behind a black-rimmed pince-nez, that vestigial

mustache, that blotchy complexion which in moments of wrath assumes a purple flush in the region of the third and amplest chins, so regally spread over the frilled mountain of her blouse. And now she sits down, or rather she tackle the job of sitting down, the [jelly of her jowl] quaking, her [prodigious posterior], with the three buttons on the side, lowering itself warily; then at the last she surrenders her bulk to God and to the wicker armchair, which, out of sheer fright, bursts into a salvo of crackling.

The winter she came was the only one of my childhood that I spent in the country. It was also a particularly severe one, incidentally producing as much snow as [Mademoiselle O might have expected to find in the hyperborean gloom of remote Muscovy]. When she [alighted at the little] station from which she still had to travel half a dozen miles by sleigh to our country house, I was not there to greet her, but I do so now, as I try to imagine what she saw and felt at that last stage of her fabulous journey. Her Russian vocabulary, I know, consisted of one short word—the same solitary word which seven years later she was to take back to Switzerland. This word, which in her case may be phonetically rendered as “giddy-ay,” meant “Where?” And that was a good deal; uttered by her like the raucous cry of some lost bird, it accumulated such interrogatory force that it sufficed for all her needs. “Giddy-ay? Giddy-ay?” she would wail, not only to find out her whereabouts but also to [express an abyss of misery]: the fact that [she was a stranger, shipwrecked, penniless, ailing, and that she was searching for the blessed land where at last she would be understood].

I can see her as she stands in the middle of the platform, and vainly my [ghostly envoy] offers her an arm which she cannot see. The door of the waiting room opens with the shuddering whine peculiar to nights of intense frost; a cloud of hot air rushes out

almost as profuse as the steam from the great [funnel-shaped stack] of the panting engine; and now our coachman is attending to Mademoiselle: a burly man in sheepskin with the leather outside, his huge gloves protruding from his [scarlet sash] into which he has tucked them. I hear the snow crunching under his felt boots while he busies himself with the luggage, the jingling harness, and then his own [nose, which he blows] by means of a dexterous [flip of finger] and thumb as he trudges back round the sleigh. Slowly, with [grim misgivings], Mademoiselle climbs in, clutching at her helper in mortal fear lest the sleigh move off before her vast form is securely encased. Finally she settles down with a [grunt and thrusts] her fists into her skimpy [plush muff]. At the juicy smacking of their driver's lips the horses strain their quarters, shift hoofs, strain again; and then Mademoiselle gives a backward jerk of the torso as the heavy sleigh is wrenched out of its world of [steel, fur, flesh, to enter a frictionless medium] where it skims along a [ghostly road] that it seems barely to touch.

For one moment, thanks to the sudden aura of a [lone lantern] at the turning, a grossly exaggerated shadow, also holding a muff, races beside the sleigh, climbs a [billow of snow], and is gone, leaving Mademoiselle to be swallowed up by what she will later [allude to with awe] and gusto as “the Steppe.”

p. 67

There, in the endless gloom, the changeable twinkle of remote village lights seems to her to be the yellow eyes of wolves. She is cold, she is frozen stiff—frozen “to the center of her brain,” for she soars with the wildest hyperbole when not clinging to the [safest old saw]. Every now and then she looks back to make sure that, always at the same distance, like those [companionable phantoms] of ships in polar seas, the [second sleigh] bearing

her trunk and hatbox is following. And now I notice that I have quite forgotten the moon; for surely there must be a moon, that full incredibly clear moon that goes so well with our **[lusty frosts]**—and with Mademoiselle’s name. So there it comes, steering out of a medley of small dappled clouds which it tinges with a vague iridescence, and as it sails higher it glazes the runner-tracks left on the road where every **[sparkling lump of snow is emphasized by a swollen shadow]**.

Very lovely, very lonesome. But what am *I* doing here in this stereoscopic dreamland? Somehow those two **[sleighs have slipped]** away; they have left me behind on the blue-white road. No, even the vibration in my ears is not their receding bells, but my own blood singing. All is still, spellbound, enthralled by that great heavenly “O” shining above my Russian wilderness. The snow is real, and as I bend to it and scoop up a handful, thirty-five years crumble to glittering frost-dust between my **[tingling fingers]**.

2

An oil lamp is brought into the gloaming. Gently it soars and comes down; the hand of memory, now in a servant’s white cotton glove, places it in the center of a round table. The flame is nicely adjusted, and a rosy silk-flounced lamp shade crowns the light.

A warm, bright room in a snow-muffled house, soon to be termed *le chateau*; built by my great-grandfather, who, being **[afraid of fires]**, had the staircase made of iron, so that when the house was burned to the ground during the Revolution, those **[fretted steps remained standing, still leading up]**. But this is neither here nor there: such a number of things fade away, while and because their owners grow, change, and forget them, that it would be unfair to lay all the blame on **[civic convulsions]**.

Some more about that room, please. The oval mirror. Hanging aslant on taut cords, its pure brow inclined, it strives to retain the **[falling furniture]** and a **[slope of sheeny floor that keep slipping from its embrace]**. The chandelier pendants. These emit a delicate tinkling whenever anything is moved in an upstairs room. Colored pencils. That tiny heap of emerald pencil dust on the oilcloth where a penknife has just done its recurrent duty. We are sitting at the table, my brother and I and Miss Jones, who now and then looks at her watch: roads must be dreadful with all that snow; and anyway, many professional hardships lie in wait for that vague French person who will replace her.

Those colored pencils—how I loved them. The green one by a **[whirl of the wrist]** could be made to **[produce so simply a ruffled tree or the smoke of a house where spinach was cooking]**. The blue by drawing a single horizontal line invited a distant sail. Somehow or other the **[brown was always broken]**, whereas the little purple chap, a special favorite of mine, had got worn down so short as to become scarcely manageable. The white one alone, that lanky albino among pencils, kept its length, or at least did so until I realized that, **[far from being a fraud]**, leaving no mark on the page, it was the ideal tool because I could imagine **[whatever I wished while I scrawled]**.

Alas, these pencils too have been distributed among the characters of my books to keep fictitious children busy; they are not quite my own now. Somewhere, in the apartment house of a chapter, in the hired room of a paragraph, I have also placed that tilted mirror, and the lamp, and the chandelier-drops. Few things are left, many have been squandered. Have I given away that old brown dachshund fast asleep on the sofa? No, I think he is still mine. His **[grizzled muzzle]**, with that wart at the **[puckered corner of the mouth, is tucked]** into the curve of his hock, and from time to time a deep **[sigh**

distends his ribs]. He is so old and his sleep is so thickly padded with dreams (about chewable slippers and a few last smells) that he does not stir when faint bells

p. 68

jingle outside and a pneumatic door heaves and clangs in the vestibule. She has come after all; I had so hoped she would not.

In our childhood we know a lot about hands since they live and hover at the level of our stature; Mademoiselle's were unpleasant because of the **[froggy gloss]** on their tight skin **[besprinkled with brownish]** liver spots. Before her time no **[stranger had ever stroked my face]**. Mademoiselle, as soon as she came, took me completely aback by patting my cheek in sign of spontaneous affection. Later on this gesture went through a natural evolution, producing varieties which she classified according to their degree of **[strength as flick, slap, smack]**, and finally what may be translated as "the Great Volley" and which, indeed, resembled the backhand smash of a tennis ace.

All her mannerisms come back to me when thinking of her hands. Her manner of **[peeling rather than sharpening a pencil, the point held towards her stupendous and sterile bosom swathed in green wool]**. The way she had of inserting her little finger into her ear and vibrating it very rapidly. The ritual observed every time she gave me a fresh copybook. Always panting a little, her mouth slightly open and emitting in quick **[succession a series of asthmatic purrs]**, she would open the copybook to make a margin in it; that is, she would trace a vertical line with her thumbnail, fold in the outer edge of the **[page, press, release, smooth it out with a final pat]**, after which the book would be **[briskly twisted]** around and placed before me ready for use. A new pen followed; she would moisten the **[glistening nib]** with susurrous lips before dipping it

into the baptismal ink font. Then, delighting in every [**limb** of every **limpid letter**] (especially so because the preceding [**copybook** had ended in utter **sloppiness**]), with exquisite care I would inscribe the word *Dictée* while Mademoiselle hunted through her collection of spelling tests for a good hard passage.

3

Meanwhile the setting has changed. Hoarfrost and snow have been removed by a silent property man. The summer afternoon is alive with steep clouds [**breasting the blue**]. Eyed shadows move on the garden paths. Lessons are over and Mademoiselle is reading to us on the veranda where the plaited chairs smell of vanilla in the heat. The sun is everywhere—on the steps, on the mat, on the [**white window sills**], where it repeats the hues of the stained glass. This is the time when Mademoiselle is at her very best.

What a number of [**volumes** she read through to us on that **veranda**]! Her slender voice sped on and on, never weakening, without the slightest [**hitch** or **hesitation**], an admirable reading-machine wholly independent of her sick bronchial tubes. We got it all: the so-called “Pink Library”—inventive Jules Verne, bombastic Hugo, romantic Dumas the Elder. There she sat distilling her reading voice from the [**still prison** of her **person**]. Apart from the lips, one of her chins, the smallest but real one, was the only mobile detail of her [**Buddha-like bulk**]. The black-rimmed pince-nez reflected eternity. Occasionally a fly would light on her stern forehead and the three wrinkles would instantly leap up together like three runners over three hurdles. But nothing whatever changed in the expression of her face—that face which I so often tried to sketch, for its [**impassive** and **simple symmetry**] offered an almost voluptuous temptation to my furtive pencil.

Presently my attention would wander still further, and it was then perhaps that the rare purity of her rhythmic voice accomplished its true purpose. I looked at a **[creamy cloud]** and years later was able to visualize its exact shape. The gardener was **[pottering among the peonies]**. A wagtail took a few steps, remembered something, and then strutted on. **[Coming from nowhere, a comma butterfly]** settled on the threshold, basked in the sun with its fulvous wings spread, suddenly closed them just to show the tiny initial chalked on the under side, and as suddenly darted away. But the most constant source of enchantment was the rhomboids of colored glass inset harlequin-wise in the crisscross panes of the side windows. The garden when viewed through these magic panes grew **[strangely still]** and

p. 69

aloof. If one looked through the blue **[glass the sand turned to cinders while inky-black trees swam in a tropical sky]**. The yellow one led to Cathay and tea-colored vistas. The red made the foliage **[drip ruby dark]** upon a **[pink-flushed footpath]**. The **[green soaked greenery in a greener green]**. And when after such richness one turned to a little square of **[normal savorless glass with its lone mosquito or lame daddy longlegs]**, it was like taking a draught of water when one is not thirsty, and one saw the first **[withered leaf lying]** on yonder bench and the blandly familiar birch trees. But of all the windows this is the **[pane through which parched nostalgia would long to peer now]**.

Mademoiselle never found out how potent had been the even flow of her voice. The claims she later put forward were quite different. “Ah,” she sighed, “didn’t we love each other? Those good old days in the chateau! The **[dead wax doll]** we once buried under the oak! (No—a golliwog in red pants!) And that time you ran away and left me

stumbling and howling in the depths of the forest! (The grove just beyond the old tennis court!) My, what a spanking you **[bad boys]** got! (Not I—I managed to escape and find Mother!) And the Princess, your aunt, whom you struck with your little fist because she had been rude to me! (I don't remember.) And the way you whispered to me all your childish troubles! (Never!) And the cozy nook in my room where you loved to snuggle because you felt so warm and secure!”

Mademoiselle's room, both in the country and in town, was a weird place to me—something like a dim hothouse sheltering a thick-leaved plant imbued with a heavy, queerly acrid odor—and although next to ours, it did not seem to belong to our pleasant, well-aired home. In that **[sickening mist]**, reeking among other effluvia with the brown smell of oxidized apple peels, the **[lamp burned low]**, and strange objects glimmered upon the writing desk: a **[lacquered box with licorice sticks]**, black segments of which she would hack off with her penknife and put to melt under her tongue; a **[picture postcard]** of a lake and a castle with **prismatic spangles sublimating** its windows]; a **[bumpy ball of tightly rolled and compressed bits]** of silver paper that came from all those chocolates she used to consume at night; photographs of the nephew who had died, of his mother who had signed hers “Mater dolorosa,” of a certain **[Monsieur de Marante]** who had been forced by his family to marry a rich widow.

Lording it over the rest was one in a noble frame incrustated with garnets; it showed in three-quarter view a slim young brunette **[clad in a close-fitting checked dress]**, with a **[liquid glint]** in her eye and a great roll of hair burdening her pale graceful neck. “A braid as thick as my arm and reaching down to my ankles!” was **[Mademoiselle's melodramatic comment]**. For this had been she—but in vain did my eyes probe and dig

into her [**familiar form**] to try to [**extract** the **exquisite** creature it had **engulfed**]. Such discoveries as I did make merely increased the difficulties of my task; and the grownups who during the day beheld only a densely clothed Mademoiselle O never saw what we children saw when, roused from her sleep by one of us shrieking himself out of a bad dream, disheveled, candle in hand, a [**gleam** of **gilt lace**] on the blood-red dressing gown that [**could** not **quite** wrap her **quaking** mass], the nightmare Jezebel of Racine's absurd play stamped [**barefooted** into our **bedroom**].

All my life I have been a poor go-to-sleeper. No matter how great my weariness, the wrench of parting with consciousness is unspeakably repulsive to me. I loathe Somnus, that [**black-masked** headsman **binding** me to the **block**]; and if in the course of years I have got so used to my nightly ordeal as almost to swagger while the familiar axe is coming out of its great velvet-lined case, initially I had no such comfort or defense, nothing—save a door left ajar into Mademoiselle's room. That meek [**line** of **light**] was something I could cling to, since in absolute darkness my head would [**swim**, **just as** the **soul dissolves** in the blackness of **sleep**].

Saturday night used to be a [**pleasurable prospect**] because that was the night Mademoiselle indulged in the luxury of a weekly bath, thus granting a [**longer lease** to my tenuous **gleam**]. But then a subtler torture set in. The bathroom was at the end of a Z-shaped corridor some twenty heartbeats

p. 70

distant from my bed, and between apprehending Mademoiselle's return and envying my brother's [**stolid snore**], I could never really put my additional time to profit by deftly getting to sleep while a [**chink** in the **dark** still **bespoke** a **speck**] of myself in Nirvana.

At length they would come, those inexorable steps, [**plodding** along the **passage**] and causing some little glass object, which had been [**secretly sharing**] my vigil, to tinkle in dismay on its shelf.

Now she has entered her room. A brisk interchange of light-values tells me that the candle on her bed table takes over the job of the lamp on her desk. My [**line of light**] is still there, but grown old and wan, and flickers whenever Mademoiselle makes her bed creak by moving. For I still hear her. Now it is a [**silvery rustle spelling “Suchard”**]; now the trk-trk-trk of a fruit knife cutting the pages of *La Revue des deux mondes*; I hear her panting slightly. And all the time I am in acute [**distress, desperately**] trying to coax sleep, opening my eyes every few seconds to check the faded gleam, and imagining [**paradise as a place**] where a sleepless neighbor reads an endless book by the light of an eternal candle.

The inevitable happens: the pince-nez case shuts with a click, the review shuffles onto the marble of the bed table, and gustily Mademoiselle’s [**pursed lips**] blow; the [**first attempt fails**], a groggy flame squirms and ducks; then comes a second [**lunge, and light collapses**]. In that pitchy [**blackness I lose my bearings**], my bed seems to be slowly drifting, panic makes me [**sit up and stare**]; finally my dark-adapted eyes sift out, among entoptic floaters, certain more precious blurrings that roam in [**aimless amnesia**] until, half-remembering, they settle [**down as the dim**] folds of window curtains.

How utterly foreign to the troubles of the night were those exciting St. Petersburg mornings when the fierce and tender, [**damp and dazzling**] arctic spring bundled away broken ice down the sea-bright Neva! It made the roofs shine. It painted the [**slush in the streets**] a rich purplish-blue shade which I have never seen anywhere since.

Mademoiselle, her coat of imitation seal majestically swelling on her bosom, sat on the back seat of the landau with my brother next to her and me facing them, joined to them by the [**valley of the velvety**] rug; and as I looked up I could see, strung on ropes from house to house high above the street, great semi-transparent [**banners billowing**], their three wide bands pale red, pale blue, and merely pale—deprived by the sun and the flying shadows of any too blunt connection with a national holiday, but undoubtedly celebrating now, in the city of memory, that spring day, that drive, the swish of the mud, and the ruffled exotic bird on Mademoiselle’s hat.

4

The unusual aspect of her [**limbless and boneless**] name may have had something to do with the morbid touchiness that was perhaps her main characteristic. Being absolutely Russian-proof, she fortunately remained unaware of what native servants did to that name; but whenever she was being introduced to a guest and it rolled out, [**sounding somewhat**] like a terminal interjection in a doggerel rhyme, her look was a mixture of defiance and anxiety. Her obesity was another reason for her always being on the defensive, as if she were living among cannibals who licked their chops behind her back.

And as though nature had not wished to spare her anything that makes one super-sensitive, she was [**hard of hearing**]. Sometimes at table we boys would suddenly become aware of two big tears crawling down Mademoiselle’s ample cheeks. “Don’t mind me,” she would say in a small voice, and she kept on eating till the unwiped tears blinded her; then with a [**heartbroken hiccough**] she would rise and blunder out of the

dining room. Little by little the truth would come out. The general **[talk had turned]**, say, on the subject of the warship my uncle commanded, and she had perceived in this a sly dig at her Switzerland that had no navy. Or else it was because she **[fancied that whenever French]** was spoken the game consisted in deliberately preventing her from directing and bejeweling the conversation. Poor lady, she was always in such a nervous hurry to seize control of **[intelligible table talk]** before

p. 71

it bolted back into Russian that no wonder she bungled her cue.

“And your Parliament, sir, how is it getting along?” she would suddenly **[burst out brightly]** from her end of the table, challenging my father, who, after a harassing day, was not exactly eager to discuss troubles of the State with a somehow unreal person who neither knew nor cared anything about them. Thinking that someone had referred to music, “But Silence, too, may be beautiful,” she would bubble, “Why, one evening in a desolate valley of the Alps I actually *heard* Silence.” Sallies like these, especially when growing deafness led her to answer a question none had put, resulted in a painful hush instead of touching off the rockets of a sprightly *causerie*.

And really, her French was so lovely! Ought one to have minded the **[shallowness of her culture, the bitterness of her temper, the banality of her mind]**, when that **[pearly language of hers purled and scintillated, as innocent of sense as the alliterative sins of Racine’s pious verse]**? My father’s **[library, not her limited lore]**, taught me to appreciate authentic poetry; nevertheless something of her tongue’s **[limpidity and luster]** has had a singularly bracing effect upon me, like those **[sparkling salts]** which are used to purify the blood. That is why it makes me so sad to imagine now the anguish

Mademoiselle O must have felt at seeing how lost, how little valued was the nightingale voice which came from her elephantine body. She stayed with us long, much too long, obstinately hoping for some miracle that would transform her into a kind of Madame de Rambouillet holding a [gold-and-satin salon of poets, princes, and politicians under her brilliant spell].

She would have gone on hoping had it not been for Leonidas Orlov. He was a Russian tutor, with mild blue eyes and strong political opinions, who had been engaged to coach us in winter and play tennis and ride with us during the summer holidays. He taught mathematics entrancingly, [lost his stirrups, and lobbed every ball into the lilac bushes]. While venerating my father, he could not quite stomach certain aspects of our household, such as [footmen and French], which last he considered an aristocratic convention of no use in a liberal statesman's home. On the other hand Mademoiselle decided that if Orlov answered her point-blank questions only with short grunts (which he tried to Germanize for want of a better tongue), it was not because he could not understand French, but because he wished to insult her in front of everybody.

I can see and hear Mademoiselle requesting him in dulcet tones, but with an ominous tightening of the lips, to pass her the bread; and likewise I can hear and see Orlov unflinchingly going on with his soup; finally with a slashing "Pardon, Monsieur," Mademoiselle would swoop right across his plate, snatch up the breadbasket, and recoil again with a "Thank you, sir" so charged with irony that Orlov's downy ears would turn the color of geranium. "The brute! The cad! The Nihilist!" she sobbed later in her room—which was no longer next to ours though still on the same floor.

If Orlov happened to come tripping downstairs while, with an asthmatic pause after every ten steps or so, she was working her way up (for the little hydraulic elevator would constantly, and rather insultingly too, **[refuse to function]**), Mademoiselle maintained that he had viciously bumped into her, pushed her, knocked her down, and we already could see him trampling her prostrate body. More and more frequently she would leave the table, and the chocolate ice or *gateau d'Artois* that she would have missed was diplomatically sent up in her wake. From her **[remote room]** she would write a sixteen-page letter to my mother, who, hurrying upstairs, would find her dramatically packing her trunk. And then one day she was allowed to go on packing.

5

Because, of the war she had some trouble in reaching Switzerland. “The Germans,” she wrote with her usual emphasis, “**[stripped me to the skin, searching me for some secret message]** which, *hélas!* they did not find.” Nor have I—at least up to this point other life story. But some ten years later, in the middle twenties long after our correspondence

p. 72

had **[fizzled out, by some fluke move of life]** in exile I chanced to pass through Lausanne—so I thought I might as well look, up Mademoiselle O if she was still alive.

She was stouter than ever, but quite gray and almost totally deaf, she welcomed me with a tumultuous outburst of affection. Instead of the **[Chateau de Chillon]** picture there was now one of a gaudy troika. She spoke as warmly of her life in Russia as if it were her own lost homeland. Indeed I found in the neighborhood quite a colony of such

old Swiss governesses ousted by our Revolution. [**Clustering** together in a **constant** seething of **competitive reminiscences**], they formed a small island in the midst of a country which had grown alien to them. One is always at home in one's past, no matter what its color, which partly explains those [**pathetic ladies' posthumous love**] for another land that they never really had known and where most of them had been continuously unhappy.

As no dialogue was possible because of Mademoiselle's deafness, I decided to bring her next day the appliance which I gathered she could not afford. No sooner had she adjusted the clumsy thing than she turned to me with a dazzled look of [**moist wonder**] and bliss in her eyes. She swore she could hear every word, every murmur of mine. She could not, for I had not spoken. Was it silence she heard, that Silence she had talked about in the past? No, she had been lying to herself then; now she was lying to me.

Before leaving for [**Basle and Berlin**], I found myself somehow or other walking along the lake in the clammy and misty night. At one spot a [**lone arc light dimly diluted the darkness**]. In its [**nimbus the mist**] seemed transformed into a [**visible drizzle**]. "Il pleut toujours en Suisse" was one of those [**casual comments**] which formerly had made Mademoiselle weep. Below, a, [**wide ripple, almost a wave, and something vaguely white**] happened to attract my eye. As I came quite close to the lapping [**water I saw what it was—an aged swan**], a large and uncouth creature, making ridiculous efforts to [**hoist himself**] into a moored boat. He could not do it. The heavy, impotent flapping of his wings, that [**scaly, slippery sound**] against the rocking and plashing boat, the [**gluey glistening**] of the dark swell where it caught the light—all seemed for a moment laden with that [**strange significance which sometimes in our dreams is attached to a finger**

pressed to mute **lips** and then pointing to **something** we have not time to **discern** before waking with a **shudder**]. But although I soon forgot that dismal night it was, oddly enough, that night, that compound image—[**shudder** and **swan** and **swell**]—which first came to my mind when a couple of years later I learned that Mademoiselle had died.

She had spent all her life in feeling miserable; this misery was her native element; its fluctuations, its varying depths, alone gave her the impression of moving and living. What bothers me is that a sense of misery, and nothing else, is not enough to make a permanent soul. My [**enormous** and **morose**] Mademoiselle O is all right on earth but impossible in eternity. Have I really salvaged her from fiction? Just before the rhythm I hear [**falters** and **fades**], I catch myself wondering whether, during the years I knew her, I had not kept utterly missing something in her that was far more she than her name or her chins or her ways or even her French—something perhaps akin to that last glimpse of her, to the radiant deceit she used in order to have me depart pleased with my own kindness, or to that swan whose agony was so much more teal than a [**drooping dancer's**] white arms; [**something in short**] which I could appreciate only after the [**things** and **beings**] that I had most loved in the security of my childhood had been turned to ashes or shot through the heart.

p. 73

CE, Draft 2

From: Nabokov, V. (1951). *Conclusive Evidence*. New York: Harper and Brothers.

Chapter 5

1

I have often noticed that after I had bestowed on the characters of my novels some treasured item of my **[past**, it would **pine** away in the artificial world where I had so **abruptly placed** it]. Although it lingered on in my mind, its personal warmth, its retrospective appeal had gone and, presently, it became more closely identified with my novel than with my former self, where it had seemed to be so safe from the intrusion of the artist. Houses have crumbled in my memory as soundlessly as they did in the mute films of yore, and the portrait of my old French governess, whom I once lent to a boy in one of my books, is **[fading fast]**, now that it is engulfed in the description of a childhood entirely unrelated to my own. The man in me revolts against the fictionist, and here is my desperate attempt to save what is left of poor Mademoiselle.

A large woman, a very stout woman, Mademoiselle rolled into our existence in 1905 when I was six and my brother five. There

p. 58

she is. I see so plainly her abundant dark hair, brushed up high and covertly greying; the three wrinkles on her austere forehead; her **[beetling brows]**; the steely eyes behind the black-rimmed pince-nez; that vestigial mustache; that blotchy complexion, which in moments of wrath develops an additional flush in the region of the third, and amplest,

chin so regally spread over the frilled mountain of her blouse. And now she sits down, or rather she tackles the job of sitting down, the **[jelly of her jowl]** quaking, her **[prodigious posterior]**, with the three buttons on the side, lowering itself warily; then, at the last second, she surrenders her bulk to the wicker armchair, which, out of sheer fright, bursts into a salvo of crackling.

The winter she came was the only one of my childhood that I spent in the country. It was a year of strikes, riots and police-inspired massacres, and I suppose my father wished to tuck his family away from the city, in our **[quiet country]** place, where his **[popularity with the peasants might mitigate]**, as he correctly surmised, the risk of agrarian troubles. It was also a particularly severe winter, producing as much snow as **[Mademoiselle might]** have expected to find in the hyperborean gloom of **remote Muscovy**. When she **[alighted at the little]** station, from which she still had to travel half-a-dozen Miles by sleigh to our country home, I was not there to greet her; but I do so now as I try to imagine what she saw and felt at that last stage of her fabulous and ill-timed journey. Her Russian vocabulary consisted, I know, of one short word, the same solitary word that years later she was to take back to Switzerland, where she had to be born of French parents. This word, which in her pronunciation may be phonetically rendered as “giddy-eh,” (actually

p. 59

it is *gde* with e as in “yet”) meant “Where?” And that was a good deal. Uttered by her like the raucous cry of some lost bird, it accumulated such interrogatory force that it sufficed for all her needs. “Giddy-eh? Giddy-eh?” she would wail, not only to find out her whereabouts but also to **[express an abyss of misery]**: the fact that she was a

stranger, shipwrecked, penniless, ailing, in search of the blessed land where at last she would be understood.

I can visualize her, by proxy, as she stands in the middle the station platform, where she has just alighted, and vainly my **[ghostly envoy]** offers her an arm that she cannot see. The door of the waiting room opens with a shuddering whine peculiar to nights of intense frost; a cloud of hot air rushes out, almost as profuse as the **[steam]** from the great **stack]** of the panting engine; and now our coachman Zakhar takes over—a burly man in sheepskin with the leather outside, his huge gloves protruding from his **[scarlet sash]** into which he has stuffed them. I hear the snow crunching under his felt boots while he busies himself with the luggage, the jingling harness, and then his own nose, which he eases by means of a dexterous **[flip of finger]** and thumb as he trudges back round the sleigh. Slowly, with **[grim misgivings]**, Mademoiselle climbs in, clutching at her helper in mortal fear lest the sleigh move off before her vast form is **[securely encased]**. Finally, she settles down with a **[grunt and thrusts]** her fists into her skimpy **[plush muff]**. At the juicy smack of their driver's lips the horses strain their quarters, shift hooves, strain again; and then Mademoiselle gives a backward jerk of her torso as the heavy sleigh is wrenched out of its world of **[steel, fur, flesh, to enter a frictionless medium]** where it skims along a spectral road that it seems barely to touch.

p. 60

For one moment, thanks to the sudden radiance of a **[lone lamp]** where the station square ends, a grossly exaggerated shadow, also holding a muff, races beside the sleigh, climbs a **[billow of snow]**, and is gone, leaving Mademoiselle to be swallowed up by what she will later allude to, with awe and gusto, as "*le steppe.*" There, in the **[limitless**

gloom], the changeable twinkle of remote village lights seems to her to be the yellow eyes of wolves. She is cold, she is frozen stiff, frozen “to the center of her brain,” for she soars with the wildest hyperbole when not clinging to the [**safest old saw**]. Every now and then, she looks back to make sure that a [**second sleigh**], bearing her trunk and hatbox, is following—always at the same distance, like those [**companionable phantoms**] of ships in polar waters which explorers have described. And let me not leave out the moon—for surely there must be a moon, the full, incredibly clear disc that goes so well with Russian [**lusty frosts**]. So there it comes, steering out of a flock of small dappled clouds, which it tinges with a vague iridescence; and, as it sails higher, it glazes the runner-tracks left on the road, where every [**sparkling lump of snow is emphasized by a swollen shadow**].

Very lovely, very lonesome. But what am I doing there in that stereoscopic dreamland? Somehow those two [**sleighs have slipped**] away; they have left my imaginary double behind on a blue-white road. No, even the vibration in my ears is not their receding bells, but my own blood singing. All is still, spellbound, enthralled by that great heavenly *O* shining above the Russian wilderness of my past. The snow is real, though, and as I bend to it and scoop up a handful, forty-five years crumble to glittering frost-dust between my fingers.

p. 61

2

A kerosene lamp is steered into the gloaming. Gently it floats and comes down; the hand of memory, now in a footman’s white cotton glove, places it in the center of a

round table. The flame is nicely adjusted, and a rosy, silk-flounced lamp shade crowns the light. Revealed: a warm, bright room in a snow-muffled house—soon to be termed *le chateau*—built by my great-grandfather, who, being **[afraid of fires]**, had the staircase made of iron, so that when the house did get burnt to the ground, sometime after the Soviet Revolution, those **[fretted steps]** remained standing there, all alone but still leading up.

Some more about that room, please. The oval mirror. Hanging on taut cords, its pure brow inclined, it strives to retain the **[falling furniture]** and a **[slope of bright floor that keep slipping from its embrace]**. The chandelier pendants. These emit a delicate tinkling whenever anything is moved in an upstairs room. Colored pencils. That tiny heap of emerald pencil dust on the oilcloth where a penknife has just done its recurrent duty. We are sitting at the table, my brother and I and Miss Robinson, who now and then looks at her watch: roads must be dreadful with all that snow; and anyway many professional hardships lie in wait for the vague French person who will replace her.

Now the colored pencils in more detail. The green one, by a mere **[whirl of the wrist]**, could be made to produce a ruffled tree, or the chimney smoke of a house where spinach was cooking. The blue one drew a simple line across the page—and the horizon of all seas was there. A nondescript blunt one kept getting into one's way. The **[brown one was always broken]**

p. 62

and so was the red, but sometimes, just after it had snapped, one could still make it serve by holding it so that the loose tip was propped, none too securely, by a jutting splinter. The little purple fellow, a special favorite of mine, had got worn down so short as to

become scarcely manageable. The white one alone, that lanky albino among pencils, kept its original length, or at least did so until I discovered that, **[far from being a fraud]** leaving no mark on the page, it was the ideal tool since I could imagine **[whatever I wished while I scrawled]**.

Alas, these pencils, too, have been distributed among the characters in my books to keep fictitious children busy; they are not quite my own now. Somewhere, in the apartment house of a chapter, in the hired room of a paragraph, I have also placed that tilted mirror, and the lamp, and the chandelier-drops. Few things are left, many have been squandered. Have I given away Box (son and husband of Loulou, the house-keeper's pet), that old brown dachshund fast asleep on the sofa? No, I think he is still mine. His **[grizzled muzzle]**, with the wart at the **[puckered corner of the mouth, is tucked]** into the curve of his hock, and from time to time a deep **[sigh distends his ribs]**. He is so old and his sleep is so thickly padded with dreams (about chewable slippers and a few last smells) that he does not stir when faint bells jingle outside. Then a pneumatic door heaves and clangs in the vestibule. She has come after all; I had so hoped she would not.

3

Another dog, the **[sweet-tempered sire of a ferocious family]**, a Great Dane not allowed in the house, **[played a pleasant part]**

p. 63

in an adventure that took place on one of the following days, if not the very day after. It so happened that my brother and I were left completely in charge of the newcomer. As I reconstitute it now, my mother had probably gone for a few hours to St. Petersburg (a

distance of some fifty Mlles) where my father was deeply involved in the grave political events of that winter. She was pregnant and very nervous. Miss Robinson, instead of staying to break in Mademoiselle had gone too—or perhaps my little sister, aged three, had inherited her. In order to prove that this was no way of treating us, I immediately formed the project of repeating the exciting performance of a year before, when we escaped from poor Miss Hunt in gay, populous Wiesbaden, a paradise of multicolored dead leaves. This time the countryside all around was a wilderness of snow, and it is hard to imagine what exactly could have been the goal of the journey I planned. We had just returned from our first after noon walk with Mademoiselle and were throbbing with frustration and hatred. To keep up with an unfamiliar tongue (all we knew in the way of French were a few household words), and on top of it to be crossed in all our fond habits, was more than we could bear. The *bonne promenade* she had promised us had turned out to be a tedious stroll around the house where the snow had been cleared and the icy ground [**sprinkled with sand**]. She had had us wear things we never used to wear, even on the frostiest day—[**horrible gaiters and hoods that hampered**] every movement. She had restrained us when we were tempted to explore the creamy, [**smooth swellings of snow**] that had been flowerbeds in summer. She had not allowed us to walk under the organ-pipe-like system of huge icicles that hung from the

p. 64

eaves and gloriously burned in the low sun. As soon as we came back from that walk, we left Mademoiselle puffing on the steps of the vestibule and dashed indoors, giving her the impression that we were about to conceal ourselves in some remote room. Actually, we [**trotted on till**] we reached the other side of the house, and then, through a veranda,

emerged into the garden again. The above-mentioned Great Dane was in the act of **[fussily adjusting]** himself to a nearby snowdrift, but while deciding which hindleg to lift, he noticed us and at once **[joined us at a joyful gallop]**.

The three of us **[followed a fairly]** easy trail and after plodding through deeper snow, **[reached the road]** that led to the village. Meanwhile the sun had set. Dusk came with **[uncanny suddenness]**. My brother declared he was cold and tired, but I urged him on and finally made him ride the dog (the only member of the party to be still enjoying himself). We had gone more than two Miles and the moon was fantastically shiny, and my brother, in perfect silence, had begun to fall, every now and then, from his mount when a servant with a lantern overtook us and led us home. “Giddy-eh, giddy-eh?” Mademoiselle was frantically shouting from the porch. I brushed past her without a word. My brother burst into tears, and gave himself up. The Great Dane, whose name was Turka, returned to his interrupted affairs in connection with serviceable and informative snowdrifts around the house.

4

In our childhood we know a lot about hands since they live and hover at the level of our stature; Mademoiselle’s were unpleasant

p. 65

because of the **[froggy gloss]** on their tight skin **[besprinkled with brown ecchymotic spots]**. Before her time no **[stranger had ever stroked]** my face. Mademoiselle, as soon as she came, had taken me completely aback by patting my cheek in sign of spontaneous affection. All her mannerisms come back to me when I think of her hands. Her trick of

[**peeling** rather than **sharpening** a **pencil**, the **point** held toward her **stupendous** and **sterile bosom swathed** in green wool]. The way she had of inserting her little finger into her ear and vibrating it very rapidly. The ritual observed every time she gave me a fresh copybook. Always panting a little, her mouth slightly open and emitting in quick [**succession** a **series** of **asthmatic puffs**], she would open the copybook to make a margin in it; that is, she would sharply imprint a vertical line with her thumbnail, fold in the edge of the page, press, release, smooth it out with the heel of her hand, after which the book would be [**briskly twisted**] around and placed before me ready for use. A new pen followed; she would moisten the [**glistening nib**] with susurrous lips before, dipping it into the baptismal ink font. Then, delighting in every [**limb** of every **limpid letter**] (especially so because the preceding [**copybook** had ended in utter **sloppiness**]), with exquisite care I would inscribe the word *Dictée* while Mademoiselle hunted through her collection of spelling tests for a good, hard passage.

5

Meanwhile the setting has changed. Hoarfrost and snow have been removed by a silent property man. The summer afternoon is alive with steep clouds [**breasting** the **blue**]. Eyed shadows move on the garden paths. Presently, lessons are over and Mademoiselle

p. 66

is reading to us on the veranda where the mats and lilted chairs develop a spicy, biscuity smell in the heat. On the [**white windowsills**], on the long window seats covered with

faded calico, the sun breaks into **[geometrical gems]** after passing through rhomboids and squares of stained glass. This is the time is when Mademoiselle is at her very best.

What a number of **[volumes]** she read through to us on that **veranda!** Her slender voice sped on and on, never weakening, without the slightest **[hitch or hesitation]**, an admirable reading machine wholly independent of her sick bronchial tubes. We got it all: *Les Malheurs de Sophie, Le Tour du Monde en Quatre, Vingt Jours, Le Petit Chose, Les Misérables, Le Comte de Monte Cristo*, many others. There she sat, distilling her reading voice from the still **[prison of her person]**. Apart from the lips, one of her chins, the smallest but true one, was the only mobile detail of her **[Buddha-like bulk]**. The black-rimmed pince-nez reflected eternity. Occasionally a fly would settle on her stern forehead and its three wrinkles would instantly leap up all together like three runners over three hurdles. But nothing whatever changed in the expression of her face—the face I so often tried to depict in my sketchbook, for its **[impassive and simple symmetry]** offered a far greater temptation to my stealthy pencil than the bowl of flowers or the **[decoy duck]** on the table before me, which I was supposedly **drawing**].

Presently my attention would wander still farther, and it was then, perhaps, that the rare purity of her rhythmic voice accomplished its true purpose. I looked at a cloud and years later was able to visualize its exact shape. The gardener was **[pottering among the peonies]**. A wagtail took a few steps, stopped as

p. 67

if it had remembered something—and then walked on, enacting its name. **[Coming from nowhere, a Comma butterfly]** settled the threshold, basked in the sun with its angular fulvous wings spread, suddenly closed them just to show the tiny initial chalked on their

dark underside, and as suddenly darted away. But the most constant source of enchantment during those readings came from the harlequin **[pattern of colored panes]** inset in a **[whitewashed framework]** on either side of the veranda. The garden when viewed through these **[magic glasses]** grew strangely still and aloof. If one looked through blue **[glass, the sand turned to cinders while inky trees swam in a tropical sky]**. The yellow created an amber world infused with an extra strong brew of sunshine. The red made the foliage **[drip ruby dark]** upon a coral-tinted footpath. The **[green soaked greenery in a greener green]**. And when, after such richness, one turned to a small square of **[normal, savorless glass, with its lone mosquito or lame daddy longlegs]**, it was like taking a draught of water when one is not thirsty, and one saw a matter-of-fact white bench under familiar trees. But of all the windows this is the **[pane through which in later years parched nostalgia longed to peer]**.

Mademoiselle never found out how potent had been the even flow of her voice. The subsequent claims she put forward were quite different. “Ah,” she sighed, “*comme on s’aimait*—didn’t we love each other! Those good old days in the *chateau*! The **[dead wax doll]** we once buried under the oak! (No—a wool-stuffed Golliwogg.) And that time you and Serge ran away and left me stumbling and howling in the depths of the forest! (Exaggerated.) *Ah, la fessée que je vous ai flanquée*—My what a

p. 68

spanking I gave you! (She did try to slap me once but the attempt was never repeated.) *Votre tante, la Princesse*, whom you struck with your little fist because she had been rude to me! (Do not remember.) And the way you whispered to me your childish troubles!

(Never!) And the cozy nook in my room where you loved to snuggle because you felt so warm and secure!”

Mademoiselle’s room, both in the country and in town, was a weird place to me—a kind of hothouse sheltering a thick-leaved plant imbued with a heavy, queerly acrid odor. Although next to ours, when we were small, it did not seem to belong to our pleasant, well-aired home. In that **[sickening mist]**, reeking, among other effluvia, of the brown smell of oxidized apple peel, the **[lamp burned low]**, and strange objects glimmered upon the writing desk: a **[lacquered box with licorice sticks]**, black segments of which she would hack off with her penknife and put to melt under her tongue; a **[picture-postcard of a lake and a castle with mother-of-pearl spangles]** for windows; a **[bumpy ball of tightly rolled bits]** of silver paper that came from all those chocolates she used to consume at night; photographs of the nephew who had died, of his mother who had signed her picture *Mater Dolorosa*, and of a certain **[Monsieur de Marante]** who been forced by his family to marry a rich widow.

Lording it over the rest was one in a noble frame incrustated with garnets; it showed, in three-quarter view, a slim young brunette **[clad in a close-fitting dress]**, with brave eyes and abundant hair. “A braid as thick as my arm and reaching down to my ankles!” was **[Mademoiselle’s melodramatic comment]**. For this had been she—but in vain did my eyes probe her

p. 69

[familiar form to try and extract the graceful creature it had engulfed]. Such discoveries as my awed brother and I did make merely increased the difficulties of that task; and the grownups who during the day beheld a densely clothed Mademoiselle never saw what we

children saw when, roused from her sleep by one of us shrieking himself out of a bad dream, disheveled, candle in hand, a **[gleam of guilt lace]** on the blood-red dressing gown that **[could not quite wrap her quaking mass]**, the ghastly Jezebel of Racine's absurd play stomped **[barefooted into our bedroom]**.

All my life I have been a poor go-to-sleeper. No matter how great my weariness, the wrench of parting with consciousness is unspeakably repulsive to me. I loathe Somnus, that **[black-masked headsman binding me to the block]**; and if in the course of years I have got so used to my nightly ordeal as almost to swagger while the familiar axe is coming out of its great velvet-lined case, initially I had no such comfort or defense: I had nothing—save a door left slightly ajar into Mademoiselle's room. Its **[vertical line of meek light]** was something I could cling to, since in absolute darkness my head would **[swim, just as the soul dissolves in the blackness of sleep]**.

Saturday night used to be a **[pleasurable prospect]** because that was the night Mademoiselle indulged in the luxury of a weekly bath, thus granting a **[longer lease]** to my tenuous gleam. But then a subtler torture set in. The nursery bathroom in our St. Petersburg house was at the end of a Z-shaped corridor some twenty heartbeats' distance from my bed, and between dreading Mademoiselle's return from the bathroom to her lighted bedroom and envying my brother's **[stolid snore]**, I could never

p. 70

really put my additional time to profit by deftly getting to sleep while a **[chink in the dark still bespoke a speck]** of myself in nothingness. At length they would come, those inexorable steps, **[plodding along the passage]** and causing some little glass object, which had been **[secretly sharing]** my vigil, to tinkle in dismay on its shelf.

Now she has entered her room. A brisk interchange of light-values tells me that the candle on her bed table takes over the job of the lamp on her desk. My **[line of light]** is still there, but it has grown old and wan, and flickers whenever Mademoiselle makes her bed creak by moving. For I still hear her. Now it is a **[silvery rustle spelling “Suchard”]**; now the trk-trk-trk of a fruit knife cutting the pages of *La Revue des Deux Mondes*. I hear her panting slightly. And all the time I am in acute distress, desperately trying to coax sleep, opening my eyes every few seconds to check the faded gleam, and imagining **[paradise as a place]** where a sleepless neighbor reads an endless book by the light of an eternal candle.

The inevitable happens: the pince-nez case **[shuts with a snap]**, the review **shuffles** onto the marble of the bed table, and gustily Mademoiselle’s **pursed lips** blow]; the **[first attempt fails]**, a groggy flame squirms and ducks; then comes a second **[lunge, and light]** collapses. In that pitchy **[blackness I lose my bearings]**, my bed seems to be slowly drifting, panic makes me **[sit up and stare]**; finally my dark-adapted eyes sift out, among entoptic floaters, certain more precious blurrings that roam in **[aimless amnesia]** until, half-remembering, they settle **[down as the dim]** folds of window curtains behind which street lights are remotely alive.

p. 71

How utterly foreign to the troubles of the night were those exciting St. Petersburg mornings when the fierce and tender, **[damp and dazzling]** arctic spring bundled away broken ice down the sea-bright Neva! It made the roofs shine. It painted the **[slush in the streets]** a rich purplish-blue shade which I have never seen anywhere since. Mademoiselle, her coat of imitation seal majestically swelling on her bosom, sat in the

back seat of the landau with my brother next to her and me facing them—joined to them by the valley of the lap rug; and as I looked up I could see, strung on ropes from housefront to housefront high above the street, great, tensely smooth, semi-transparent **[banners billowing]**, their three wide bands—pale red, pale blue, and merely pale—deprived by the sun and the flying cloud shadows of any too blunt connection with a national holiday, but undoubtedly celebrating now, in the city of memory, the essence of that spring day, the swish of the mud, the ruffled exotic bird with one bloodshot eye on Mademoiselle's hat.

6

She spent seven years with us, lessons getting rarer and rarer and her temper worse and worse. Still, she seemed like a rock of grim permanence when compared to the ebb and flow of English governesses and Russian tutors passing through our large household. She was on bad terms with all of them. Seldom less than a dozen people sat down for meals and when, on birthdays, this number rose to thirty or more, the question of place at table became a particularly burning one for Mademoiselle. Uncles and aunts and cousins would arrive on such days from neighboring estates, and the village **[doctor** would come in his **dogcart]**,

p. 72

and the village schoolmaster would be heard blowing his nose in cool hall, where he passed from mirror to mirror with a greenish, damp, creaking bouquet of lilies of the valley or a sky-colored, brittle one of cornflowers in his fist.

If Mademoiselle found herself seated too far at the end of the table, and especially if she lost precedence to a certain poor relative who was almost as fat as she (*“Je suis une sylphide a cote d’elle,”* Mademoiselle would [**say with a shrug**] of contempt), then her sense of injury caused her lips to twitch in a would-be ironical smile—and when a [**naive neighbor**] would smile back, she would rapidly shake her head, as if coming out of some very deep meditation, with the remark: *“Excusez-moi, je souriais a mes tristes pensees.”*

And as though nature had not wished to spare her anything that makes one supersensitive, she was [**hard of hearing**]. Sometimes at table we boys would suddenly become aware of two big tears crawling down Mademoiselle’s ample cheeks. “Don’t mind me,” she would say in a small voice, and she kept on eating till the unwiped tears blinded her; then, with a [**heartbroken hiccough**] she would rise and blunder out of the dining room. Little by little the truth would come out. The general [**talk had turned**], say, on the subject of the warship my uncle commanded, and she had perceived in this a sly dig at her Switzerland that had no navy. Or else it was because she [**fancied that whenever French**] was spoken, the game consisted in deliberately preventing her from directing and bejeweling the conversation. Poor lady, she was always in such a nervous hurry to seize control of [**intelligible table talk**] before it bolted back into Russian that no wonder she bungled her cue.

p. 73

“And your Parliament, Sir, how is it getting along?” she would suddenly [**burst out brightly**] from her end of the table, challenging my father, who, after a harassing day, was not exactly eager to discuss troubles of the State with a singularly unreal person who neither knew nor cared anything about them. Thinking that someone had referred to

music, “But Silence, too, may be beautiful,” she would bubble. “Why, one evening, in a desolate valley of the Alps, I actually *heard* Silence.” Sallies like these, especially when growing deafness led her to answer questions none had put, resulted in a painful hush, instead of touching off the rockets of a sprightly *causerie*.

And, really, her French was so lovely! Ought one to have minded the shallowness of her culture, the bitterness of her temper, the banality of her mind, when that [**pearly language of hers purled and scintillated**, as **innocent of sense** as the alliterative **sins of Racine’s pious verse**]? My father’s [**library**, not her **limited lore**], taught me to appreciate authentic poetry; nevertheless, something of her tongue’s [**limpidity and luster**] has had a singularly bracing effect upon me, like those [**sparkling salts**] that are used to purify the blood. This is why it makes me so sad to imagine now the anguish Mademoiselle must have felt at seeing how lost, how little valued was the nightingale voice which came from her elephantine body. She stayed with us long, much too long, obstinately hoping for some miracle that would transform her into a kind of Madame de Rambouillet holding a [**gilt-and-satin salon of poets, princes and statesmen** under her **brilliant spell**].

She would have gone on hoping had it not been for one Lenski, a young Russian tutor, with [**mild myopic**] eyes and strong

p. 74

political opinions, who had been engaged to coach us in various subjects and participate in our sports. He had had several predecessors, none of whom Mademoiselle had liked, but he, as she put it, was “*le comble*.” While venerating my father, Lenski could not quite stomach certain aspects of our household, such as [**footmen and French**], which last he

considered an aristocratic convention of no use in a liberal's home. On the other hand, Mademoiselle decided that if Lenski answered her point-blank questions only with short grunts (which he tried to Germanize for want of a better language), it was not because he could not understand French, but because he wished to insult her in front of everybody.

I can hear and see Mademoiselle requesting him in dulcet tones, but with an ominous quiver of her upper lip, to pass her the bread; and, likewise, I can hear and see **[Lenski Frenchlessly and unflinchingly]** going on with his soup; finally, with a slashing "*Pardon, Monsieur,*" Mademoiselle would swoop right across his plate, snatch up the breadbasket, and recoil again with a "*Merci*" so charged with irony that Lenski's downy ears would turn the hue of geraniums. "The brute! The cad! The Nihilist!" she would sob later in her room—which was no longer next to ours though still on the same floor.

If Lenski happened to come tripping downstairs while, with an asthmatic pause every ten steps or so, she was working her way up (for the little hydraulic elevator of our house in St. Petersburg would constantly, and rather insultingly, **[refuse to function]**), **[Mademoiselle maintained]** that he had viciously bumped into her, pushed her, knocked her down, and we already could see him trampling her prostrate body. More and more

p. 75

frequently she would leave the table, and the dessert she would have missed was diplomatically sent up in her wake. From her **[remote room]** she would write a sixteen-page letter to my mother, who, upon hurrying upstairs, would find her dramatically packing her trunk. And then, one day, she was allowed to go on with her packing.

She returned to Switzerland. World War One came, then the Revolution. In the early twenties, long after our correspondence had **[fizzled out, by a fluke move of life]** in exile I chanced to visit Lausanne with a college friend of mine, so I thought I might as well look up Mademoiselle, if she were still alive.

She was stouter than ever, quite grey and almost totally deaf, she welcomed me with a tumultuous outburst of affection. Instead of the **[Chateau de Chillon]** picture, there was now one of a garish troika. She spoke as warmly of her life in Russia as if it were her own lost homeland. Indeed, I found in the neighborhood quite a colony of such old Swiss governesses. **[Clustering together in a constant seething of competitive reminiscences]**, they formed a small island in an environment that had grown alien to them. Mademoiselle's bosom friend was now **[mummy-like Mlle. Golay]**, my mother's former governess, still **[prim and pessimistic]** at eighty-five; she had remained in our family long after **[my mother had married]**, and her return to Switzerland had preceded only by a couple of years that of Mademoiselle, with whom she had not been on speaking terms when both had been living under our roof. One is always a home in one's past, which partly explains those **[pathetic ladies'**

p. 76

posthumous love] for another country, which they never had really known and in which none of them had been very content.

As no conversation was possible because of Mademoiselle's deafness, my friend and I decided to bring her next day the appliance which we gathered she could not afford. She adjusted the clumsy thing improperly at first, but no sooner had she done so than she turned to me with a dazzled look of **[moist wonder]** and bliss in her eyes. She swore she

could hear every word, every **[murmur of mine]**. She could not for, having my doubts, I had not spoken. If I had, I would have told her to thank my friend, who had paid for the instrument. Was it, then, silence she heard, that Alpine Silence she had talked about in the past? In that past, she had been lying to herself; now she was lying to me.

Before leaving for **[Basle and Berlin]**, I happened to be walking along the lake in the cold, misty night. At one spot a **[lone light dimly diluted the darkness]**. In its **[nimbus the mist]** seemed transformed into a **[visible drizzle]**. “*Il pleut toujours en Suisse*” was one of those **[casual comments]** which, formerly, had made Mademoiselle weep. **[Below, a wide ripple, almost a wave, and something vaguely white]** attracted my eye. As I came quite close to the lapping **[water, I saw what it was—an aged swan]**, a large, uncouth, dodo-like creature, making ridiculous efforts to **[hoist himself]** into a moored boat. He could not do it. The heavy, impotent flapping of his wings, their **[slippery sound]** against the rocking and splashing boat, the **[gluey glistening]** of the dark swell where it caught the light—all seemed for a moment laden with that **[strange significance]** which **sometimes in dreams is** attached to a finger **pressed** to mute **lips** and then pointed at something

p. 77

the dreamer has no time to **distinguish** before waking with a **start]**. But although I soon forgot that dismal night, it was, oddly enough, that night, that compound image—**[shudder and swan and swell]**—which first came to my mind when a couple of years later I learned that Mademoiselle had died.

She had spent all her life in feeling miserable; this misery was her native element; its fluctuations, its varying depths, alone gave her the impression of moving and living.

What bothers me is that a sense of misery, and nothing else, is not enough to make a permanent soul. My [**enormous** and **morose**] Mademoiselle is all right on earth but impossible in eternity. Have I really salvaged her from fiction? Just before the rhythm I hear [**falters** and **fades**], I catch myself wondering whether, during the years I knew her, I had not kept utterly missing something in her that was far more she than her chins or her ways or even her French—something perhaps akin to that last glimpse of her, the radiant deceit she had used in order to have me depart pleased with my own kindness, or to that swan whose agony was so much closer to artistic truth than a [**drooping dancer's**] pale arms; something, in short, that I could appreciate only after the [**things** and **beings**] that I had most loved in the security of my childhood, had been turned to ashes or shot through heart.

p. 78

SM, Draft 3

From: Nabokov, V. (1989). *Speak, Memory: an Autobiography Revisited*. New York: Vintage International.

Chapter 5

1

I have often noticed that after I had bestowed on the characters of my novels some treasured item of my **[past**, it would **pine** away in the artificial world where I had so **abruptly placed** it]. Although it lingered on in my mind, its personal warmth, its retrospective appeal had gone and, presently, it became more closely identified with my novel than with my former self, where it had seemed to be so safe from the intrusion of the artist. Houses have crumbled in my memory as soundlessly as they did in the mute films of yore, and the portrait of my old French governess, whom I once lent to a boy in one of my books, is **[fading fast]**, now that it is engulfed in the description of a childhood entirely unrelated to my own. The man in me revolts against the fictionist, and here is my desperate attempt to save what is left of poor Mademoiselle.

A large woman, a very stout woman. Mademoiselle rolled into our existence in December 1905 when I was six and my brother five. There she is. I see so plainly her abundant dark hair, brushed up high and covertly graying; the three wrinkles on her austere forehead; her **[beetling brows]**; the steely eyes behind the black-rimmed pince-nez; that vestigial mustache;

p. 95

that blotchy complexion, which in moments of wrath develops an additional flush in the region of the third, and amplest, chin so regally spread over the frilled mountain of her blouse. And now she sits down, or rather she tackles the job of sitting down, the **[jelly]** of her **[jowl]** quaking, her **[prodigious posterior]**, with the three buttons on the side, lowering itself warily; then, at the last second, she surrenders her bulk to the wicker armchair, which, out of sheer fright, bursts into a salvo of crackling.

We had been abroad for about a year. After spending the summer of 1904 in Beaulieu and Abbazia, and several months in Wiesbaden, we left for Russia in the beginning of 1905. I fail to remember the month. One clue is that in Wiesbaden I had been taken to its Russian church—the first time I had been to church anywhere—and that might have been in the Lenten season (during the service I asked my mother what were the priest and deacon talking about; she whispered back in English that they were saying we should all love one another but I understood she meant that those two gorgeous personages in **[cone-shaped shining]** robes were telling each other they would always remain good friends). From Frankfurt we arrived in Berlin in a snowstorm, and next morning caught the Nord-Express, which thundered in from Paris. Twelve hours later it reached the Russian frontier. Against the background of winter, the **[ceremonial change of cars]** and engines acquired a strange new meaning. An exciting sense of *rodina*, “motherland,” was for the first time organically mingled with the **[comfortably creaking]** snow, the deep footprints across it, the red gloss of the engine stack, the birch logs piled high, under their private layer of transportable snow, on the red tender. I was not quite six, but that year abroad, a year of **[difficult decisions]** and liberal hopes, had exposed a small Russian boy to grown-up conversations. He

could not help being affected in some way of his own by a mother's nostalgia and a father's patriotism. In result, that particular return to Russia, my first *conscious* return, seems to me now, sixty years later, a rehearsal—not of the grand homecoming that will never take place, but of its constant dream in my long years of exile.

The summer of 1905 in Vyra had not yet evolved lepidoptera. The village schoolmaster took us for instructive walks (“What you hear is the sound of a [**scythe** being **sharpened**]”; “That field there will be given a rest next season”; “Oh, just a small bird—no special name”; “If that peasant is drunk, it is because he is poor”). Autumn carpeted the park with varicolored leaves, and Miss Robinson showed us the beautiful device—which the Ambassador's Boy, a familiar character in her small world, had enjoyed so much the preceding autumn—of choosing on the ground and arranging on a big sheet of paper such maple leaves as would form an almost complete spectrum (minus the blue—a big disappointment!), green shading into lemon, lemon into orange and so on through the reds to purples, purplish browns, reddish again and back through lemon to green (which was getting quite hard to find except as a part, a last brave edge). The [**first frosts**] hit the asters and still we did not move to town.

That winter of 1905-1906, when Mademoiselle arrived from Switzerland, was the only one of my childhood that I spent in the country. It was a year of strikes, riots and police-inspired massacres, and I suppose my father wished to keep his family away from the city, in our [**quiet country**] place, where his [**popularity** with the **peasants might mitigate**], as he correctly surmised, the [**risks of unrest**]. It was also a particularly severe

winter, producing as much snow as [**Mademoiselle might** have expected to find in the hyperborean gloom of **remote Muscovy**]. When she [**alighted** at the **little Siverski**

p. 97

station], from which she still had to travel half-a-dozen miles by sleigh to Vyra, I was not there to greet her; but I do so now as I try to imagine what she saw and felt at that last stage of her fabulous and ill-timed journey. Her Russian vocabulary consisted, I know, of one short word, the same solitary word that years later she was to take back to Switzerland. This word, which in her pronunciation may be phonetically rendered as “giddy-eh” (actually it is *gde* with *e* as in “yet”), meant “Where?” And that was a good deal. Uttered by her like the raucous cry of some lost bird, it accumulated such interrogatory force that it sufficed for all her needs. “Giddy-eh? Giddy-eh?” she would wail, not only to find out her whereabouts but also to [**express supreme misery**]: the fact that she was a stranger, shipwrecked, penniless, ailing, in search of the blessed land where at last she would be understood.

I can visualize her, by proxy, as she stands in the middle of the station platform, where she has just alighted, and vainly my [**ghostly envoy**] offers her an arm that she cannot see. (“There I was, abandoned by all, *comme la Comtesse Karenine*,” she later complained, eloquently, if not quite correctly.) The door of the waiting room opens with a shuddering whine peculiar to nights of intense frost; a cloud of hot air rushes out, almost as profuse as the steam from the panting engine; and now our coachman Zahar takes over—a burly man in sheepskin with the leather outside, his huge gloves protruding from his [**scarlet sash**] into which he has stuffed them. I hear the snow crunching under his felt boots while he busies himself with the luggage, the jingling harness, and then his

own nose, which he eases by means of a dexterous tweak-and-shake of finger and thumb as he trudges back around the sleigh. Slowly, with [**grim misgivings**], “*Madmazelya*,” as her helper [**calls her, climbs in, clutching** at him] in mortal fear lest the sleigh move off before her vast form

p. 98

is [**securely encased**]. Finally, she settles down with a [**grunt and thrusts**] her fists into her skimpy [**plush muff**]. At the juicy smack of their driver’s lips the two black horses, [**Zoyka and Zinka**], strain their quarters, shift hooves, strain again; and then Mademoiselle gives a backward jerk of her torso as the heavy sleigh is wrenched out of its world of [**steel, fur, flesh**, to enter a **frictionless** medium] where it skims along a spectral road that it seems barely to touch.

For one moment, thanks to the sudden radiance of a [**lone lamp**] where the station square ends, a grossly exaggerated shadow, also holding a muff, races beside the sleigh, climbs a [**billow of snow**], and is gone, leaving Mademoiselle to be swallowed up by what she will later [**allude to, with awe**] and gusto, as “*le steppe*.” There, in the [**limitless gloom**], the changeable twinkle of remote village lights seems to her to be the yellow eyes of wolves. She is cold, she is frozen stiff, frozen “to the center of her brain”—for she soars with the wildest hyperbole when not tagging after the most pedestrian dictum. Every now and then, she looks back to make sure that a [**second sleigh**], bearing her trunk and hatbox, is following—always at the same distance, like those [**companionable phantoms**] of ships in polar waters which explorers have described. And let me not leave out the moon—for surely there must be a moon, the full, incredibly clear disc that goes so well with Russian [**lusty frosts**]. So there it comes, steering out of a flock of small

dappled clouds, which it tinges with a vague iridescence; and, as it sails higher, it glazes the runner tracks left on the road, where every **[sparkling lump of snow is emphasized by a swollen shadow]**.

Very lovely, very lonesome. But what am I doing in this stereoscopic dreamland? How did I get here? Somehow, the two **[sleighs have slipped]** away, leaving behind a **[passportless spy standing]** on the blue-white road in his New England

p. 99

[snowboots and stormcoat]. The vibration in my ears is no longer their receding bells, but only my old blood singing. All is still, spellbound, enthralled by the moon, fancy's rear-vision mirror. The snow is real, though, and as I bend to it and scoop up a handful, sixty years crumble to glittering frost-dust between my fingers.

2

A large, alabaster-based kerosene lamp is steered into the gloaming. Gently it floats and comes down; the hand of memory, now in a footman's white glove, places it in the center of a round table. The flame is nicely adjusted, and a rosy, silk-flounced lamp shade, with inset glimpses of rococo winter sports, crowns the readjusted (cotton wool in Casimir's ear) light. Revealed: a warm, **[bright, stylish]** ("Russian Empire") drawing room in a snow-muffled house—soon to be termed *le chateau*—built by my mother's grandfather, who, being **[afraid of fires]**, had the staircase fashioned of iron, so that when the house did get burned to the ground, sometime after the Soviet Revolution, those fine-wrought steps, with the **[sky shining]** through their openwork risers, remained standing, all alone but still leading up.

Some more about that drawing room, please. The gleaming white moldings of the furniture, the embroidered roses of its upholstery. The white piano. The oval mirror. Hanging on taut cords, its pure brow inclined, it strives to retain the **[falling furniture]** and a **[slope of bright floor that keep slipping from its embrace]**. The chandelier pendants. These emit a delicate tinkling (things are being moved in the upstairs room where Mademoiselle **[will dwell]**). Colored pencils. Their detailed spectrum advertised on the box but never completely represented by those inside. We are sitting at

p. 100

a round table, my brother and I and Miss Robinson, who now and then looks at her watch: roads must be dreadful with all that snow; and anyway many professional hardships lie in wait for the vague French person who will replace her.

Now the colored pencils in action. The green one, by a mere **[whirl of the wrist]**, could be made to produce a ruffled tree, or the eddy left by a submerged crocodile. The blue one drew a simple line across the page—and the horizon of all seas was there. A nondescript blunt one kept getting into one's way. The **[brown one was always broken]**, and so was the red, but sometimes, just after it had snapped, one could still make it serve by holding it so that the loose tip was propped, none too securely, by a jutting splinter. The little purple fellow, a special favorite of mine, had got worn down so short as to become scarcely manageable. The white one alone, that lanky albino among pencils, kept its original length, or at least did so until I discovered that, **[far from being a fraud]** leaving no mark on the page, it was the ideal implement since I could imagine **[whatever I wished while I scrawled]**.

Alas, these pencils, too, have been distributed among the characters in my books to keep fictitious children busy; they are not quite my own now. Somewhere, in the apartment house of a chapter, in the hired room of a paragraph, I have also placed that tilted mirror, and the lamp, and the chandelier drops. Few things are left, many have been squandered. Have I given away Box I (son and husband of Loulou, the housekeeper's pet), that old brown dachshund fast asleep on the sofa? No, I think he is still mine. His **[grizzled muzzle]**, with the wart at the **[puckered]** corner of the mouth, is **tucked** into the curve of his hock, and from time to time a deep **[sigh distends his ribs]**. He is so old and his sleep is so thickly padded with dreams (about chewable slippers and a few last

p. 101

smells) that he does not stir when faint bells jingle outside. Then a pneumatic door heaves and clangs in the vestibule. She has come after all; I had so hoped she would not.

3

Another dog, the **[sweet-tempered sire of a ferocious family]**, a Great Dane not allowed in the house, **[played a pleasant part]** in an adventure that took place on one of the following days, if not the very day after. It so happened that my brother and I were left completely in charge of the newcomer. As I reconstitute it now, my mother had probably gone, with her maid and young Trainy, to St. Petersburg (a distance of some fifty miles) where my father was deeply involved in the grave political events of that winter. She was pregnant and very nervous. Miss Robinson, instead of staying to break in Mademoiselle, had gone too—back to that ambassador's family, about which we had heard from her as much as they would about us. In order to prove that this was no way of

treating us, I immediately formed the project of repeating the exciting performance of a year before when we escaped from poor Miss Hunt in Wiesbaden. This time the countryside all around was a **[wilderness of snow]**, and it is hard to imagine what exactly could have been the goal of the journey I planned. We had just returned from our first afternoon walk with Mademoiselle and I was seething with frustration and hatred. With a little prompting, I had meek Sergey share some of my anger. To keep up with an unfamiliar tongue (all we knew in the way of French were a few household phrases), and on top of it to be crossed in all our fond habits, was more than one could bear. The *bonne promenade* she had promised us had turned out to be a tedious stroll near the house where the snow had been cleared and the icy ground **[sprinkled** with

p. 102

sand]. She had had us wear things we never used to wear, even on the frostiest day—**[horrible gaiters and hoods that hampered]** our every movement. She had restrained us when I induced Sergey to explore the creamy, **[smooth swellings of snow]** that had been flower beds in summer. She had not allowed us to walk under the organ-pipelike system of huge icicles that hung from the eaves and gloriously burned in the low sun. And she had rejected as *ignoble* one of my favorite pastimes (devised by Miss Robinson)—lying prone on a little **[plush sledge]** with a bit of rope tied to its front and a hand in a leathern mitten pulling me along a snow-covered path, under white trees, and Sergey, not lying but sitting on a **[second sledge]**, upholstered in red plush, attached to the rear of my blue one, and the heels of two felt boots, right in front of my face, walking quite fast with toes slightly turned in, now this, now that **[sole skidding]** on a raw patch of ice. (The hand

and the feet belonged to Dmitri, our oldest and shortest gardener, and the path was the avenue of oaklings which seems to have been the main artery of my infancy.)

I explained to my brother a wicked **[plan and persuaded]** him to accept it. As soon as we came back from that walk, we left Mademoiselle puffing on the steps of the vestibule and dashed indoors, giving her the impression that we were about to conceal ourselves in some remote room. Actually, we **[trotted on till]** we reached the other side of the house, and then, through a veranda, emerged into the garden again. The above-mentioned Great Dane was in the act of **[fussily adjusting]** himself to a nearby snowdrift, but while deciding which hindleg to lift, he noticed us and at once **[joined us at a joyful gallop]**.

The three of us **[followed a fairly]** easy trail and after plodding through deeper snow, **[reached the road]** that led to the village. Meanwhile the sun had set. Dusk came with **[uncanny**

p. 103

suddenness]. My brother declared he was cold and tired, but I urged him on and finally made him ride the dog (the only member of the party to be still enjoying himself). We had gone more than two miles, and the moon was fantastically shiny, and my brother, in perfect silence, had begun to fall, every now and then, from his mount when Dmitri with a lantern overtook us and led us home. “Giddy-eh, giddy-eh?” Mademoiselle was frantically shouting from the porch. I brushed past her without a word. My brother burst into tears, and gave himself up. The Great Dane, whose name was Turka, returned to his interrupted affairs in connection with serviceable and informative snowdrifts around the house.

In our childhood we know a lot about hands since they live and hover at the level of our stature; Mademoiselle's were unpleasant because of the **[froggy gloss]** on their tight skin **[besprinkled with brown ecchymotic spots]**. Before her time no **[stranger had ever stroked]** my face. Mademoiselle, as soon as she came, had taken me completely aback by patting my cheek in sign of spontaneous affection. All her mannerisms come back to me when I think of her hands. Her trick of **[peeling rather than sharpening a pencil, the point held toward her stupendous and sterile bosom swathed in green wool]**. The way she had of inserting her little finger into her ear and vibrating it very rapidly. The ritual observed every time she gave me a fresh copybook. Always panting a little, her mouth slightly open and emitting in quick **[succession a series of asthmatic puffs]**, she would open the copybook to make a margin in it; that is, she would sharply imprint a vertical line with her thumbnail, fold in the edge of the page, press, release, smooth it out with the heel of her hand, after

p. 104

which the book would be **[briskly twisted]** around and placed before me ready for use. A new pen followed; she would moisten the **[glistening nib]** with susurrous lips before dipping it into the baptismal ink font. Then, delighting in every **[limb of every limpid letter]** (especially so because the preceding **[copybook had ended in utter sloppiness]**), with exquisite care I would inscribe the word *Dictee* while Mademoiselle hunted through her collection of spelling tests for a good, hard passage.

Meanwhile the setting has changed. The berimed tree and the high snowdrift with its xanthic hole have been removed by a silent property man. The summer afternoon is alive with steep clouds [**breasting the blue**]. Eyed shadows move on the garden paths. Presently, lessons are over and Mademoiselle is reading to us on the veranda where the mats and plaited chairs develop a spicy, biscuity smell in the heat. On the [**white window**] ledges, on the long window seats covered with faded calico, the sun breaks into [**geometrical gems**] after passing through rhomboids and squares of stained glass. This is the time when Mademoiselle is at her very best.

What a number of [**volumes** she read through to us on that **veranda**! Her slender voice sped on and on, never weakening, without the slightest [**hitch or hesitation**], an admirable reading machine wholly independent of her sick bronchial tubes. We got it all: *Les Malheurs de Sophie*, *Le Tour du Monde en Quatre Vingts Jours*, *Le Petit Chose*, *Les Miserables*, *Le Comte de Monte Cristo*, many others. There she sat, distilling her reading voice from the still [**prison of her person**]. Apart from the lips, one of her chins, the smallest but true one, was the only mobile detail of her [**Buddha-like bulk**]. The black-rimmed pince-nez reflected eternity. Occasionally a fly

p. 105

would settle on her stern forehead and its three wrinkles would instantly leap up all together like three runners over three hurdles. But nothing whatever changed in the expression of her face—the face I so often tried to depict in my sketchbook, for its [**impassive and simple symmetry**] offered a far greater temptation to my stealthy pencil

than the bowl of flowers or the [**decoy duck** on the table before me, which I was supposedly **drawing**].

Presently my attention would wander still farther, and it was then, perhaps, that the rare purity of her rhythmic voice accomplished its true purpose. I looked at a tree and the stir of its leaves borrowed that rhythm. Egor was [**pottering** among the **peonies**]. A wagtail took a few steps, stopped as if it had remembered something—and then walked on, enacting its name. [**Coming** from nowhere, a **Comma** butterfly] settled on the threshold, basked in the sun with its angular fulvous wings spread, suddenly closed them just to show the tiny initial chalked on their dark underside, and as suddenly darted away. But the most constant source of enchantment during those readings came from the harlequin [**pattern** of colored **panes**] inset in a [**whitewashed framework**] on either side of the veranda. The garden when viewed through these [**magic glasses**] grew strangely still and aloof. If one looked through blue glass, the [**sand** turned to **cinders** while inky **trees swam** in a tropical **sky**]. The yellow created an amber world infused with an extra strong brew of sunshine. The red made the foliage [**drip** ruby **dark**] upon a pink footpath. The [**green** soaked **greenery** in a **greener green**]. And when, after such richness, one turned to a small square of [**normal, savorless glass**, with its **lone** mosquito or **lame** daddy **longlegs**], it was like taking a draught of water when one is not thirsty, and one saw a matter-of-fact white bench under familiar trees.

p. 106

But of all the windows this is the [**pane** through which in later years **parched** nostalgia longed to **peer**].

Mademoiselle never found out how potent had been the even flow of her voice. The subsequent claims she put forward were quite different. “Ah,” she sighed, “*comme on s’aimait*—didn’t we love each other! Those good old days in the chateau! The [**dead wax doll**] we once buried under the oak! No—a wool-stuffed Golliwogg. And that time you and Serge ran away and left me stumbling and howling in the depths of the forest! Exaggerated. *Ah, la fessée que je vous ai flanquée*—My, what a spanking I gave you! She did try to slap me once but the attempt was never repeated. *Votre tante, la, Princesse*, whom you struck with your little fist because she had been rude to me! Do not remember. And the way you whispered to me your childish troubles! Never! And the nook in my room where you loved to snuggle because you felt so warm and secure!”

Mademoiselle’s room, both in the country and in town, was a weird place to me—a kind of hothouse sheltering a thick-leaved plant imbued with a heavy, enuretic odor. Although next to ours, when we were small, it did not seem to belong to our pleasant, well-aired home. In that [**sickening mist**], reeking, among other woolier effluvia, of the brown smell of oxidized apple peel, the [**lamp burned low**], and strange objects glimmered upon the writing desk: a [**lacquered box with licorice sticks**], black segments of which she would hack off with her penknife and put to melt under her tongue; a [**picture postcard**] of a lake and a castle with mother-of-pearl spangles for windows; a [**bumpy ball of tightly rolled bits**] of silver paper that came from all those chocolates she used to consume at night; photographs of the nephew who had died, of his mother who had signed her picture *Mater Dolorosa*,

p. 107

and of a certain [**Monsieur de Marante**] who had been forced by his family to marry a rich widow.

Lording it over the rest was one in a [**fancy frame**] incrusting with garnets; it showed, in three-quarter view, a slim young brunette [**clad in a close-fitting dress**], with brave eyes and abundant hair. “A braid as thick as my arm and reaching down to my ankles!” was [**Mademoiselle’s melodramatic comment**]. For this had been she—but in vain did my eyes probe her [**familiar form** to try and extract the **graceful** creature it had **engulfed**]. Such discoveries as my awed brother and I did make merely increased the difficulties of that task; and the grown-ups who during the day beheld a densely clothed Mademoiselle never saw what we children saw when, roused from her sleep by one of us shrieking himself out of a bad dream, disheveled, candle in hand, a [**gleam of gilt lace**] on the blood-red dressing gown that [**could not quite wrap her quaking mass**], the ghastly Jezebel of Racine’s absurd play stomped [**barefooted into our bedroom**].

All my life I have been a poor go-to-sleeper. People in trains, who lay their newspaper aside, fold their silly arms, and immediately, with an [**offensive familiarity**] of demeanor, [**start snoring**], amaze me as much as the uninhibited chap who cozily defecates in the presence of a chatty tubber, or participates in huge demonstrations, or joins some union in order to dissolve in it. Sleep is the most moronic fraternity in the world, with the heaviest dues and the crudest rituals. It is a mental torture I find debasing. The [**strain and drain**] of composition often force me, alas, to swallow a strong pill that gives me an hour or two of [**frightful nightmares**] or even to accept the comic relief of a midday snooze, the way a senile rake might totter to the nearest euthanasium; but I

simply cannot get used to the nightly betrayal of reason, humanity, genius. No matter how great my weariness, the wrench of

p. 108

parting with consciousness is unspeakably repulsive to me. I loathe Somnus, that [**black-masked** headsman **binding** me to the **block**]; and if in the course of years, with the approach of a far more thorough and still more risible disintegration, which nowanights, I confess, detracts much from the routine terrors of sleep, I have grown so accustomed to my bedtime ordeal as almost to swagger while the familiar ax is coming out of its great velvet-lined [**double-bass case**], initially I had no such comfort or defense: I had nothing—except one token light in the potentially refulgent chandelier of Mademoiselle’s bedroom, whose [**door**, by our family **doctor’s decree**] (I salute you. Dr. Sokolov!), remained slightly ajar. Its vertical [**line of lambency**] (which a child’s tears could transform into dazzling rays of compassion) was something I could cling to, since in absolute darkness my head would [**swim and my mind melt**] in a travesty of the death struggle.

Saturday night used to be or ought to have been a [**pleasurable prospect**], because that was the night Mademoiselle, who belonged to the classical school of hygiene and regarded our *toquades anglaises* as merely a source of colds, indulged in the perilous luxury of a weekly bath, thus granting a [**longer lease** to my tenuous **gleam**]. But then a subtler torment set in.

We have moved now to our town house, an Italianate construction of [**Finnish** granite, built by my grandfather circa 1885, with **floral frescoes**] above the third (upper) story and a second-floor oriel, in St. Peterburg (now Leningrad), 47, Morskaya (now

Herten Street). The children occupied the third floor. In 1908, the year selected here, I still shared a nursery with my brother. The bathroom assigned to Mademoiselle was at the end of a Z-shaped corridor some twenty heartbeats' distance from my bed, and between dreading her premature return from the bathroom to her lighted bedroom

p. 109

next to our nursery and envying my brother's regular little wheeze behind the japped screen separating us, I could never really put my additional time to profit by deftly getting to sleep while a [**chink in the dark still bespoke a speck**] of myself in nothingness. At length they would come, those inexorable steps, [**plodding along the passage**] and causing some fragile glass object, which had been [**secretly sharing**] my vigil, to vibrate in dismay on its shelf.

Now she has entered her room. A brisk interchange of light values tells me that the [**candle on her bed table takes over the job of the ceiling cluster of bulbs**], which, having run up with a [**couple of clicks**] two additional steps of natural, and then supernatural, brightness, clicks off altogether. My [**line of light**] is still there, but it has grown old and wan, and flickers whenever Mademoiselle makes her bed creak by moving. For I still hear her. Now it is a [**silvery rustle spelling "Suchard"**]; now the trk-trk of a fruit knife cutting the pages of *La Revue des Deux Mondes*. A period of decline has started: she is reading Bourget. Not one word of his will survive him. Doom is nigh. I am in acute distress, desperately trying to coax sleep, opening my eyes every few seconds to check the faded gleam, and imagining [**paradise as a place**] where a sleepless neighbor reads an endless book by the light of an eternal candle.

The inevitable happens: the pince-nez case [**shuts** with a **snap**, the review **shuffles** onto the marble of the bed table, and gustily Mademoiselle's **pursed lips** blow]; the [**first attempt fails**], a groggy flame squirms and ducks; then comes a second [**lunge**, and **light**] collapses. In that pitchy [**blackness** I lose my **bearings**, my **bed** seems to **be** slowly drifting], panic makes me [**sit up and stare**]; finally my dark-adapted eyes sift out, among entoptic floaters, certain more precious blurrings that roam in [**aimless amnesia**] until, half-remembering, they settle down

p. 110

as the dim folds of window curtains behind which street lights are remotely alive.

How utterly foreign to the troubles of the night were those exciting St. Petersburg mornings when the fierce and tender, [**damp** and **dazzling**] arctic spring bundled away broken ice down the sea-bright Neva! It made the roofs shine. It painted the [**slush** in the **streets**] a rich purplish-blue shade which I have never seen anywhere since. On those glorious days *on allait se promener en equipage*—the old-world expression current in our set. I can easily refeel the exhilarating change I from the thickly padded, knee-length *polushubok*, with the hot beaver collar, to the short navy-blue coat with its anchor-patterned brass buttons. In the open landau I am joined by the valley of a lap rug to the occupants of the more interesting back seat, majestic Mademoiselle, and [**triumphant**, **tear-bedabbled**] Sergey, with whom I have just had a row at home. I am kicking him slightly, now and then, under our common cover, until Mademoiselle sternly tells me to stop. We drift past the show windows of Faberge whose [**mineral monstrosities**], jeweled troykas poised on marble ostrich eggs, and the like, highly appreciated by the imperial family, were emblems of [**grotesque garishness**] to ours. Church bells are

ringing, the first Brimstone flies up over the Palace Arch, in another month we shall return to the country; and as I look up I can see, strung on ropes from housefront to housefront high above the street, great, tensely smooth, semitransparent [**banners billowing**], their three wide bands—pale red, pale blue, and merely pale—deprived by the sun and the flying cloud-shadows of any too blunt connection with a national holiday, but undoubtedly celebrating now, in the city of memory, the essence of that spring day, the swish of the mud, the beginning of mumps, the ruffled exotic bird with one bloodshot eye on Mademoiselle's hat.

p. 111

6

She spent seven years with us, lessons getting rarer and rarer and her temper worse and worse. Still, she seemed like a rock of grim permanence when compared to the ebb and flow of English governesses and Russian tutors passing through our large household. She was on bad terms with all of them. In [**summer seldom less**] than fifteen people sat down for meals and when, on birthdays, this number rose to thirty or more, the question of place at table became a particularly burning one for Mademoiselle. Uncles and aunts and cousins would arrive on such days from neighboring estates, and the village [**doctor** would come in his **dogcart**], and the village schoolmaster would be heard blowing his nose in the cool hall, where he passed from mirror to mirror with a greenish, damp, creaking bouquet of lilies of the valley or a sky-colored, brittle one of cornflowers in his fist.

If Mademoiselle found herself seated too far at the end of the huge table, and especially if she lost precedence to a certain poor relative who was almost as fat as she (*“fe suis une sylphide a cote d’elle,”* Mademoiselle would [**say with a shrug**] of contempt), then her sense of injury caused her lips to twitch in a would-be ironical smile—and when a [**naive neighbor**] would smile back, she would rapidly shake her head, as if coming out of some very deep meditation, with the remark: *“Excusez-moi, je souriais a mes tristes pensees.”*

And as though nature had not wished to spare her anything that makes one supersensitive, she was [**hard of hearing**]. Sometimes at table we boys would suddenly become aware of two big tears crawling down Mademoiselle’s ample cheeks. “Don’t mind me,” she would say in a small voice, and she kept on eating till the unwiped tears blinded her; then, with a [**heartbroken hiccough**] she would rise and blunder out of the dining

p. 112

room. Little by little the truth would come out. The general [**talk had turned**], say, on the subject of the warship my uncle commanded, and she had perceived in this a sly dig at her Switzerland that had no navy. Or else it was because she [**fancied that whenever French was spoken**], the game consisted in deliberately preventing her from directing and adorning the conversation. Poor lady, she was always in such a nervous hurry to seize control of [**intelligible table talk**] before it bolted back into Russian that no wonder she bungled her cue.

“And your Parliament, sir, how is it getting along?” she would suddenly [**burst out brightly**] from her end of the table, challenging my father, who, after a harassing day,

was not exactly eager to discuss troubles of the state with a singularly unreal person who neither knew nor cared anything about them. Thinking that someone had referred to music, “But Silence, too, may be beautiful,” she would bubble. “Why, one evening, in a desolate valley of the Alps, I actually heard Silence.” Sallies like these, especially when growing deafness led her to answer questions none had put, resulted in a painful hush, instead of touching off the rockets of a sprightly *causerie*.

And, really, her French was so lovely! Ought one to have minded the shallowness of her culture, the bitterness of her temper, the banality of her mind, [when that **pearly language** of hers **purled** and **scintillated**, as **innocent** of **sense** as the **alliterative sins** of **Racine’s pious verse**]? My father’s [**library**, not her **limited lore**], taught me to appreciate authentic poetry; nevertheless, something of her tongue’s [**limpidity** and **luster**] has had a singularly bracing effect upon me, like those [**sparkling salts**] that are used to purify the blood. This is why it makes me so sad to imagine now the anguish Mademoiselle must have felt at seeing how lost, how little valued was

p. 113

the nightingale voice which came from her elephantine body. She stayed with us long, much too long, obstinately hoping for some miracle that would transform her into a kind of Madame de Rambouillet holding a [**gilt-and-satin salon** of **poets, princes** and **statesmen** under her **brilliant spell**].

She would have gone on hoping had it not been for one Lenski, a young Russian tutor, with [**mild myopic**] eyes and strong political opinions, who had been engaged to coach us in various subjects and participate in our sports. He had had several predecessors, none of whom Mademoiselle had liked, but he, as she put it, was “*le*

comble.” While venerating my father, Lenski could not quite stomach certain aspects of our household, such as **[footmen and French]**, which last he considered an aristocratic convention of no use in a liberal’s home. On the other hand, Mademoiselle decided that if Lenski answered her point-blank questions only with short grunts (which he tried to Germanize for want of a better language), it was not because he could not understand French, but because he wished to insult her in front of everybody.

I can hear and see Mademoiselle requesting him in dulcet tones, but with an ominous quiver of her upper lip, to pass her the bread; and, likewise, I can hear and see **[Lenski Frenchlessly and unflinchingly]** going on with his soup; finally, with a slashing “*Pardon, monsieur,*” Mademoiselle would swoop right across his plate, snatch up the breadbasket, and recoil again with a “*Merci!*” so charged with irony that Lenski’s downy ears would turn the hue of geraniums. “The brute! The cad! The Nihilist!” she would sob later in her room—which was no longer next to ours though still on the same floor.

If Lenski happened to come tripping downstairs while, with an asthmatic pause every ten steps or so, she was working her way up (for the little hydraulic elevator of our house

p. 114

in St. Petersburg would constantly, and rather insultingly, **[refuse to function])**, **[Mademoiselle maintained]** that he had viciously bumped into her, pushed her, knocked her down, and we already could see him trampling her prostrate body. More and more frequently she would leave the table, and the dessert she would have missed was diplomatically sent up in her wake. From her **[remote room]** she would write a sixteen-

page letter to my mother, who, upon hurrying upstairs, would find her dramatically packing her trunk. And then, one day, she was allowed to go on with her packing.

7

She returned to Switzerland. World War One came, then the Revolution. In the early twenties, long after our correspondence had had [**fizzled** out, by a **fluke** move of **life in exile**] I chanced to visit Lausanne with a college friend of mine, so I thought I might as well look up Mademoiselle, if she were still alive.

She was stouter than ever, quite gray and almost totally deaf, she welcomed me with a tumultuous outburst of affection. Instead of the [**Chateau de Chillon**] picture, there was now one of a garish troika. She spoke as warmly of her life in Russia as if it were her own lost homeland. Indeed, I found in the neighborhood quite a colony of such old Swiss governesses. Huddled together in a [**constant** seething of **competitive reminiscences**], they formed a small island in an environment that had grown alien to them. Mademoiselle's bosom friend was now [**mummy-like Mlle Golay**], my mother's former governess, still [**prim** and **pessimistic**] at eighty-five; she had remained in our family long after [**my mother** had **married**], and her return to Switzerland had preceded only by a couple of years that of Mademoiselle, with whom she had

p. 115

not been on speaking terms when both had been living under our roof. One is always at home in one's past, which partly explains those [**pathetic ladies' posthumous love**] for a remote and, to be perfectly frank, rather appalling country, which they never had really known and in which none of them had been very content.

As no conversation was possible because of Mademoiselle's deafness, my friend and I decided to bring her next day the appliance which we gathered she could not afford. She adjusted the clumsy thing improperly at first, but no sooner had she done so than she turned to me with a dazzled look of **[moist wonder]** and bliss in her eyes. She swore she could hear every word, every **[murmur of mine]**. She could not for, having my doubts, I had not spoken. If I had, I would have told her to thank my friend, who had paid for the instrument. Was it, then, silence she heard, that Alpine Silence she had talked about in the past? In that past, she had been lying to herself; now she was lying to me.

Before leaving for **[Basle and Berlin]**, I happened to be walking along the lake in the cold, misty night. At one spot a **[lone light dimly diluted the darkness]** and transformed the mist into a **[visible drizzle]**. "*Il pleut toujours en Suisse*" was one of those **[casual comments]** which, formerly, had made Mademoiselle **[weep]**. Below, a **wide** ripple, almost a **wave**, and something vaguely **white** attracted my eye]. As I came quite close to the **[lapping water, I saw what it was—an aged swan]**, a large, uncouth, dodo-like creature, making ridiculous efforts to **[hoist himself]** into a moored boat. He could not do it. The heavy, impotent flapping of his wings, their **[slippery sound]** against the rocking and plashing boat, the **[gluey glistening]** of the dark swell where it caught the light—all seemed for a moment laden with that **[strange significance which sometimes in dreams is attached to a finger pressed to mute lips]**

p. 116

and then pointed at **something** the dreamer has no time to **distinguish** before waking with a **start]**. But although I soon forgot that dismal night, it was, oddly enough, that

night, that compound image—[**shudder** and **swan** and **swell**]—which first came to my mind when a couple of years later I learned that Mademoiselle had died.

She had spent all her life in feeling miserable; this misery was her native element; its fluctuations, its varying depths, alone gave her the impression of moving and living. What bothers me is that a sense of misery, and nothing else, is not enough to make a permanent soul. My [**enormous** and **morose**] Mademoiselle is all right on earth but impossible in eternity. Have I really salvaged her from fiction? Just before the rhythm I hear [**falters** and **fades**], I catch myself wondering whether, during the years I knew her, I had not kept utterly missing something in her that was far more she than her chins or her ways or even her French—something perhaps akin to that last glimpse of her, to the radiant deceit she had used in order to have me depart pleased with my own kindness, or to that swan whose agony was so much closer to artistic truth than a [**drooping dancer's**] pale arms; something, in short, that I could appreciate only after the [**things** and **beings**] that I had most loved in the security of my childhood had been turned to ashes or shot through the heart.

There is an appendix to Mademoiselle's story. When I first wrote it I did not know about certain amazing survivals. Thus, in 1960, my London cousin Peter de Peterson told me that their English nanny, who had seemed old to me in 1904 in Abbazia, was by now over ninety and in good health; neither was I aware that the governess of my father's two youngest sisters, Mlle Bouvier (later Mme Conrad), survived my father by almost half a century. She had entered their household in 1889 and stayed six years, being the last in a

p. 117

series of governesses. A pretty little keepsake drawn in 1895 by Ivan de Peterson, Peter's father, shows various events of life at Batovo vignetted over an inscription in my father's hand: *A celle qui a toujours su se faire aimer et qui lie saura jamais ne faire oublier*; signatures have been appended by four young male Nabokovs and three of their sisters, Natalia, Elizaveta, and Nadezhda, as well as by Natalia's husband, their little son Mitik, two girl cousins, and Ivan Aleksandrovich Tihotski, the Russian tutor. Sixty-five years later, in Geneva, my sister Elena discovered Mme Conrad, now in her tenth decade. The ancient lady, skipping one generation, naively mistook Elena for our mother, then a girl of eighteen, who used to drive up with Mlle Golay from Vyra to Batovo, in those distant times whose **[long light]** finds so many ingenious ways to reach me.

p. 118

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Akhtar, S. (1995). A Third Individuation: Immigration, Identity, and the Psychoanalytic Process. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 43: 1051-1084.
- Akhtar, S. (1996). "Someday . . ." And "If Only . . ." Fantasies: Pathological Optimism And Inordinate Nostalgia As Related Forms Of Idealization. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 44: 723-753.
- Akhtar, S. (2000). Mental Pain And The Cultural Ointment Of Poetry. *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, 81: 229-243.
- Alliteration. (n.d.) In *Oxford English Dictionary*. Retrieved from: <http://dictionary.oed.com>.
- Appel, A. and Nabokov, V. (1967). An Interview with Vladimir Nabokov. *Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature*, 8 (2): 127-152.
- Angier, N. (2010, February 1). Abstract Thoughts? The Body Takes Them Literally. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/02/science/02angier.html?pa>.
- Assonance. (n.d.) In *Oxford English Dictionary*. Retrieved from: <http://dictionary.oed.com>.
- Beebe, B., and Lachmann, F. (1988). The Contribution of Mother–Infant Mutual Influence to the Origins of Self and Object Representations. *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, 5: 305-337.
- Boyd, B. (1993a). *Vladimir Nabokov: The Russian Years*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Boyd, B. (1993b). *Vladimir Nabokov: The American Years*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Boyd, B. (2009). *On the Origin of Stories: Evolution, Cognition, and Fiction*. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Breuer, J. and Freud, S. (1893). On The Psychical Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 2: 1-17.
- Bruner, J. (1996). A Narrative Model of Self Construction. *Psyche & Logos*, 17 (1): 154-170.

- Bruner, J (1991). The Narrative Construction of Reality. *Critical Inquiry*, 18 (1): 1-21.
- Buckley, P. (Ed.), (1986). *Essential Papers on Object Relations*. New York: New York University Press.
- Casement, P.J. (1982). Samuel Beckett's Relationship to his Mother-Tongue. *International Review of Psycho-Analysis*, 9: 35-44
- Consonance. (n.d.) In *Oxford English Dictionary*. Retrieved from: <http://dictionary.oed.com>.
- de la Durantaye, L. (2005). Vladimir Nabokov and Sigmund Freud, or a Particular Problem. *American Imago*, 62 (1): 59-73.
- Fairbairn, W. D. (1952). *Psychoanalytic Studies of the Personality*. London: Tavistock Publications Limited.
- Ferenczi, S. (1952). *First Contributions to Psycho-Analysis*. London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis.
- Fonagy, P., and Target, M. (1998). Mentalization and the Changing Aims of Child Psychoanalysis. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 8: 87-114.
- Fonagy, P., Target, M., Gergely, G., Allen, J., and Bateman, A. (2003). The Developmental Roots of Borderline Personality Disorder in Early Attachment Relationships: A Theory and Some Evidence. *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*, 23: 412-459.
- Foster, R. (1996). The Bilingual Self: Duet in Two Voices. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 6: 99-121.
- Freud, S. (1893-1895). Studies on Hysteria. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 2. London: The Hogarth Press, 1955.
- Freud, S. (1905). Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 8. London: The Hogarth Press, 1955.
- Freud, S. (1914). Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through (Further Recommendations on the Technique of Psycho-Analysis II). *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 12. London: The Hogarth Press, 1955.
- Freud, S. (1915). Instincts and their Vicissitudes. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 14. London: The Hogarth Press, 1955.

- Freud, S. (1919). Introduction to Psycho-Analysis and the War Neuroses. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 17. London: The Hogarth Press, 1955.
- Freud, S. (1920). Beyond the Pleasure Principle. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 18. London: The Hogarth Press, 1955.
- Freud, S. (1923). The Ego and the Id. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 19. London: The Hogarth Press, 1955.
- Freud, S. (1926). Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 20. London: The Hogarth Press, 1955.
- Freud, S. (1930). Civilization and Its Discontents. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 21. London: The Hogarth Press, 1955.
- Goldstone, A. (2008). *On Nabokov's Lolita*. Retrieved from <http://oyc.yale.edu/english/american-novel-since-1945/content/sessions/session-6censorship>.
- Grayson, J. (1977). *Nabokov Translated: A Comparison of Nabokov's Russian and English Prose*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Greenson, R. (1950). The Mother Tongue and the Mother. *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, 31: 18-23.
- Grossman, L. (May 17, 2000). The Gay Nabokov. *Salon*. Retrieved from <http://www.salon.com/books/feature/2000/05/17/nabokov>.
- Hampl, P. (1996). Memory and Imagination. In McConkey, J (Ed.), *The Anatomy of Memory: An Anthology*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Jakobson, R. (1960). Linguistics and Poetics. In T. Sebeok (Ed.), *Style in Language* (p. 350-377). Cambridge Massachusetts: MIT Press.
- Kugiumutzakis, G., Kokkinaki, T., Makrodimitraki, M. And Vitalaki, E. (2004) In Nadel, J. And Muir, D. (eds) *Emotional Development*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lakoff, G. & Johnson, M. (1999). *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought*. New York: Basic Books.
- Lakoff, G. (2010, February 21). A Good Week for Science (Or, What Eating Worms Reveals About Politics). *The Huffington Post*. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/george-lakoff/a-good-week-for-science_b_470500.html.

- Langer, S. (1953). *Feeling and Form*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.
- Laplanche, J. & Pontalis, J. B. (1973). *The Language of Psychoanalysis*. New York: Norton.
- Loewald, H. (1971). Some Considerations on Repetition and Repetition Compulsion. *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, 52: 59-66.
- Loewald, H. (2000). *The Essential Loewald: Collected Papers and Monographs*. Hagarstown: University Publishing Group.
- Mehler, J.A., Argentieri, S., Canestri, J. (1990). The Babel of the Unconscious. *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, 71: 569-583.
- Mehler, J.A. (1995). The Exiled Language. *Canadian Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 3: 87-104.
- Miall, D and Kuiken, D. (1994). Foregrounding, Defamiliarization, and Affect: Response to Literary Stories. *Poetics*, 22: 389-407
- Miall, D and Dissanayake, E. (2003). The Poetics Of Babytalk. *Human Nature*, 14 (4): 337-364.
- Nabokov, V. (1943). Mademoiselle O. *The Atlantic Monthly*, 171:1, 66-73.
- Nabokov, V. (1948, January 3). Portrait of My Uncle. *The New Yorker*, 23-26.
- Nabokov, V. (1948, March 27). My English Education. *The New Yorker*, 25-28.
- Nabokov, V. (1948, June 12). Butterflies. *The New Yorker*, 25-28.
- Nabokov, V. (1948, July 31). Colette. *The New Yorker*, 19-22.
- Nabokov, V. (1948, September 18). My Russian Education. *The New Yorker*, 30-33.
- Nabokov, V. (1949, January 1). Curtain-Raiser. *The New Yorker*, 18-21.
- Nabokov, V. (1949, September). First Poem. *Partisan Review*, 16: 9, 885-894.
- Nabokov, V. (1949, April 9). Portrait of My Mother. *The New Yorker*, 33-37.
- Nabokov, V. (1949, December 10). Tamara. *The New Yorker*, 35-39.
- Nabokov, V. (1950, February 11). Lantern Slides. *The New Yorker*: 25-31.

- Nabokov, V. (1950, April 15). Perfect Past. *The New Yorker*: 33-36.
- Nabokov, V. (1950, June, 17). Gardens and Parks. *The New Yorker*: 28-33.
- Nabokov, V. (1951, January). Lodgings in Trinity Lane. *Harper's Magazine*, 202: 84-91.
- Nabokov, V. (1951, January-February). Exile. *Partisan Review*, 18: 1, 45-58.
- Nabokov, V. (1951). *Conclusive Evidence*. New York: Harper and Brothers.
- Nabokov, V. (1954). *Drugie berega*. New York: Chekhov Publishing House.
- Nabokov, V. (1963). *The Gift*. New York: G.P. Putnam and Sons.
- Nabokov, V. (1968). *King, Queen, Knave*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Nabokov, V. (1970). *The Gift*. New York: Capricorn Books.
- Nabokov, V. (1974). *Look at the Harlequins!* New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Nabokov, V. (1980). *Lectures on Literature*. New York: Harcourt.
- Nabokov, V., Rivers, J., and Nicol, C. (1982). *Nabokov's Fifth Arc: Nabokov and Others on his Life's Work*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Nabokov, V. (1989). *Speak, Memory: an Autobiography Revisited*. New York: Vintage International.
- Nabokov, V. (1990a). *Vladimir Nabokov: Selected Letters 1940-1977*. New York: Mariner Books.
- Nabokov, V. (1990b). *Strong Opinions*. New York: Vintage International.
- Nabokov, V. (1991a). *The Annotated Lolita: Revised and Updated*. New York: Vintage.
- Nabokov, V. (1991b). *Eugene Onegin: A Novel in Verse, Volume 2*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Nabokov, V. (1998). Conclusive Evidence. *The New Yorker*, 74: 124-133.
- Nagay, E. (2006). From Imitation to Conversation: The First Dialogues with Human Neonates. *Infant and Child Development*, 15: 223-232 (2006)
- Nagay, E. and Molnar, P. (2004). Homo Imitans or Homo Provocans? Human Imprinting Model of Neonatal Imitation. *Infant Behaviour and Development*, 27 (1): 54-63.

- Oliver, M. (1994). *A Poetry Handbook*. New York: Mariner Books.
- The Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd ed. 1989. OED Online. Oxford University Press.
<http://dictionary.oed.com>.
- The Oxford Companion to the Mind*. Richard L. Gregory. Oxford University Press 1987.
 Oxford Reference Online. Oxford University Press.
<http://www.oxfordreference.com>.
- The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*. Chris Baldick. Oxford University Press, 2008.
 Oxford Reference Online. Oxford University Press.
<http://www.oxfordreference.com>.
- Schafer, R. (1980). Narration in the Psychoanalytic Dialogue. *Critical Inquiry*, 7 (1): 29-53.
- Sontag, S. (1961). *Against Interpretation*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Stern, D. (1985). *The Interpersonal World of the Infant: A View from Psychoanalysis and Developmental Psychology*. New York: Basic Books.
- Trevarthen, C. (2010). *Communicative Musicality: Exploring the Basis of Human Companionship*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Trevarthen, C. (2005). First Things First: Infants Make Good Use of the Sympathetic Rhythm of Imitation, without Reason or Language. *Journal Of Child Psychotherapy*, 31 (1): 91-113.
- Wetzsteon, R. (1970). Nabokov as a Teacher. In A. Appel and C. Newman (Eds.), *Nabokov: Criticism, Reminiscences, Translations, and Tributes* (pp. 240–46). Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Winnicott, D. (1990). *The Maturation Processes and the Facilitating Environment: Studies in the Theory of Emotional Development*. London: Karnac.
- Winnicott, D. (1991). *Playing and Reality*. London: Routledge.