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## DOUBLES, DECEIT AND REFLEXIVE NARRATIVE IN TWO NOVELS BY VLADIMIR NABOKOV

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Not quite a bed, not quite a bench.  
Wallpaper: a grim yellow.  
A pair of chairs. A squinty looking-glass.  
We enter — my shadow and I.

Nabokov, "Hotel room"

VLADIMIR NABOKOV'S novels show that imagination creates its own reality by giving order and meaning to a subject. They do not reflect reality; instead, they express their own individual reality. Simon Karlinsky formulates a basic principle of Nabokov's writing:

The hero uses his imagination to devise a reality of his own, which he seeks to impose on a central reality. The question of which reality is real, that of the hero or that of the environment, is usually left open. What matters is which of the two realities is the more relevant one for the artistic conception of the story (quoted in Dembo 1967: 3-4)

Nabokov's novels are self-reflexive. Khodasevich, a Russian emigrant and critic, writes about Nabokov's *oeuvre* in 1937: "Sirin not only does not

mask, does not hide his devices . . . but . . . places them in full view" (quoted in Christensen 1981: 37). His language, too, is self-conscious and self-referential. In all his novels one finds jokes and anagrams which require readers to work out solutions. Nabokov commented in an interview:

One of the functions of all my novels is to prove that the novel in general does not exist. The book I make is a subjective and specific affair. I have no purpose at all when composing the stuff except to compose it. I work hard, I work long on a body of words until it grants me complete possession and pleasure. (Nabokov 1990: 115)

One of the main devices used by Nabokov is the use of doubles. The *Doppelgänger*, double or alter ego is a very well known motif. It appears whenever two characters play a symmetrical role in a single narration. There are examples of this motif from the very beginning of literary tradition. Plautus' confusion of twins, which also appears in Molière's and Shakespeare's plays, is a good example. The motif of the double was used to convey ideas about the unconscious and dreams during the Romantic age, for instance in the relationship between Frankenstein and his creature in Mary Shelley's novel. The romantic *Doppelgänger* showed the dark aspect of personality and the repressed personality. For example, Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* is a metaphor of the emotional repression which British people suffered in Victorian age. Moreover, one can infer the meaning of these characters' names: "Jekyll" as "I kill" and "Hyde" as "to hide" (Jackson 1978: 114).

The word *Doppelgänger* was primarily associated with German Romanticism. Writers such as Goethe, Richter and Hoffman were the first to use it. Later in the same century novelists stressed the psychological features of the *Doppelgänger* instead of the physical ones. The plots of the stories dealt with characters who think they have a double but do not. Poe's "William Wilson," Dostoevsky's *The Double* and Gogol's *The Nose* are some examples.

But . . . What is the possible origin of this literary tradition? According to Otto Rank, primitive man's persistent fear of oblivion forced him to create a body-soul which might be located in his shadow or reflection and which is not subject to man's idea of physical life-span but survives death. Primitive man saw the disappearance and reappearance at dawn of his shadow, and assumed that a spiritual self existed somewhere (Dembo 1967: 68). Certain Indian tribes from Canada and South America use the same word for soul and reflection. Besides, one remembers the legend of vampires. They do not have

a reflection in a mirror as they do not have a soul (Ziolkowski 1980: 141). However, modern man makes this double a symbol of death rather than of eternal life. It may be the product of an hallucination or madness. So most narratives using versions of the double end up in madness, suicide, murder or death. Poe's "William Wilson," Hans Heinz Ewers's *The student of Prague*, Oscar Wilde's *Dorian Gray* and most of Nabokov's novels end this way.

Moreover, Nabokov writes in a time in which contemporary science and knowledge problematize the understanding of reality. The traditional concepts of time and space are not valid any more. Fiction starts rejecting pre-formed views of reality, the conventions of the traditional novel. This is a self-conscious rebellion against conventions. The novel must explore its own inward mechanisms. The result is an era of self-reflexiveness or metafiction in the novel. It is the era of what critics have called the self-conscious novel:

the self-conscious novel . . . may be defined as an extended prose narrative that draws attention to its status as a fiction. . . . The self-conscious novel denies that its obligation is "to hold the mirror up to nature." It asserts that art has virtues of its own to admire, and, that if there is any mirroring to be done, the novel should mirror itself. (Stonehill 1988: 3, 11)

For instance, John Fowles writes *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, where the author himself speaks with his characters within the novel and the reader can choose the end of the novel. Doris Lessing writes *The Golden Notebook*, whose structure is divided into several notebooks, written by the same character, which are fragmented and mixed. In each narrative there are accounts of various stories, overlapping occurs and even contradictory versions are formed. Moreover, the reader discovers that the first sentence of the book *The Golden Notebook* is the first sentence of the protagonist's next book within the novel. Where does the protagonist's world start? Where does the reader's world finish?

Self-reflexiveness is attained through the use of different motifs. One of them is the *mise en abyme*. It is a structural device because it is a story within a story which is a small scale model of the whole novel. It offers a means by which the novel can refer to itself. Another motif is the *Doppelgänger*.

As has already been stated, the *Doppelgänger* motif is concerned with characterization. It establishes parallels between characters within the novel and therefore, creates a symmetrical plot due to the two parallel characters. The motif of the *Doppelgänger* allows the novelist to parody consciously and symmetrically the actions of the characters within the book. It is a recurring

design by which the novel refers to itself. Consequently, it can be used as another way for the novel to draw attention to its status of fiction (Stonchill 1988: 28).

Nabokov has denied the use of true doubles in his novels, as there are no two characters exactly alike within a single novel. In fact, false doubles are used. His novels do not deal with two characters which look alike. He stresses the psychological features of the motif of the *Doppelgänger* rather than the physical ones. In other words, one of his characters feels he has a double, but in reality he does not. However, this character and the one which is thought to be his double work as *Doppelgänger*, albeit in a rather different way. What is new in Nabokov's treatment of the double is irony and parody. Nabokov displays a ludic view of literature. In his works, his characters play their role and he plays with the reader. In the metafictional mode, "Literature, like the other arts, is seen as a game in which the goal is aesthetic satisfaction and in which truth to life is irrelevant" (Stonchill 1988: 13).

Nabokov, then, introduces the motif of the *Doppelgänger* in an anti-romantic way. Some examples of this would be: Albinus and Rex in *Laughter in the Dark*, Cincinnatus and Pierre in *Invitation to a Beheading*, Kinbote and Shade in *Pale Fire*, Van and Ada in *Ada* and Hermann and Felix in *Despair*, as well as Humbert Humbert and Clare Quilty in *Lolita*. These last two examples will be the object of this study.

Although *Despair* is one of the first of Nabokov's novels, written in Russian in 1932 and rewritten in English in 1965, it is not one of the best known. Hermann Hermann, like the hero of *Lolita*, Humbert Humbert, has got a double name. It is a name which reflects itself. Moreover, this double name is a symbol of his double life. He is writing the story to give an account of the final events in his life as is Humbert's case too. His story is a kind of reflection of his real life. Hermann narrates his experiences, which are half imagined and half remembered. Moreover, as happens in *Lolita*, his story also involves the murder of a man who is supposed to be very much like himself. The victim falls prey to his distorted perception, although Hermann is driven by greed.

Hermann's relationship with his *Doppelgänger*, whose name is Felix, starts in the first chapter of the novel. However, there is an image of duality which precedes it, and is shown in the form of alliteration.

My mother. . . On hot summer days, *a languid lady in lilac silks*, she would recline in her rocking chair, fanning herself, munching chocolate. . . .

Our trademark on the wrapper showed *a lady in lilac*, with a fan.

(D 13, 14; my emphasis) In fact, there are images of duality spread throughout all the novel. They are related to the game of doubles that the narrator has set for the reader.

I remember once seeing *a pair of twins* at a fair.

. . . that Communism shall indeed create a beautifully square world of *identical* brawny fellows.

We admired the *exact replica* . . . The leaf came to . . . its beautiful, lethal reflection.

Looked at *two* little girls. . . under a *double-trunked* birch tree.

(D 20, 27, 59, 65; my emphasis)

These examples help to create an atmosphere of doubles throughout the novel. On the other hand, it is known that the narrator of all these examples is Hermann. Consequently, he demonstrates how he visualizes objects in general, in other words how he sees reality in terms of two, double and reflections. This idea is also very clear when dealing with mirrors:

What should I call my book then? . . . 'The Mirror'? 'Portrait of the Artist in a Mirror'? (D 167)

Hermann is conscious of the importance of mirrors within his story. However, his behaviour in connection with mirrors is not very self-confident:

I am going to write that word again. Mirror. Mirror. Well, has anything happened? Mirror, mirror, mirror. As many times as you like —I fear nothing. A mirror. To catch sight of oneself in a mirror. (D 28)

. . . to have the bed reflected in the oblique speculum or *spiegel*. (D 33)

In the first example he tries to show that he is not afraid of mirrors. But the second one which follows almost immediately the first illustrates that Hermann does not dare to pronounce the word mirror though he wishes to say it. That, therefore, shows his lack of self-confidence about mirrors.

At that time I was on admirable terms with mirrors. (D 61)

Far worse was my failure to put up with mirrors. In fact, the beard I started growing was meant to hide me not so much from others as from my own self. (D 147)

If he is reflected in a mirror, an equal self is shown in the mirror. Somebody who looks just like him but who is not him. This frightens Hermann, and he makes up another figure similar to himself, though it is not Hermann:

Thus we were reflected by the misty and, to all appearances, sick mirror, with a freakish slant, a streak of madness, a mirror that surely would have cracked at once had it chanced to reflect one single genuine human countenance. (D 81; my emphasis)

Hermann's double is Felix who cannot be another perfect Hermann. Naturally enough, Felix is related to mirrors.

While reading, one discovers that Hermann Hermann keeps a double perspective whilst narrating events. This means that he keeps two different, and even opposite, points of view on the same matter.

Dealing with his wife, he thinks that she loves him deeply and that she is totally faithful to him:

We never quarrelled. (D 30)

To her I was the ideal man: brains, pluck. And there was none dressed better. (D 31)

On Ardalion's bed, half dressed —that is, shoeless and wearing only a rumpled green slip— Lydia lay smoking. (D 92)

Then, all at once, he (Ardalion) gathered up Lydia in his clutch and covered her with juicy kisses. (D 116)

The first two examples show how much his wife loves Hermann and the third example introduces Ardalion as his wife's cousin. However, the last one shows Hermann's confusion is about both Lydia and Ardalion. In reality she does not love him and Ardalion is her lover. The narrator exposes Felix as his double, but there are also instances in which Hermann is able to see Felix without any resemblance to him:

He appeared to my eyes as my double, that is, as a creature bodily identical with me. (D 21)

For a moment I had the impression that it had all been a delusion, a hallucination —that never could he have been my double. (D 68)

These examples show, on one hand, that Hermann is out of touch with reality, and on the other, that he is also capable of understanding reality as it is. Consequently, he can understand that Lydia's lover is Ardalion and that Felix is not his real double. These examples also show how hard he tries to convince himself both of Lydia's love for him and Felix's similarity to him. This is connected to Freud's idea of forgetfulness in which forgetting can be seen in terms of retention of what the subject is trying to forget (Freud 1988: 1684).

This duality makes Hermann see events from somebody else's point of view. So he sometimes narrates events from Felix's point of view as if he were his double. The following examples show how Hermann Hermann thinks as if he were Felix.

What I wished to imagine most, was the impression left upon him by a certain morning in May passed on a patch of sickly grass near Prague. He woke up. At his side a well-dressed gentleman was sitting and staring. . . I gathered it was about likeness. Well, thought I, let then likeness be. No concern of mine. Chance of giving me an easy job.

I killed the bluffer and robbed him. He lies in the wood.

That poor man in his fine overcoat lies dead, not far from his car. I can drive a car. I love violets and music. I was born at Zwickau.

(D 46, 146, 147; my emphasis)

In these examples, Hermann is the one who speaks. However, he describes the scenes from Felix's point of view, as if Felix were the focalizer instead of him, though it is Hermann who is telling the story. This is indeed unusual because the story is based on Hermann's memories, not on Felix's. The focalizer is Hermann, he is the narrator. The reader does not witness Felix's thoughts, they are just described by Hermann. However, these examples show some of the instances in which Hermann describes scenes as if he were Felix, as if the narrator were Felix instead of Hermann. The narrator shows

the theme of the *Doppelgänger* not only by using two characters but also by mixing two different perspectives.

However, Hermann is conscious of his double perspective within the story.

I have grown much too used to an *outside view of myself*, to being both painter and model.

I would be in bed with Lydia. . . but at the same time, incomprehensibly and delightfully, I was standing naked in the middle of the room. . . . *The sensation of being in two places at once* gave an extraordinary kick.

Here it is before me, the *letter I finally wrote*. . . . Thus it would seem that *I were the receiver* — not the sender. Well, so it ought to be in the long run, for haven't we changed places, he and I?

(D 26, 32, 57; my emphasis)

These three examples show three different instances in which he is conscious of being both the model and the duplication. It is a type of metafictional behaviour for a character, as he creates his own double. Apart from that, all these examples show Hermann's sense of dissociation or of double perspective. For instance, the scene of Hermann's description of intercourse with his wife, Lydia, involves schizophrenic dissociations. He stands outside himself and gets aroused by watching himself copulate with Lydia. Moreover, these examples show his lack in the sense of reality due to his belief of his similarity to Felix and his blindness towards the affair between Ardalion and Lydia.

Hermann's dissociations, his double perspective, and his lack of sense of reality characterise his relationship with Felix, his double:

I closed my eyes . . . came Felix. . . . But he faded as before, the moment he reached me, or, better say, he seemed to enter into me, and pass through, as if I were a shadow . . . and again a figure appeared, and again it was he. (D 51)

Here Hermann speaks of himself as a shadow, the one who will finish his double's life. Jung talks about the shadow calling it "our shadow (the dark side of our nature)" (Jung 1968: 73). He goes on to state that "through dreams one becomes acquainted with aspects of one's own personality that for various reasons one has preferred not to look at too closely" (Jung 1968:

174). This is what Jung called the realization of the shadow, and now it often appears in dreams as a personified form.<sup>1</sup>

When Hermann describes his first meeting with Felix, the narrator introduces Felix as his double:

He appeared to me as my double, that is, a creature bodily identical with me. (D 21)

However, when they are talking together there is no other character with them. Besides, nobody else is able to see their similarity:

he looked at me, then at Felix. Naturally, owing to my moustache, our likeness did not leap to the eyes; (D 73)

Now it dawned upon me what had shocked me most — shocked me as an insult: not a word was there about our resemblance; not only was it not criticized (for instance they might have said, at least: "Yes, an admirable resemblance, yet such and such markings show it to be not his body") but it was not mentioned at all. (D 155).

Hermann could have imagined the whole story about his double, because his union with Lydia, his wife, is childless. There is no extension of himself in another person. Therefore, he projects his own face upon the body of another person (Dembo 1967: 73).

Andrew Field comments on this relationship:

*Despair* is a tale of a murder which goes wrong. Felix, the victim, is the necessary and complementary mirror without which Hermann, the murderer, can't be seen in proper focus. Hermann is right-handed, Felix left-handed. In a key sentence added to the English translation of the novel, the relationship is neatly stated as "Narcissus fooling nemesis by helping his image out of the brook" Nemesis is the personification of divine retribution for violation of sacred law. Murder is only one aspect of Hermann's transgression. His despair is predominantly sexual. (Field 1987: 164).

Hermann thinks he has got a *Doppelgänger*. However, nobody notices it. Whenever both of them speak or meet, they are alone. As happens in other *Doppelgänger* stories, Felix signifies everything that Hermann can never have. In a way, Felix is the externalization of Hermann's buried instinctual life. Felix, as a name, means the happy one. Felix, the character, remains

outside the society which has created businessmen such as Hermann. His passport says that Felix is a musician. He is a dirty bohemian tramp who exists without responsibilities. However, this is not Hermann's case. He has a business to run, a wife to take care of. He belongs to the upper middle class and whenever he travels, he uses his comfortable blue Icarus. Felix lives happily without these responsibilities. Hermann's case is not unusual: "El doble en suma, no es sino una proyección de los aspectos reprimidos de su personalidad" (Ziolkowski 1980: 160).

Felix, the happy one, is the man whose death can bring happiness to Hermann. Hermann thinks that with money he can solve all his problems. However, he cannot kill him without being discovered. Obviously, he will not get that money and he will add another problem to his long list. In the end Hermann writes:

I understood that what little life still lay before me would be solely devoted to a futile struggle against that doubt; and I smiled the smile of the condemned and in a blunt pencil that screamed with pain wrote swiftly and boldly on the first page of my work: "Despair"; no need to look for a better title. (D 169)

The result of his situation is despair, a feeling which provokes him to write the story.

The protagonist of *Lolita* has also got a double name. He is Humbert Humbert, something he makes explicit by playing with his name:

Humbert the Terrible deliberated with Humbert the Small. (L 29)

Humbert the Wounded Spider. . . Humbert the Humble. (L 54)

Mr Edgar H. Humbert. (L 75)

These quotations appear particularly at the beginning of the novel when he is introducing his affair with Lolita. These quotations are proleptic in a way because the reader will later understand that Humbert sees objects with a double vision and personality. In one way he is the lecherous admirer of young girls. In another way he is the normal man who confronts Clare Quilty acting as Dolores Haze's father. His duality is also apparent from the way he views things and narrates them to us:

There was a double bed, a mirror, a double bed in the mirror, a closet door with the mirror, a bathroom door ditto, a blue-dark window, a reflected bed there, the same in the closet mirror, two chairs, a glass-topped table, two bed-tables, a double bed (L 118)

The key words in this short passage are two, doble, duality, and mirror, as this object has the following feature: "el espejo dobla la figura reflejada, ésta surge como si se tratara del doble de quien se pone ante él" (Ziolkowski 1980: 143). When he sees this room in the Enchanted Hunters hotel he knows he is about to have sexual intercourse with Lolita though he also pretends to be her father. He feels a duality which is reflected in the mirror which, in turn, doubles everything within the room. This is related to the traditional meaning of reproduction:

The mirror is employed as a motif or device to introduce a double or Doppelgänger effect: the reflection in the glass is the subject's other. (Jackson 1978: 45)

El cuadro, así desencantado, ha pasado sencillamente a convertirse en una imagen en la que los hombres proyectan sus sentimientos de culpa, al estilo de Dorian Gray. (Ziolkowski 1980: 132; my emphasis)

The many reflections in this room, as well as his inability to recognize his double life, seem to dissolve the actual reality of the room itself. With these images the protagonist starts projecting his own feelings of guilt with respect to his behaviour with Lolita. He says that Lolita has seduced him in that room, but she accuses him of having raped her and he feels guilty (L 140). These feelings will end up in an autonomous figure instead of images in a mirror.

Moreover, the protagonist, at one point early in the novel, tells the reader about one of the several occasions when he spent some time in a sanatorium where he was labelled as a potential homosexual and also he confesses his love for nymphets.

Between the age of nine and fourteen there occur maidens who, to they, reveal their nature which is not human, but nymphic (that is demoniac). . . .

. . . the boundaries —the *mirrory* beaches and rosy rocks— of an enchanted island haunted by those nymphets of mine. . . (L 16; my emphasis)

we who are in the know, . . . we nympholepts would have long gone insane. . . (L 17)

my adult life during the European period of my existence proved monstrously *twofold*. . . I had so-called normal relationships with a number of terrestrial women. . . inside I was consumed by a hell furnace of localized lust for every passing nymphet. (L 18)

He admits being labelled homosexual and being what he calls a nympholept. Both themes are related to narcissism, as a means to double himself. Homosexuality is to be involved with the body of a person similar to his, to a sexuality similar to his or in other words as a feature of narcissism:

no han roto su relación erótica con las personas y las cosas. Las conservan en su fantasía; esto es, han sustituido los objetos reales por otros imaginarios, o lo han mezclado con ellos, y por otro lado, han renunciado a realizar los actos motores necesarios para la consecución de sus fines en tales objetos. (Freud 1979: 8)

Freud's Oedipal stage includes narcissism, which is love for the self, and secondly an attachment to loved objects, which is a love for others (Jackson 1978: 88). Humbert turns an average American teenager into a nymphet. In fact, he is constantly looking for nymphets among European and American teenagers. This is the result of his inability to recognize that the true home of his nymphets is within his mind. All these will accumulate into his horror at recognizing his guilt with Lolita. However, he cannot accept this. His nature makes him first have a double life, later a split personality and, ultimately, a double. Consequently he will be forced to invent another sinister second self, a double, a *Doppelgänger*, who will be responsible for his actions. There are many examples in which his double is related to shadowy places (Maddox 1983: 251):

I was unaware that in the *darkness* next to me there was somebody.  
...

Lo in white shorts receding through the speckled *shadow* of a garden path in the company of a tall man.

... its imperious red *shadow*. . . (L 126, 161, 217; my emphasis)

As has been mentioned above, Jung asserts that "the shadow cast by the conscious mind of the individual contains the hidden, repressed, and unfavorable (or nefarious) aspects of the personality" (Jung 1968: 110). Moreover, in dreams, myths and stories, the shadow appears as a person of the same sex as that of the dreamer (Jung 1968: 175). These are the cases of both Hermann and Humbert. Consequently, Humbert Humbert sees as his opponent as Clare Quilty, who is born "clearly guilty" (Fowler 1974: 153).

Before the first true sexual act with Lolita Humbert Humbert had already had relationships of a sexual nature with her at Charlotte's house. It is then that he says that there were two pictures posted on Lolita's bedroom wall, one labelled HH and the other Quilty (L 68). From then onwards the narrator will speak about Clare Quilty. Quilty will be a figure which Humbert will use to isolate evil in a narcissistic and unreal way.

The first explicit allusion made to Quilty is by Lolita in the hotel The Enchanted Hunters. "Does not he look exactly, but exactly like Quilty?" said Lo in a soft voice" (L 121). She recognizes him as the man who had dinner in the dining room of the hotel. Prior to having sexual intercourse with Lolita and, consequently, prior to commencing a double life as Lolita's father and lover, Humbert has a little conversation with Clare Quilty, whom he finds in a dark place.

"Where the devil did you get her?"

"I beg your pardon?"

"I said: the weather is getting better."

"Seems so."

"Who is the lassie?"

"My daughter."

"You lie — she is not."

"I beg your pardon?"

"I said July is hot. Where is her mother?" (L 126)

Clare Quilty has recognized Lolita and Humbert. Then he initiates a conversation. It seems to be a casual one, but it is not. The important theme is Lolita. They appear to be talking about one thing but they are really talking about Lolita. This conversation has two levels, a double meaning. In fact, it is a symbol of Humbert's double personality and of his relationship with Clare Quilty as his *Doppelgänger*.

The reader is not given a good portrayal of Clare Quilty; instead, when the narrator gives any information related to him, the narrator compares him to himself:

A fellow of my age in tweeds. . . was staring at my Lolita. . . . (L 138)

. . . that red ghost swimming and shivering with lust in my mirror  
. . . a broad thickish man of my age. (L 216)

. . . he swept by me in a purple bathrobe, very like one I had. (L 293).

These examples not only have to do with Jung's previous idea that a double is a person of the same sex as that of the dreamer but also show that the double has similar features to those of Humbert's. He is described as a man about his age and "shivering with lust" as Humbert would do for Lolita and dressed in the same clothes. Clare Quilty is a well-known American playwright who also writes for Hollywood. Meanwhile, Humbert pretends to be writing a novel at Charlotte's. Besides, the reader will see almost at the end of the novel that Humbert and Quilty both write and speak French. He likes young girls as Humbert does and both are interested in Lolita. Moreover, both of them are described as sexually ambiguous. Humbert is labelled as a potential homosexual whereas Quilty is described as having a "strange feminine manner" (L 295). He calls Quilty "my brother" but he is not conscious of his duality with him. Therefore, they reinforce the idea of doubles.

Once Humbert's guilt is exteriorized in Clare Quilty as somebody different from himself Humbert associates him with Lolita, the girl who is the reason for his guilt. Both of them conspire against Humbert. Consequently, Lolita suffers a kind of dissociation (Field 1987: 328) in Humbert's point of view as she behaves in two different ways. She acts in one way with Humbert and in another without him. In fact she is betraying him:

One Friday night . . . the telephone . . . rang and Miss Emperor asked if Lo was coming next Tuesday because she had missed last Tuesday's and today's lessons. . . . (L 200-201)

"Who exactly concocted that play?"

"Some old woman, Clare Something". . .

"So she complimented you?"

"Complimented my eye — she kissed me on my pure brow." (L 207)

The starting point of Lolita's dissociation, from Humbert's, is when she meets Quilty. But it is especially stressed when Quilty's red convertible appears. For instance, he finds out that Lolita has deleted Quilty's car number because he had written it down and he is not sure if Lolita is betraying him with the basque nurse in the hospital. I think it is especially stressed then since Humbert knows that Lolita is with him on their second journey without her consent. They have left Breadsley because Humbert was not happy about Lolita performing in a play, *The Enchanted Hunters*, in which Quilty transformed Lolita into an enchantress.

Humbert began his first real sexual intercourse in the hotel *The Enchanted Hunters*. This hotel is as real as his love for Lolita. Clare Quilty starts having sexual intercourse due to her role in his play *The Enchanted Hunters*. He is the second important man in her sexual experiences. He is the second enchanted hunter, as there was one previously, Humbert. Moreover, this play is fictional, it is not real just like Clare Quilty's interest for the teenager is not real. She was just his passing fancy. He does not love her whereas Humbert does. Here lies the difference between Quilty and Humbert. For Quilty the pursuit of Lolita is only a challenging game. When he is fed up with her because she does not cooperate in his films, he banishes her from his life.

Quilty is corrupt as well as the people around him. He tells Humbert that he knows a couple of things about a policeman who makes him his slave (L 300). Moreover, he considers Lolita as an object which will be with him for as long as is necessary. Quilty represents Humbert's old self as a nympholept (Fowler 1974: 155), and his old selfishness, because he forces her to have sex though she is unwilling to. That is why Humbert kills Quilty. Quilty is an unconscious projection of qualities or desires that Humbert refuses to recognize. So, he places these perverse features in another person or thing (Jackson 1978: 66). Consequently, Humbert resolves to kill his double. In so doing, he fulfils one of the features used in this kind of narration dealing with duality.<sup>2</sup> Humbert goes to Quilty's house only to kill him. However, this task turns out to be a difficult one. Quilty seems to be a ghost which Humbert cannot kill (Field 1967: 349). In fact, Humbert describes Quilty's house at the beginning of this chapter as a "medieval fairy house" (L 292).

Their first conversation at Quilty's starts in a similar way to that in the hotel *The Enchanted Hunters*, but the other way round. This time it is Humbert who recognizes Quilty whereas Quilty does not. Like the first one, their conversation has a double level of meaning:



"So you have not come to bother me about those long-distance calls?"

"You do make them once in a while don't you?"

"Excuse me?"

"I said I had said I thought he had said he had never—" (L 294)

Finally Humbert introduces himself to Quilty as Lolita's father. He also announces that he is going to kill him.

From this point onwards the murder turns out to be a mockery. He has to convince Quilty that he really wants to kill him. "Concentrate. Try to understand what is happening to you" (L 296). Even after having fired at him, Quilty says: "You should be a little more careful!" (L 296), "Ah! That hurts, sir, enough!" (L 302). Moreover, while Humbert fires bullet after bullet into him, he thinks:

I understood that far from killing him I was injecting spurs of energy into the poor fellow, as if the bullets had been capsules wherein a heady elixir danced. (L 302)

This chapter makes the reader question the reliability of Humbert's narration. Is it possible for a person to take so long to die? Ghosts and phantoms do not die easily either. Neither does a hallucination, or a *Doppelgänger* in a story. Apart from the features that both Humbert and Quilty share there are other clues which lead the reader to consider Quilty as a *Doppelgänger*. Quilty calls Humbert ape. An ape is not only a wild animal but also an imitator (Rivers and Nicol 1982: 179). In *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* Mr Hyde plays "ape-like tricks" and attacks and kills with "ape-like fury" and "ape-like spite" and in Poe's "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," the criminal self is literally an ape (Dembo 1967: 132). In this novel Humbert calls his double ape, however in *Despair* the reference to his double is not as clear as in this one. In *Despair* Hermann says "Let us suppose. I kill an ape" (D 175). Besides when Humbert and Quilty fight for the gun, they seem to blend together to form one object.

He was naked and goatish under his robe, and I felt suffocated as he rolled over me. *I rolled over him. We rolled over me. They rolled over him. We rolled over us.* (L 297; my emphasis)

Who is Humbert? Who is Quilty? It is a good example in which the narrator shows that Humbert is, in fact, killing his guilt. Humbert is purged of his crime of having forced Lolita to have sex. Humbert loves Lolita, for

that he must make his dark side disappear, the one who raped her. This is done by killing Quilty.

At the end of this chapter, though Quilty is dead, there are some images of duality: "two dark-haired pale young beauties. . . bringing *two* glasses out. . . where *two* or three women. . . *two* girls on the davenport, *both* wearing (L 303) . . . *two* other parked cars were parked on *both* sides" (L 304). It is as if Quilty, his house and his world meant two, doubles and duality.

*Despair* and *Lolita* start and end at the same point. Hermann is writing his story in a hotel room and Humbert is in jail charged with murder while writing his story. Hermann Hermann and Humbert Humbert have both double names, which is in anticipation of their stories concerning their doubles. Both kill their *Doppelgänger*. Both stories contain the murderers' confession of their crimes. Hermann thinks he has found his perfect double in Felix, a man who is free of any responsibility, that is a situation totally opposed to that of Hermann's. After meeting his double on several occasions, Hermann kills Felix to obtain money from his insurance company. In *Lolita*, when Humbert was a young boy he met a girl, Annabel, Lolita's double. This makes him long to find her again. He thinks he has done this with Lolita. However, what he does is just to take advantage of a vulnerable girl. This guilt provokes him to invent a *Doppelgänger*, Clare Quilty, whom he kills after accusing him of raping Lolita. Dealing with this, Jung asserts: "In fact, daydreams arise just because they connect a man with his complexes" (Jung 1968: 229). Hermann and Humbert kill their doubles because Felix and Quilty have all they themselves desire. The former has all the peacefulness and happiness that Hermann seeks and the latter is murdered because Lolita has willingly accepted his company. However, there is a difference between them. Humbert committed his crime driven by love while Hermann committed his driven by greed. Nabokov says about them:

Hermann and Humbert are alike only in the sense that two dragons painted by the same artist at different periods of his life resemble each other. Both are neurotic scoundrels, yet there is a green lane in Paradise where Humbert is permitted to wander at dusk once a year; but Hell shall never parole Hermann. (D 11)

Hermann and Humbert tell their story retrospectively. Besides, it is the only way they have in which they can reconcile their outer and inner worlds. This is because they describe their relationship with their *Doppelgänger* and their murder. However, the reader is never sure whether the story of their

double is true or not. As, in both novels the hero and his double are never seen together by another character and there is no reliable clue for the true existence of the *Doppelgänger*. Moreover, both doubles are not real doubles through physical appearance. Hermann is sometimes unsure of Felix's resemblance to him. Also, in *Lolita* the reader does not have a well-defined description of Quilty as he always appears in shadows and darkness. However, the reader can infer their roles as doubles from all the clues that the narrators supply. Felix seems to be Hermann's hidden instinctual life as he is the happy one with no responsibilities and Quilty seems to be a mirror of Humbert's tortured conscience, as the concept of evil is usually attached to the other. The stories of the *Doppelgänger* function as a form of commentary on the main stream of the story. The stories dealing with Felix and Quilty comment on what both Hermann and Humbert would like to have but cannot obtain, that is to say, no responsibilities and Lolita's love. It is a metafictional feature because both subplots comment on the main one, though both of them carry as much importance as the main plot itself. Hermann and Humbert create two characters, Felix and Clare Quilty, in the same way as Nabokov creates Hermann and Humbert. They are in the process of inventing a character. Hermann and Humbert create their doubles. We can argue, following Clancy, that

[a]*Doppelgänger* is an artistic principle which may be used to examine and portray psychological, esthetic and formal artistic problems, such as the relationship of the author to what he is writing. (Clancy 1984: 59)

Hence, the reader begins to wonder whether the both elaborately described murders of Felix and Quilty are in fact just part of Hermann's and Humbert's imaginations. The reader has to decide whether the story is true or not. This is a metafictional feature. Reading becomes a creative process shared with the author. These stories are not a portrait of reality as the realistic novel was. The reader creates the novel as well, when he decides what to believe. In *Despair* Hermann wants to create Felix into something which proves impossible. He strives to make Felix his perfect double. For this they change clothes and identities. Hermann moulds Felix as if he were a sculpture to make him similar to himself. After that Hermann kills his double and adds: "There are mysterious moments and that was one of them! . . . I could not say who had been killed, I or he! (D 144). The final confrontation between Humbert and Quilty acts as the best clue in realizing that the novel deals with duality. Humbert is firing bullet after bullet into Quilty, but he takes a very long time to die. This is unreal. This episode is

more mocking than real; in fact, it makes the reader doubt the narrator's reliability. This chapter has been carefully constructed by the author. On one hand Nabokov has legitimized Quilty's murder because he is perverted, vicious and so unable to love Lolita; on the other hand, Humbert has repented and has fallen deeply in love with her.

Moreover, if those stories are not true, both remind the reader that fiction is an illusion, and not the reality it may seem. Then, here are two stories which draw attention to their status as fiction (Stonehill 1988: 3). They do not mirror reality but themselves. The *Doppelgänger* motif itself is a kind of mirror. Felix and Quilty, symmetrically, mirror the actions of Hermann and Humbert within the novels. The doubles could not exist if they were not presented as a reflection of their originals. They are without doubt mirrors of Hermann and Humbert's actions. "The author confronts the reader, and possibly his own characters, with a form of mirror image" (Hutchison 1983: 57). The *Doppelgänger* is a kind of aesthetic repetition. Both stories turn our attention upon their status as works of art. Besides, by splitting the presentation of a story into two with double characters,

the author forces the reader into much closer scrutiny of the text, into exercising much of the judgement, and also into having constantly to revise that judgement whenever a different perspective forces a different view of plot and character (Hutchison 1983: 35)

As has been said previously the *Doppelgänger* motif is not original. Nabokov knew of Dostoevski's *The Double*, Gogol's *The Nose* or Mann's *Death in Venice*. However, Nabokov uses it in an innovative way. He undermines the familiar convention of the double. As any parodist, he chooses a fairly well-known theme to ridicule. He transforms the theme of doubles by dismissing conventional expectations dealing with the *Doppelgänger* motif and by frustrating the reader's presumption of how the *Doppelgänger* acts. Nabokov's use of the *Doppelgänger* makes reading a game of mirrors where the reader does not know whether the reflection is true or not.

This is in line with Nabokov's place as a writer of the mid-20th century, an age when all novelists are experimenting with the novel's resources and themes.

La exuberancia experimental característica del arte del siglo XX permitió a los escritores hacer un uso libre y humorístico de la

imagen sin verse coaccionados a justificarla racional o psicológicamente en cada caso. (Ziolkowski 1980:174)

Consequently, the use of *Doppelgänger* is used by the novelist in a parodic way. It is set up in contrast the traditional novels based on the *Doppelgänger* motif. Nabokov establishes a parallel, a *Doppelgänger*, but he exploits it in a self-conscious manner in order to accentuate certain features of the original, that is Hermann and Felix, and to accentuate certain differences with other well-known works on *Doppelgängers*. In *Lolita* both of them aim to have sexual intercourse with her, not to gain the girl's love as in *The student of Prague*. The confrontation between Hermann and Felix is not as serious or mysterious as in either *The student of Prague* or *William Wilson*. Even, in *Lolita* the confrontation between Humbert and Quilty is comical. There is no element of terror as happens in Stevenson's short stories (Jung 1968: 25). Humbert and Quilty's confrontation banishes reliability from the story, which has not been the case in the traditional use of the *Doppelgänger* up till then. In *Despair* the narrator tells the reader how he, like a sculptor, is moulding Felix into his perfect double.

Pero desde el momento en que el doble pasa del marco de la realidad novelesca a la mente del protagonista los problemas dejan de ser los mismos: la narración puede llegar al pathos, o a la farsa, a voluntad del narrador. (Ziolkowski 1980: 162)

The reader cannot trust the narrator. The *Doppelgänger* motif attracts the reader's attention to the fictionality of the novel by means of the character's story.

And even concerning Nabokov himself who has mastered two languages, Russian and American one can see his double outlook in life. He was born into the Russian culture but matured with the American one (Nabokov 1990: 10). That division is Nabokov's *Doppelgänger*. As Nabokov himself said to Andrew Field:

Nabokov stopped short in his conversation and said quite simply about himself "*The past is my double*, Andrew" (A. Field 1987: 86)



## NOTES

1. However, neither Nabokov nor the narrator speak of a ghostly presence, as Rowe asserts that Nabokov does in different examples throughout the novel (Rowe 1981: 76). I do not agree with him, as his examples and explanations are not literal enough. Nabokov did not agree with him either, since he wrote an article speaking of this critic in these terms: "What I object to is Mr Rowe's manipulating my most innocent words" (Nabokov 1990: 304).

2. Jackson notes that most stories with versions of doubles finish with the madness, suicide or death of the divided character because if he is united with the other he will cease to be (Jackson 1978: 91). Moreover, the idea of death is joined to the motif of the doubles in writers such as Maupassant, Poe, Wilde and Ewers (Ziolkowski 1980: 179) — as we see, Nabokov is using a traditional motif.

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