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## A Multifarious Approach to Understanding Rhetorical Fragmentation in Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*

### Keywords

Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita*, Rhetoric

**A Multifarious Approach to Understanding  
Rhetorical Fragmentation  
in Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita***

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A primary challenge for authors aiming to persuade readers into conforming to a particular mode of thought is the process of subtly winning the empathy of the reader without appearing to be purposely trying to achieve that goal. Once the reader is aware of being manipulated, empathy can often be replaced by doubt and skepticism. Subterfuge is not required for achieving empathy; however, it is necessary for the author to employ a form of rhetoric that emerges organically in the text. The implementation of this notion is clearly evident in Vladimir Nabokov's controversial novel, *Lolita*. Lauded as one of the greatest metafictional wordsmiths, Nabokov uses rhetoric

as a way to mitigate his seemingly brash disregard for the social taboos encompassed in the work's pedophilic subject matter. Scholars such as Wayne Booth note that in order to better promote his rhetoric, Nabokov removes himself from the text by surrendering textual authority to Humbert Humbert: an unreliable narrator who attempts to defend his pedophilic endeavors by persuading the reader into empathizing with him. By giving Humbert free reign over the epistolary text, Nabokov is able to ensure that there is a narrative level in between him and his rhetoric. The level is important in preventing Nabokov's rhetorical strategy from appearing to be too obvious. The aim of this essay will be to take the authorial separation a step further by arguing for the existence of another, more unconventional manifestation of Nabokov's rhetoric that further disguises Nabokov's process of persuasion.

The epistolary novel is conventionally accepted to be a creation of the narrator, thereby providing the character with absolute authority over the text. While this concept applies to most epistolary novels, *Lolita* proves to be an anomaly. Although the text is supposed to serve as a manifestation of Humbert's unadulterated discourse, his work is subverted by the influence of various textual (in-text) publications. The different types of publications represented within *Lolita* are exceptionally wide-ranging: books, newspapers, magazines, comics, play scripts, roadmaps, letters, and manuals. Their omnipresence creates a linguistic power struggle for autonomy and authority in the narrative. This struggle ultimately enhances Nabokov's rhetoric because

by obscuring the source of persuasion, the conflict distracts the reader from the fact that the reader is being influenced. In order to fully comprehend the significance and rhetorical power of the textual publications in the novel, this essay will adopt multiple literary perspectives. By demonstrating the powerful use of the in-text publication as a literary tool, the importance in the novel of rhetorical fragmentation—the dissemination of authorial, rhetorical discourse into different literary voices—will be revealed.

### **Vindictive Voices: A Bakhtinian Discourse Analysis**

Mikhail Bakhtin posited theories regarding the diverse relationships between various voices within a text. Bakhtin argues for the unfinalizability of the Self: the complete Self can never be fully realized because it is constantly evolving and being influenced (*Problems Dostoevsky* 53). He acknowledges that *polyphony*, the simultaneous existence of multiple voices in relationship to the unfinalizability of the Self, plays a major role in the development of the individual identity (17). The occurrence of polyphony within a linguistic code or literary work fosters *heteroglossia*: “...the base condition governing the operation of meaning in an utterance” (“Discourse in the Novel” 580). Furthermore, the *utterance* is a result of the hybridity and dialogic nature of language, and “to make an utterance” is defined as “...appropriate the words of others and populate them with one’s own intention” (582). The manifestation of different voices within a single work can both enhance and hinder meaning.

When different voices are opposed to one another, the voices will compete to try to usurp power over one another. In *The Dialogic Imagination*, Bakhtin defines the relationship between heteroglossia and literary authority: “It serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intentions of the character...and the refracted intentions of the author” (324). The often conflicting interaction among voices is known as the *carnavalesque*. The interaction is often a challenge against any monologic hegemony exerted on the text. Bakhtin argues that the authoritative discourse “demands our unconditional allegiance,” but he also acknowledges the role of internally persuasive discourse in subverting the authoritative discourse. Internally persuasive discourse recognizes the necessity of dialogue, as well as the impossibility of any word ever having a permanent meaning (345).

The presence of in-text publications throughout *Lolita* creates voices that distort the meaning intended by Humbert. The cohabitation of opposing voices and the authorial fragmentation of Humbert’s influence over the text signify that the epistolary novel is composed entirely out of hybrid utterances. Consequently, textual publications become manifestations of internally persuasive discourse that challenges Humbert’s literary hegemony and shape the novel’s rhetoric in the process.

The emergence of the opposing forms of discourse becomes evident during the first road trip taken by Humbert

and his underage love-interest Dolores. During this trip, Humbert realizes Dolores' infatuation with billboards—an infatuation that comes to control Humbert's life. He notes, "She it was to whom ads were dedicated: the ideal consumer, the subject and object of every foul poster" (Nabokov 148). The opposing voices in the posters not only influence literary characters, they also influence the reader. Humbert's remark echoes the insecurities of a speaker using a would-be authoritative discourse. Intertextual manifestations are geared towards the "ideal consumer," or in this case, the ideal reader. Such manifestations allow for Dolores to remain independent of Humbert's influence and for the reader to embrace a narrative that is free from an authoritative discourse.

Humbert's discourse is dialogic and susceptible to hybrid utterances. For example, a narrative clash ensues after the literary work produced by Humbert is assaulted by his wife, Charlotte Haze. When Charlotte breaks into Humbert's chest and raids his letters and diary, she is shocked to find out about his obsession over her daughter. As a result of the shock, Haze vehemently attacks Humbert's literary voice. She berates Humbert and, at the same time, defends her own voice when saying, "I ignore the particular...I cannot ignore the general...*I have a small but distinct voice*"<sup>1</sup> (91). The fallout caused by a marginalized voice challenging the authoritative discourse results in narrative dissonance. After Haze dies from being hit by a car, Humbert goes through a variety of narrative modes: "*He*<sup>2</sup> staggered a bit, that he did;

but he opened his mouth only to impart such information or issue such directions as were strictly necessary...the sun was still blinding red when he was put to bed...for all I<sup>3</sup> know..." (98). Humbert proves he is self-aware of his multiple narrative points-of-view when he later admits, "Of course, such announcements made in the first person may sound ridiculous" (104). Humbert wants to transcend the role of narrator to become author, but these quotes expose the instability of Humbert's voice and thereby demonstrate the chaos caused by competing voices.

Other characters benefit from the juxtaposition caused by rhetorical fragmentation. For example, Dolores is so manipulative in the text that she is able to pit Humbert's discourse against the textual publications for her own gain. In the text Dolores is able to escape Humbert by running off with Humbert's doppelganger, Clare Quilty, a somewhat successful playwright whose actions against Humbert are also attempts at subverting Humbert's authoritative discourse. It is fitting that Quilty is a playwright because he is able to use his command of linguistics to take over Humbert's narrative. Quilty steals Dolores just as his play steals meaning and importance from Humbert's text.

Quilty's form of textual discourse, *The Enchanted Hunter*, makes its first appearance as a school production that captures the interest of Dolores. The play then begins to manifest itself throughout the text, slowly influencing Humbert's internally persuasive discourse. For example, one of the inns where Humbert and Dolores stay is called The

Enchanted Hunter. On another occasion Humbert sees a painting in a hotel depicting the opening scene of the play. Such allusions are significant because by forcing Humbert to acknowledge their existence within his own narrative, the opposing voices demonstrate how even a conventionally authoritative discourse can be weakened and subverted by competing forms of dialogue.

The existence of other literary voices within the text weakens Humbert's voice and causes him to break the fourth wall in order to plead with the reader to acknowledge his voice as being the sole form of discourse. He begs, "Imagine me; I shall not exist if you do not imagine me" (129). The concurrent existence of Humbert's pedophilically motivated discourse and the orderly, pragmatic discourse of the textual publication creates a carnivalesque reaction in the novel as a whole. Due to this carnivalesque nature, the issue of authorship arises.

The only way to resolve the dissonance created by heteroglossia is to acknowledge that the authoritative discourse, if it does exist, is constantly being subverted dialogically. Unification of the text results from a stalemate between pedophilic and textual discourse, and accordingly neither are able to dominate within the text. More importantly from a rhetorical aspect, the competing voices distract the reader from any potential manifestation of polemic rhetoric that may be imposed upon the reader. Nabokov's ideology is disguised by dividing his rhetoric into separate voices that dialogically engage the reader. Dialogic

rhetoric affects the reader more strongly as it creates the façade that any rhetorical revelation fostered by the reader is the reader's own doing,<sup>4</sup> as opposed to being the product of Nabokov's subtle puppeteering.<sup>5</sup>

### **Worthless, Wordless Words: Rhetorical Deconstruction**

While Humbert's voice may be subverted and marginalized, he is still conventionally understood as the author of the epistolary narrative. Additionally, through Humbert's writing, Dolores is conventionally objectified as a passive entity. Her discourse is present in the text only at Humbert's discretion. Therefore, Dolores's literary existence is contingent on how Humbert consciously chooses to manipulate and present her through his writing. However, Dolores also proves she is able to infiltrate and manipulate Humbert's discourse, thereby allowing Dolores to become the true narrator of the epistolary narrative. The power shift deconstructs the presence of a hegemonic, polemic voice within the novel while forcing the reader to possess a level of "methodological quizzicality"<sup>6</sup> toward the language expressed. Allowing a work to be susceptible to deconstruction can actually benefit the author's rhetoric by forcing the reader to invest more time than usual in the text in order to reconstruct meaning.<sup>7</sup>

Dolores's conventional objectification as a commodity to Humbert in his solipsistic narrative diminishes her literary sovereignty and discourse. At the beginning of the epistolary narrative, Humbert defends his portrayal of Dolores: "Did she have a precursor? She did, indeed she

did. In point of fact, there might have been no Lolita at all had I not loved, one summer, a certain initial girl-child” (9). Humbert fails to view her as an autonomous being. Instead, Humbert sees her in relation to Annabel Leigh: his original nymphet.

This association influences how Humbert treats Dolores in his writing. He removes her from her past and constructs her into an objectified entity. She is no longer Dolores; she is now “Lolita, light of my life, fire of my loins. My sin, my soul...She was Dolly at school. She was Dolores on the dotted line. But in my arms she was always Lolita” (9). Lolita is dependent on Humbert’s authoritative portrayal of her in the text. She is born and cultivated through Humbert’s writing. He further states, “What I had madly possessed as not she, but my own creation...having no consciousness—indeed, no life of her own” (62). Humbert’s adoption of Dolores after Charlotte’s death would thus be seen as Humbert becoming Lolita’s literal patriarch to complement his role as her literary patriarch.

Nevertheless, Lolita proves time and again that she is not Lolita. She is Dolores Haze. An insurrection occurs within the text as Dolores frees herself from Humbert’s objectification by infiltrating the source of Humbert’s power: his discourse. Dolores is so manipulative in the text that Humbert’s actions are as much hers as they are his own. For example, Dolores uses textual publications to dictate the movement for both of them on their road trips as Humbert claims, “We had dug out our tour books and maps. She had

traced our route with immense zest” (208). Also, Humbert subconsciously expresses Dolores’ manipulation of him early on in the text when he claims, “You can always count on a murderer for a fancy prose style” (9). Humbert believes that his role in the murder of Quilty is the main influence on his prose.

However, Dolores is just as much to blame for the playwright’s death. After years of isolating herself from Humbert, Dolores one day reveals her whereabouts in a letter. She lets herself be found in order to manipulate Humbert into providing her and her new husband with money. During a heated confrontation, the now visibly distraught Humbert demands to know the name of Dolores’s other pedophilic lover. After some hesitation Dolores “...softly, confidentially, arching her thin eyebrows and puckering her parched lips, ... emitted, a little mockingly, somewhat fastidiously, not untenderly, in a kind of muted whistle, the name that the astute reader had guessed long ago” (271). She demonstrates her proficiency at influencing Humbert’s actions through the employment of all three major facets that govern rhetoric: *ethos*<sup>8</sup> *logos*<sup>9</sup> and *pathos*<sup>10</sup>. She knew she was sentencing Quilty to death when she revealed his name to Humbert, and thus Dolores serves as the influential precursor to Humbert’s “murderous prose style.”

Dolores exhibits her literary autonomy by circumventing the literary bondage that Humbert and the teachers at Beardsley School for Girls attempted to impose on her. Headmistress Pratt described the school’s ideology

thusly, “We are not so much concerned...with having our students become bookworms...We are more interested in communication than in composition...rather than plunge into musty old books” (177). The school attempts to silence her textual influence on Humbert, but she is able to liberate herself from such dialogic paralysis. Ironically, Humbert’s attempt to silence her through the school actually allows her to achieve literary freedom. It is at this school that Dolores first meets the playwright, Quilty. His play becomes so influential that it bleeds into Humbert’s discourse, signifying Dolores’s liberation from his authoritative voice.

It bears mentioning that because he is the fictional editor of the epistolary narrative, Ray Jr. is therefore conventionally viewed as having significant literary power over the text. He alone decides how the final product of the narrative is related to the reader. However, Dolores proves that she can subvert the editor’s power as well. During the editing process, Ray admits that “...a few tenacious details... still subsisted in his text as signposts and tombstones” (3). These “tenacious details” are the result of the literary dissonance resulting from Dolores’s attempts to destabilize Humbert’s narrative. Ray cannot completely remove these manifestations without disrupting the meaning of the text. He goes on to state that “...her name is too closely interwound with the inmost fiber of the book to allow one to alter it” (4). Dolores cannot be removed from the text because she *is* the text. The battle for rhetorical supremacy is waged between the competing voices of Humbert and

Dolores, causing Ray to note that “[the text] is a tempest in a test tube” (5). However, Dolores proves to possess untamable discourse that takes over the narrative. She may not be the literary precursor to Humbert’s work, but her voice overwhelms and manipulates any of Humbert’s attempts to break away into his own free discourse.

Dolores’s influence over Humbert’s discourse through the textual publication, in addition to the editor’s role in its construction, effectively cripples Humbert’s work to the extent of making Humbert voiceless at times. By demonstrating that there is a simultaneous coexistence of Dolores and Humbert’s dialogue in the narrative, the text is no longer reliable. The unreliability present in the text means that any meaning conveyed is not absolute, and thus the narrative is contaminated by a hybrid fusion of discourse with rhetoric open to interpretation by the reader.<sup>11</sup>

### **Sex, Script, and Self-Realization: Jungian Psychoanalysis Related to Rhetoric**

Book III of Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* focuses on the relationship of writing style with rhetoric. Notably, Aristotle asserts the metaphor is a psychological tool that enhances rhetoric by allowing fresh and different ideas to be more graspable by enabling visualization in the reader.<sup>12</sup> When used properly, the metaphor can be paramount to the employment of discursive rhetoric. The textual publication not only subverts Humbert’s authority but also comes to metaphorically signify the culmination of his very existence. Humbert is a pristine example of Carl Jung’s theory regarding

the analytic, psychological process of the individual unconscious towards self-realization (7). Humbert's process of individuation<sup>13</sup> requires him to go through a series of psychological stages—persona, ego, anima, shadow, self, transcendence—on his way towards garnering textual autonomy. He encounters various manifestations of the textual publication serving as a metaphor for each level of his consciousness towards self-realization.

The first stage in the process of total self-realization is the individual's recognition of the persona: a pseudo-form of the Self resulting from the individual compromising the personal view of one's Self with the social expectations that the community imposes on the individual (591). Humbert's true pedophilic nature is consciously hidden by Humbert away from the societies he inhabits. In order to properly conceal his identity, he often rejects his true nature and repeatedly attempts to rationalize his character. For example, Humbert tries to manipulate his persona so that it is perceived by others as respectable and intelligent: "My studies were meticulous and intense...I discussed Soviet movies with expatriates. I sat with uranists in the Deux Magots. I published tortuous essays in obscure journals" (Nabokov 16). Humbert wishes to appear to be refined and acculturated so as to better conceal any pedophilic tendencies that may be visible to others around him. He manipulates publications—"tortuous essays in obscure journals"—into tools used to shape his identity.

Humbert also exemplifies his persona through the

written medium. Throughout the novel he conveys a sense of self-awareness towards the fact that he is writing as a patient in a psychiatric hospital. He often has to craft his words in a way that is agreeable to the asylum staff members who read his work. In one instance Humbert writes, "...if you can still stand my style (*I am writing under observation*), the sun of my infancy had set..." (10). He is incapable of writing truthfully for fear of being punished by his captors and must therefore engage in his persona even when writing. Society's perception of Humbert is dependent on how he manipulates his persona through the use of texts.

Humbert embraces his ego<sup>14</sup> as well in the text.

While his writing at times exemplifies his persona, the textual publication also serves as a manifestation of his true being. At the beginning of the work, Humbert demonstrates an awareness of his murderous, pedophilic nature when he attempts to persuade the reader into looking past his ego. Humbert pleads, "Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, exhibit number one is what the seraphs, the misinformed, simple, noble-winged seraphs, envied. Look at this tangle of thorns" (9). The juxtaposition between Humbert's persona and ego—his "tangle of thorns"—is presented accordingly in his writing.

Furthermore, this tension can have drastic consequences on the novel when the persona and ego noticeably clash. For example, the textual publication is also used as a point of convergence for Humbert's persona and ego. Charlotte, in wholeheartedly accepting Humbert's

persona, at one point provides him with a love letter. Charlotte acknowledges the power of text in her letter: “Now, my dearest...you have read this; now you know... if after reading my ‘confession’ you decided...to take advantage of my letter...you would be a criminal” (67). Her message conveys how the textual publication can be “take[n] advantage of” and used as a weapon. Charlotte also demonstrates her acceptance of Humbert’s persona: “I know how reserved you are, how ‘British.’ Your old-world reticence, your sense of decorum may be shocked by the boldness of an American girl!” (68). The letter defends the idea that Charlotte is completely unaware of Humbert’s pedophilic ego because she has accepted his English scholar persona.

However, while the textual publication can strengthen Humbert’s persona, it can also weaken it. The journal entries Humbert stores in his trunk, referred by him as his “locked up love letters,” eventually reveal his true character to Charlotte (92). When Charlotte reads Humbert’s most protected secrets, she addresses his ego by stating, “You’re a monster. You’re a detestable, abominable, criminal fraud” (96). Humbert further empowers the textual publication by linking it to Charlotte’s death when he later notes, “...that journal...blinded Charlotte in her dash to the mailbox...to her fate” (103). The textual publication both enhances and reduces his identity.

Another way the textual publication plays a significant role in shaping Humbert’s existence is through the publication’s relationship with his anima: Dolores. She serves

as a manifestation of the female consciousness in Humbert's writing (Jung 524). Dolores is treated by Humbert as more of a muse than a physical entity. In an instance of awareness towards the audience of his work, Humbert reaffirms this textual objectification by claiming, "The reader knows what importance I attached to having a bevy of page girls" (Nabokov 190). The phrase "page girls" expresses Humbert's desire to objectify women through the textual medium. Consequently, his anima is therefore also present in the text. The conflict between Humbert's masculine voice and his anima forces him to acknowledge the finiteness of his own existence, as illustrated in his plea, "Oh, my Lolita, I have only words to play with!" (32).

The in-text publication also gives Quilty, Humbert's shadow,<sup>15</sup> a major role within *Lolita*. Quilty, also being a writer with pedophilic urges, is the perfect example of a shadow because Humbert bitterly hates Quilty despite sharing similar characteristics with him. Through his play, Quilty is able to challenge Humbert's authority in the novel. Humbert describes the play: "...I did not bother to read the complete text of *The Enchanted Hunters*...it seemed to be a pretty dismal kind of fancy work" (200-201). Despite his criticism of the play, *The Enchanted Hunters* continues to usurp Humbert's authority throughout the text. The love triangle between Dolores, Humbert, and Quilty is a parody of the love conflict between the group of hunters and Dolly Dell in *The Enchanted Hunters*. The in-text publication allows Humbert's shadow to be able to challenge Humbert's

authority.

The psychological relationship between Humbert and the textual publication ultimately reveals how Humbert's existence is contingent on texts; it is only through these publications that he is able to experience self-realization. Through his diary entries, Humbert is able to fuse the different voices into a cohesive discourse that exemplifies his fully realized Self. Additionally, the textual publications afford Humbert transcendence. If the diary entries represent Humbert's Self, then the entries as a published work within *Lolita* allow Humbert to exceed the confines of his Self. Publishing the diary entries allows Humbert to experience having a readership, affording him the opportunity to have his ideas be embraced by others. This transcendence serves as a metaphor for the reader's embrace of Nabokov's rhetoric. While Humbert reaches individuation by unifying the different voices within him, Nabokov's rhetorical individuation is the result of the reader and author unifying the authoritative fragmentation created within the text in order for Nabokov's rhetoric to be better accepted by the reader.

### **Might of the Pen: A Rhetorical Feminist Analysis**

The novel poses gender implications as well. The competing voices within *Lolita* are also subjected to the patriarchal hegemony dominant in Humbert's phallogocentric narrative. The phallic symbol of Humbert's writing pen becomes a surrogate for his masculine authority. In adopting

a gynocritic approach, rhetorical fragmentation also results from the conflict created between the female voices encompassed under the textual publication<sup>16</sup> attempting to usurp the dominance of Humbert's masculine discourse.<sup>17</sup>

As a writer, Humbert is able to penetrate and manipulate the textual publication with his pen. If the pen is phallic, then the textual publication is a yonic symbol as it is on the receiving end and impregnated with the rhetoric of the pen. The textual publication is the womb to the textual knowledge nurtured within, and accordingly the physical binding of the textual publication would be the legs protecting the textual publication from penetration. Humbert can open the legs and penetrate the womb of his own diary entries, but his inability to impregnate the textual publications around him forces him to succumb to a state of literary flaccidness. Humbert possesses the phallic symbol of male generative power, but his incapability in using it prevents him from becoming the "ultimate man" (Lacan 1151).

While Humbert is able to gratify his masculine desire for dominance by penetrating the legs of women, he cannot penetrate the legs protecting the literary womb of rhetoric he so desperately desires. For example, Humbert describes one of his first sexual explorations of Dolores: "My hand swept over her agile giggling legs, and the book like a sleigh left my lap...Mrs. Haze strolled by and said, 'Just slap her if she interferes with your scholarly meditations'" (Nabokov 55). As is depicted in this scene wherein the book

falls off his lap, Humbert is able to feel Dolores' legs at the expense of rejecting the knowledge of the textual publication. The publication's ability to remain autonomous and unpenetrated subverts Humbert's masculine authority.

Another incident of Humbert's literary flaccidness occurs during his failed seduction of Dolores in a hotel room. Humbert describes the incident: "...Lolita would be haphazardly preparing her homework, sucking a pencil... in an easy chair with both legs over its arm, I would shed all pedagogic restraint...forget all my masculine pride—and literally crawl on my knees to your chair...`Pulease, leave me alone, will you,' you would say...And I would get up from the floor...I am only a brute" (192-193). Humbert not only rejects the womb of knowledge by "shed[ing] all pedagogic restraint" but also sexually objectifies knowledge through his perception of Dolores "sucking a pencil." He relates the pencil to a phallus and attempts to penetrate Dolores in order to compensate for his inability to penetrate the textual publication. But just as a closed book can stop the penetration of a pen, Dolores prevents herself from being penetrated by closing her legs. Her defiance allows her to possess her own rhetorical phallus.

Dolores' rejection of Humbert and Quilty not only embodies her feminine sovereignty but also represents the textual publication remaining pure from the writers' penetration. For example, Humbert loses Dolores due to his capitulation to the texts: "...I signed the very symbolic receipt, thus surrendering my Lolita to all those apes" (247). Similarly, Quilty loses Dolores due to his inability to

penetrate and impregnate her with his rhetoric. He describes losing Dolores: “I am a playwright. I have written tragedies, comedies, fantasies...I know all the ropes...I made a mistake [with Dolores]...I am practically impotent” (298). Despite Humbert and Quilty’s literary power in the novel, they are unable to keep Dolores due to their literary flaccidness caused by their inability to rhetorically penetrate the in-text publications she uses as safeguards against them.

### **Conclusion**

Rhetorical fragmentation, while unconventional, can be a powerful technique in persuading the reader into accepting the author’s ideology. While opposing voices can at times harm the clarity of a work’s rhetoric, they can also entice the reader if done properly. Nabokov’s subtle, yet powerful manipulation of in-text publications allows characters such as Dolores and Quilty to defy what is conventionally recognized as the unchallenged polemic of Humbert’s narration. Nabokov may surrender his text to Humbert, but rhetorical fragmentation is Nabokov’s way of assuring the reader to invest faith in a text governed by unreliable narration. An element of subjectivity will always exist in rhetorical fragmentation, yet this is not necessarily a bad thing.

Bakhtin argues that subjective consciousness is inevitable in literature and must therefore be embraced: “consciousness finds itself inevitably facing the necessity of having to choose a language. With each literary-verbal performance, consciousness must actively orient itself amidst

heteroglossia, it must move in and occupy a position for itself within... a language” (295). Heteroglossia within the text is the product of society’s “socio-linguistic consciousness” (360). In building off this theory, Joe Bray argues in *The Epistolary Novel: Representations of Consciousness* that instead of attempting to resolve the narrative dissonance, the competing voices should be treasured because “[t]he loss of epic authority produces, in the hands of the great novelists, a dazzlingly open-ended variety of languages and voices” (4).

The voices fostered within a text when authority is fragmented are instrumental toward alleviating skepticism and garnering a higher level of intellectual investment from the reader where a single voice falls short. Despite the lack of narrative harmony caused by rhetorical fragmentation, the textual publications that Nabokov speaks through affect the reader more than a single authoritative voice ever could. As Roland Barthes would argue, “[t]o give a text an author is to impose a limit on that text” (Barthes 876). Rhetorical fragmentation is infringing, messy, and rebellious—a surefire device for preventing an author’s rhetoric from being perceived as prosaic banality to the savvy, self-aware reader of the twenty-first century.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Italicized for emphasis.

<sup>2</sup>Italicized to emphasize third-person perspective.

<sup>3</sup>Italicized to emphasize first-person perspective.

<sup>4</sup>A satisfying experience for any reader, one that makes the reader much more receptive to embracing the author's rhetoric.

<sup>5</sup>A concept that is akin to Bakhtin's theory of hidden dialogicality: marginalized subtle discourse can leave deep traces that influence the meaning of the present and visible words of the primary voice (*Problems Dostoevsky* 197).

<sup>6</sup>A term coined by Kenneth Burke in his work *A Grammar of Motives* to signify the dubiety a reader feels when conscious of being subjected to persuasion (441). Methodological quizzicality can influence the reader into ceasing focus on rhetoric's practical agenda, allowing the reader better to appreciate the resourcefulness of language.

<sup>7</sup>If the author sets up the text properly, the meaning reconstructed by the reader will retain elements of the author's intended rhetoric. This notion functions similarly to hidden dialogicality incorporated into dialogic rhetoric.

<sup>8</sup> "not untenderly."

<sup>9</sup> "fastidiously."

<sup>10</sup> "mockingly."

<sup>11</sup>Recall the concept of hidden dialogicality.

<sup>12</sup>William Jordan elaborates on this by suggesting that the metaphor possesses "semantic and structural characteristics which affect reader and listener" (237).

<sup>13</sup>The process by which differentiated components of the psyche become integrated into a stable whole (Jung 1).

<sup>14</sup>The second stage towards individuation, which is the individual's self-perceived identity (Jung 540).

<sup>15</sup>The shadow encompasses components of the individual's personality that are not consciously recognized as being part of the ego. The shadow must be integrated into the ego in order for individuation to be successful (Jung 205).

<sup>16</sup>Recall how the textual publication was shown earlier to be wielded by Dolores in order to promote her own discourse.

<sup>17</sup>Diane Miller laid out a similar notion; she argues that a rereading of traditional discourse is necessary in order to tease out "structures of gender that relegate some meanings to marginal status while elevating others to high visibility and positions of importance" (368).

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