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The Mystery of Vladimir Nabokov's Sources: Some New Ideas on *Lolita's* Intertextual Links

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Vladimir Nabokov's novel *Lolita* has been extensively analyzed. Despite the amount of critical attention devoted to it, however, *Lolita* remains one of those works that still provoke textual surprises. No matter how often the professional reader has studied it or how attentive he may have been, he is bound to generate new ideas and find some new textual mysteries there. This includes the mystery of Nabokov's sources. In his introduction to the English translation of *The Gift*, Nabokov states that the novel's protagonist is not Zina, but Russian literature. Following the author's lead, it is reasonable to claim that the protagonist of *Lolita* is neither the narrator Humbert Humbert, nor the nymphet, but world literature as a whole. No wonder that many mysteries of Vladimir Nabokov's sources remain to be solved. This article may be considered as an attempt to go somewhat further in tracing another possible source of *Lolita*.

It is well known that *Lolita* is an extremely complicated text containing numerous cases of wordplay, literary allusions, parodies and cross references. Naïve readers may erroneously regard it as an erotic best-seller, less naïve readers may treat it as a parody of erotic literature, but competent readers are bound to appreciate it as an elaborate, ludic text that invites them to decipher it. A well-known Nabokovian, Alfred Appel, Jr., has justly stated: "As with Joyce and Melville, the reader of *Lolita* attempts to arrive at some sense of its overall 'meaning,' while at the same time having to struggle with the difficulties posed by the recondite materials and rich elaborate verbal textures" (xi). In publishing *The Annotated Lolita* in 1970 (rev. ed. 1991), A. Appel Jr. provided all Nabokov scholars with a sort of manual to the novel.

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As he states, "[t]he main purpose of this edition is to solve [various] local problems and to show how they contribute to the total design of the novel" (xi).

Although *The Annotated Lolita* has helped to explain many mysteries of the text, it is by no means comprehensive, especially when it comes to the question of Nabokov's sources. In addition to Appel's findings, some of them have been identified by Carl Proffer, Alexander Dolinin et al.; still others remain unclear.

Important evidence testifying to the fact that it is too early for Nabokovians to treat the problem of *Lolita*'s intertextual links as settled is the recent discussion about the origin of Nabokov's nymphet's name Lolita which was started by Michael Maar's publications in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* in March 2004.

The nymphet's name is introduced in the very first lines of the novel:

> Lolita, light of my life, fire of my loins. My sin, my soul. Lo-li-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.
>
> She was Lo, plain Lo, in the morning, standing four feet ten in one sock. She was Lola in slacks. She was Dolly at school. She was Dolores on the dotted line. But in my arms she was always Lolita.
>
> Did she have a precursor? She did, indeed she did.

The most evident precursor is hinted at in the next lines:

> In point of fact, there might have been no Lolita at all had I not loved, one summer, a certain initial girl-child. *In a princedom by the sea*. (9; my emphasis)

It is clear that Nabokov alludes to "Annabel Lee" by Edgar Allan Poe:

> It was many and many a year ago,
> *In a kingdom by the sea*,
> That a maiden there lived whom you may know
> By the name of Annabel Lee. (957; my emphasis)

Numerous intertextual references in Nabokov's *Lolita* to Poe and his ballad have been singled out and long since commented on. In the

Playboy interview (later reprinted in *Strong Opinions)*, when asked how Lolita's name occurred to him, Nabokov replied:

> For my nymphet I needed a diminutive with a lyrical lilt to it. One of the most limpid and luminous letters is "L". The suffix "-ita" has a lot of Latin tenderness, and this I required too. Hence: Lolita. However, it should not be pronounced as […] most Americans pronounce it: Low-lee-ta, with a heavy, clammy "L" and a long "o". No, the first syllable should be as in "lollipop", the "L" liquid and delicate, the "lee" not too sharp. Spaniards and Italians pronounce it, of course, with exactly the necessary note of archness and caress. Another consideration was the welcome murmur of its source name, the fountain name: those roses and tears in "Dolores". My little girl's heart-rendering fate had to be taken into account together with the cuteness and limpidity. Dolores also provided her with another plainer, more familiar and infantile diminutive: Dolly, which went nicely with the surname "Haze", where Irish mists blend with a German bunny—I mean a small German hare [i.e. = *Hase*]. (25)

Of relevance here is that Nabokov indicates the link of Lolita's name with the "source name" Dolores, but does not comment on the origin of both. We are led to assume that their appearance in Nabokov's masterpiece is due to chance only.

In Appel's "Notes" we find some ideas concerning the diminutive "Lola" and the source name "Dolores." About "*Lola*" he writes: "in addition to being a diminutive of 'Dolores,' it is the name of the young cabaret entertainer who enchants the middle-aged professor in the German film, *The Blue Angel* (1930), directed by Josef von Sternberg" (332). Appel quotes Nabokov as saying that he never saw the film and doubted that he had the association in mind. But the critic fails to mention that Nabokov always denied the knowledge of books, films and authors he or his works were compared with. He also fails to mention the fact that von Sternberg's film is based on Heinrich Mann's novel *Professor Unrat*. But it is significant that Appel points out the fact that Marlene Dietrich, who played the role of Lola, is mentioned in the novel; i.e. Lolita's mother is described by Humbert Humbert as having "features of a type that may be defined as a weak solution of Marlene Dietrich" (37).

An explanation of Lolita's full name "*Dolores*" is proposed by Appel as well. He states: "*Dolores*: derived from the Latin, *dolor*; sorrow, pain […]. Traditionally an allusion to the Virgin Mary, Our Lady of Sorrows, and the Seven Sorrows concerning the life of Jesus." The critic adds that "H. H. observes a church, 'Mission Dolores,' and takes advantage of the ready-made pun; 'good title for book'" (332). Appel refers to Carl Proffer's *Keys to Lolita* where a poem by Swinburne is named as the original source of the character's name. "Lo [Proffer writes] has some actual namesakes among the demonic ladies of literature too. The most important literary echo of her real name, Dolores Haze, is from Algernon Swinburne's 'Dolores'—subtitled *Notre-Dame des Sept Douleurs*: thereby paralleling Humbert's various puns on Dolores (dolorous darling, dumps and dolors, *adolori*, etc.)" (28-29). While Proffer's and Appel's findings have helped to shape the reader's understanding of the intertextual links with dozens of preceding texts within *Lolita*, Michael Maar has shown that *Lolita* is one of those novels that will not stop supplying us with textual surprises. The first of Maar's publications in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* explaining the origin of the title name and some plot elements of the novel was the article "Was wusste Nabokov?" ["What did Nabokov know?"] published on March 19, 2004. Its message sounds like this: there is a story entitled "Lolita" by the minor German writer and journalist Heinz von Lichberg, which was published in 1916 in his collection of short stories *Die verfluchte Gioconda*. This collection has never been reissued and is extremely rare now. Not only does the sexually attractive girl child in both texts possess the same name, but Lichberg's story is in some respects close to Nabokov's masterpiece. Maar compares the plot elements and insists on their similarity. The results of the critic's research appeared in *The Times Literary Supplement* as well and produced a minor sensation among prominent Nabokovians. A week later, on March 26, 2004, there appeared another article by the same critic, "Der Mann, der 'Lolita' erfand" ["The man who invented 'Lolita'"], which contained more detailed informa-

tion about von Lichberg's life story. A day later, on March 27, *F.A.Z.* reprinted von Lichberg's "Lolita."

And finally, on April 29, 2004 the same paper published one more polemical piece by Michael Maar, "Lolitas spanische Freundin: Noch einmal zu Nabokov" ["Lolita's Spanish Friend: Nabokov Once More"], where he answered those sceptics who doubted the validity of his hypothesis and made an attempt to formulate it with greater accuracy. Eight main coincidences between Nabokov's novel and von Lichberg's *Lolita* are stated there:

1. In both of them the characters have the same name which is used as the title.
2. The girl in both cases is an adolescent (Lichberg characterizes her as "blutjung").
3. She is a daughter of the landlord (in Lichberg's short story) and of the landlady (in Nabokov's novel) whose house is located by the seaside (in the first case) or near a lake (in the second one).
4. In both cases the girl child seduces the narrator, and he falls in love with her finally.
5. Both Lichberg's and Nabokov's Lolitas die by the end of the narration, and the theme of the enchanted past becomes dominant.
6. There is a grotesque murder scene in the final part of each text.
7. Nabokov's Lolita dies in childbirth, and in Lichberg's short story Lolita's mother Lola is killed after the heroine is born; by the end of Lichberg's story we witness the girl child's mysterious death.
8. The narrators of both texts are left heartbroken, but the tragic loss of their love objects makes them true poets.[1]

Michael Maar is right in saying that these are classical plot elements. What is important, according to him, is not each concrete case of coincidence, but the combination of so many coincidences.

There are also some other features of the two texts that support Maar's ideas. Both texts contain noticeable fairy tale elements (in Lichberg's case reminiscent of Hoffmann, in Nabokov's case of com-

posite origin). In both cases, the action is dreamlike, and its reality may be questioned. Lichberg's Lolita is presented as no less demonic than Nabokov's nymphet. The Walzer twins in Lichberg's *Lolita* are reminiscent of Nabokov's play *The Waltz Invention* (Waltz being the protagonist's name).

Maar's discovery was positively received by the German press. The majority of those who reproduced his arguments and commented upon them sounded convinced that Nabokov must have come across von Lichberg's story and that it should be regarded as one of his secret and masked sources. A very characteristic conclusion is drawn by Thomas Steinfeld in his article "Watson, übernehmen Sie! Vladimir Nabokov, Michael Maar und die doppelte Lolita" ["Watson, Take Over! Vladimir Nabokov, Michael Maar, and the Two Lolitas"], published in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, who insists: "Es ist schlicht wahrscheinlich, dass Vladimir Nabokov die Erzählung 'Die Verfluchte Gioconda' von Heinz von Lichberg im Berliner Exil gelesen hatte—falls es nicht andere, noch unbekannte Dinge gibt, die diese Parallelen irgendwo, an anderer, womöglich noch entlegenerer Stelle zusammenführen."[2]

Despite this positive reception, Maar's version has also been strongly criticized by some members of the Nabokov community. Most of their objections have been collected and summarized in Germany by Dieter E. Zimmer whose role in promoting Nabokov studies in this country is undeniable. Zimmer's arguments (they may be found in the Internet Nabokov Forum *Nabokov-L)* follow two principle lines. In the first place, he finds it most unlikely that Nabokov would have come across Lichberg's *Lolita*. Secondly, he insists that the differences between the texts are much more significant than the similarities, although the arguments cited earlier seem to weaken this objection.

Along with Zimmer many other renowned members of the Nabokov Society were also dismissive of Mr. Maar's find, including Alexander Dolinin. In his message for the Nabokov Internet forum (*Nabokov-L*) he calls Maar's case "shaky" and puts forward the opinion

that "what Mr. Maar should have done is to have written a two-page note for *The Nabokovian*, presenting his minor discovery as an addition to a rather long list of various Lolitas and Lolas that preceded Nabokov's novel, and to be satisfied with Nabokov scholars' congratulations."

The discussion of the relevance of Mr. Maar's discovery for Nabokov studies demonstrated the existence of a wide-spread misunderstanding of the problem. For neither plagiarism nor the comparison of the artistic merits of Nabokov's masterpiece with second-rate or even third-rate fiction is the point. What really matters is the artist's ability to transform mediocre literary material into a lexical and semantic magic carpet. To appreciate this phenomenon, an investigation of intertextual links that are not necessarily evident is required.

The same Alexander Dolinin, while criticizing Michael Maar in his *Nabokov-L* message, justly states: "As for the ways Nabokov's genius worked, I would be the last one to ignore his attention to third-, fourth- and fifth-rate literature." The critic quotes an earlier article of his own as follows:

> Nabokov was keenly interested not only in major, accepted authors he deemed unworthy of their reputation and strove to dethrone, but also in third-rate literature proper, without any pretensions to greatness in such popular, paraliterary or marginal genres as detective story, thriller, sensational novel, fantasy, humoristic writings and even soft pornography. Texts belonging to these genres usually have a very short life-span; after a while their individual characteristics are obliterated from the readers' memory; they merge with their peers, dissolving into an anonymous mass, not unlike folklore, of standard plots, situations, characters, stylistic clichés. It is from this anonymous mass of forgotten texts that Nabokov preferred to draw ideas for his works because a lucky catch in the sea of bad literature could be transformed beyond recognition and interwoven into a new context without participating in intertextual dialogue.

It is difficult to accept Dolinin's last point. The intertextual dialogue may remain undetected if we do not know the pretext used by the master. But this does not necessarily rule out a dialogue with such a "forgotten text." One of this article's aims is to indicate that there may

be many more instances of intertextual dialogue in the Nabokovian *Lolita* with little known texts of accepted authors as well.

Whereas Maar seems to have found a clue, explaining the origin of the nymphet's name Lolita, the origin of her full name *Dolores* remains unclear. The Swinburne version by Carl R. Proffer and Alfred Appel, while suggestive, seems at least incomplete. It may thus be presumed that some potentially interesting and important novelistic sources remain undetected. One such novel that may have stirred up Nabokov's imagination and influenced his choice of the character's full name Dolores and which has not yet been commented upon by scholars is H. G. Wells's *Apropos of Dolores* (1938). This novel is not a very well-known Wellsian text and is probably read only by some Wells scholars today. In fact, it has never been popular. Nevertheless, the temptation to look at it in a Nabokovian context is very strong.

There seem to be no references, no allusions to H. G. Wells in *Lolita*, but this fact should not discourage scholars. Nabokov is notorious for hiding those intertextual sources that are of crucial importance for his texts. Even more important is the fact that H. G. Wells was always among Nabokov's favourite British authors. One of H. G. Wells's novels is even placed on Sebastian Knight's bookshelf with the rest of his favorite fiction alongside *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Madame Bovary*, *Le Temps Retrouvé*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and *Ulysses* in *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* (35).

It is very instructive to turn to Brian Boyd's biography in search for data. Boyd mentions in *Vladimir Nabokov: The Russian Years* that in late January and early February 1914 H. G. Wells visited Russia and was invited to dinner at the Nabokovs'. Wells's translator Zinaida Vengerov was one of the guests, too. This meeting must have affected Nabokov greatly if for no other reason than that it led to intense interest in Wells the author. Boyd adds: "That winter Nabokov read avidly the Wells books in his father's library, and the future creator of *Ada*'s Antiterra would never lose his high esteem for Wells as a craftsman of romance" (178).

Speaking about the formation of Nabokov's literary tastes at the age of twelve, Boyd mentions that at that age he first read *Crime and Punishment* and thought it "a wonderfully powerful and exciting book." Boyd states that this is not the Nabokov we know, as he was later to disparage Dostoevsky's writing frequently. But more important is what follows: "But at about this time he also read H. G. Wells's *The Passionate Friends*." Asked at the age of seventy-seven to name a neglected masterpiece, he chose this book—which he had not read for more than six decades—and cited one detail. At a moment of deep distress the hero, just to do *something*, points out the white covers on the furniture, and explains casually to someone else: "'Because of the flies.' The poetry of the unsaid, the drama of the unsayable." Boyd comments: "What Nabokov did not recall is that this is the *only* intensely artistic detail in a book weighed down by sociological speculation of a kind that as an experienced reader he could not stomach" (91).

Boyd's judgment seems somewhat harsh—the more so as Nabokov's praise of Wells's novel dates from 1977, half a year before his death. It should be noted that *The Passionate Friends* is today no less rarely read than *Apropos of Dolores*. It is sensible to quote another well-known Nabokovian whose observations confirm Nabokov's reverence of H. G. Wells. Vladimir Alexandrov, while discussing the writer's attitude to mimicry in nature in his book *Nabokov's Otherworld*, mentions in a note Jonathan Sisson's Ph.D. thesis *Cosmic Syncronization and other Worlds in the Work of Vladimir Nabokov* (1979), which points out a resemblance between Nabokov's ideas about mimicry and "the apparent conflict between Darwinian natural selection and the sense of beauty" and the eponymous protagonist in Wells's novel *Ann Veronica: A Modern Love Story* (1909) (252-53). In another note Alexandrov adds that Sisson has analyzed suggestive parallels between Nabokov and H. G. Wells, "aspects of whose legacy Nabokov is known to have admired" (251).

As regards the relevance of H. G. Wells's *Apropos of Dolores* to Nabokov's *Lolita*, it may be observed that both novels are first-person

narrations. Steven Wilback, the narrator, presents a reconstruction of the complicated story of his marriage with the eccentric, quarrelsome and foolish Dolores. The seven chapters of the novel focus on the final crisis of their relationship and cover a two-month period—from August 2 till October 2, 1934. Chapter 3 contains a flashback, informing the reader about the circumstances of the narrator's acquaintance with the eponymous protagonist Dolores and the thirteen years of their married coexistence.

Of course, the search for traces of intertextual links must not obscure the fact that interrelated texts do not necessarily coincide in all their thematic, stylistic or other aspects. We must concede that Nabokov's *Lolita* and Wells's *Apropos of Dolores* are basically quite autonomous. Nonetheless, there are some elements of plot, narration and ideas in Wells's novel that are surprisingly similar to those in *Lolita* and may be regarded as proofs of Nabokov's acquaintance with it.

The following singles out the peculiarities of Wells's novel which support the hypothesis that it may have been one of the previously unknown sources of Nabokov's *Lolita*.

1. *The protagonist's name is* Dolores, *and it is used as the novel's title*. There seems to be no other English novel preceeding *Lolita*'s publication whose heroine is called Dolores. Taken separately, this fact does not prove anything. But when combined with the others it gains certain significance.

2. *Both novels are first-person narratives by writers who are creating a novel before the readers' eyes*. The novel about his relations with Dolores Haze (Lolita) is supposed to become Humbert Humbert's main artistic achievement. Nabokovians remember well Humbert's illuminating statement in the final chapter: "The following decision I make with all the legal impact and support of a signed testament: I wish this memoir to be published only when Lolita is no longer alive" (308-09). By this time the reader must have already grasped that Lolita is not alive any more.

The narrator in H. G. Wells's *Apropos of Dolores* is a publisher whose main interests are also predominantly literary. He is likewise writing

a memoir (or a diary) about his relations with Dolores, and this memoir is structured and characterized as a novel. Chapter 2 begins with the narrator's statement that he intends to change the style of this story because his views have changed. In the first paragraph of chapter 3 he recommends those readers who do not approve of the book in progress to choose another one or to try writing a text of their own. He insists that he is too preoccupied with his own emotions to consider the possible reactions of the reader. In the last section of chapter 4 the narrator informs us that he has stopped writing because of a dramatic change in the situation. Chapter 5 starts with a shocking piece of news: Dolores is dead. This statement is followed by a flashback reconstructing the scene which preceded her death. Her death is treated as a symbolic event within the novel's context; besides, it motivates the creative impulse influencing the narrator's decision to produce his text.

3. *The narration in both cases displays noticeable metafictional characteristics*. The narrators make digressions in order to comment upon their techniques and intentions.

4. *In both novels the initial impulse starting the marital crisis appears through the accusation that the husband seems to be involved in an incestuous love affair—either with his wife's daughter (*Lolita*) or his own daughter from a previous marriage (*Apropos of Dolores*)*. Charlotte learns about Humbert's infatuation after having read his diary (we learn this from Humbert's description of their dispute preceding Charlotte's death in a fatal accident), and Dolores in Wells's novel imagines the narrator to be in love with his daughter Letitia, tears her photograph to pieces and accuses her husband of incest in the course of their last dispute. Wells's Dolores is (from the typological point of view) akin to Nabokov's Charlotte (not Dolores Haze).

5. *The circumstances surrounding the revelation of secrets held by the narrators are strikingly similar*. Charlotte insists that Humbert should unlock the drawer where he keeps his diary. Humbert refuses, but takes additional precautions after his wife's departure.

> I checked the hiding place of the key: rather self-consciously it lay under the old expensive safety razor I had used before she bought me a much better and cheaper one. Was it a perfect hiding place—there, under that razor, in the groove of its velvet-lined case? […] Remarkable how difficult it is to conceal things—especially when one's wife keeps monkeying with the furniture. (93)

Later, Charlotte quotes his unsparing words from the diary: "The Haze woman […] the big bitch, the old cat, the obnoxious mama" etc. (95).

In *Apropos of Dolores*, the narrator, while working at his diary (section 20 of chapter 4), suddenly notices some changes on his desk. Something is evidently missing. It turns out to be his daughter Letitia's photograph. He also finds that it is torn in pieces. The narrator immediately realizes that Dolores, who could never understand why he spent so much time there, has searched his study. He finds it probable that Dolores may have seen the manuscript that he never left unlocked. He grimly suspects that his wife may have read his very unsparing judgments of her.

6. *The idea of killing the hateful wife is present in both texts*. Humbert imagines how he might get rid of Dolores Haze's mother in the waters of Hourglass Lake:

> I might come up for a mouthful of air while still holding her down and then would dive again as many times as would be necessary. And only when the curtain came down on her for good, would I permit myself to yell for help. And when some twenty minutes later the two puppets steadily growing arrived in a rowboat, one half newly painted, poor Mrs. Humbert Humbert, the victim of a cramp or coronary occlusion, or both, would be standing on her head in the inky ooze, some thirty feet below the smiling surface of Hourglass Lake. (87)

Somewhat later, preparing for Lolita's visit from school, Humbert experiments with sleeping pills in order to possess the means "of putting two creatures to sleep so thoroughly that neither sound nor touch should rouse them." He sums up the results of his efforts: "Throughout most of July I had been experimenting with various

sleeping powders, trying them out on Charlotte, a great taker of pills. The last dose I had given her […] had knocked her out for four solid hours" (94).

In Wells's novel, Dolores, after having rudely denounced her narrator husband, asks him to give her magical, marvelous sleeping pills—semondyl. The next morning her dead body is found. Analyzing his actions during their quarrel, the narrator cannot say for certain whether he really supplied Dolores with two pills only or helped her with the whole tube. It turns out that he has really had fantasies for a long time about getting rid of Dolores forever, though he is not sure whether his subconscious intentions have been realized. His suspicions are partly confirmed by the fact that he had woken up next morning confident that Dolores was no longer alive. Besides, he is positive of his wife's inability to commit suicide. On the other hand, the narrator admits his innate inability to invent circumstantial evidence against himself.

7. *The narration in both novels is mockingly presented as the hearings of a case in court*. Humbert regularly addresses the judge and the members of the jury, e.g.:

> Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, exhibit number one is what the seraphs, the misinformed, simple, noble-winged seraphs, envied. (9)

> Exhibit number two is a pocket diary bound in black imitation leather, with a golden year, 1947, *en escalier*, in its upper left-hand corner. (40)

> Gentlemen of the jury! I cannot swear that certain motions, pertaining to the business in hand—if I may coin an expression—had not drifted across my mind before. (69)

> […] and I wept. Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, I wept. (103)

> Gentlewomen of the jury! Bear with me! Allow me to take just a tiny bit of your precious time! (123)

> I did my best, your Honor, to tackle the problem of boys. (185)

In *Apropos of Dolores*, the narration is constantly presented as *a legal case of Steven Wilback versus Dolores***.** This idea is introduced in the initial lines of chapter 3. The narrator declares that Dolores has been concocting a real bill of indictment against him for some years (chapter 3, section 2). Later on he also tries to compile a bill of indictment against Dolores, but he finds it a technically difficult task, because the only witness he can find is he himself (chapter 3, section 6). The narrator is in turns Dolores's councilor, his own councilor and the judge (chapter 3, section 12). Chapter 5 begins with the narrator's confession that he is unable to finish the hearings in his case versus Dolores, the only reason being Dolores's death. And in the last paragraph of the novel he pleads that the court passes a mild sentence in his case versus Dolores, considering the fact that both sides are guilty.

8. *We witness the phenomenon of theatralization*. Both narrators comment upon the actions of the main characters as if they were actors, participating in a performance and playing specific roles.

* * *

Nabokov has always resisted the facile identification of "influences" in his writing. To a certain degree this is apt because he was too outstanding a writer just to imitate texts of his forerunners and contemporaries. Alfred Appel was right in pointing out that what Jorge Luis Borges says of Pierre Menard, author of *Quixote*, surely holds for Vladimir Nabokov, the author of *Lolita*: he "has enriched, by means of a new technique, the halting and rudimentary art of reading" (lxvii). Nevertheless, this magical novel is based on the intertextual play with certain literary sources that is subordinated to a consistent authorial strategy. Some of these sources are self-evident, some have been singled out and commented upon by Proffer, Appel and others.

But it should be stressed that in Nabokov's case (as in the case of the majority of other distinguished writers) we come across another category of sources as well. He may often have read or looked through either some ordinary texts by now forgotten minor writers or works which (although written by prominent literary figures) have not

become part of the canon, and these works may have given him important artistic impulses. The detection of such non-evident sources gives a scholar a valid ground for experiencing textual surprises. Michael Maar's findings concerning von Lichberg's *Lolita* are a recent example of the kind. A comparison of Nabokov's novel with H. G. Wells's *Apropos of Dolores* is another one, as it offers further surprising insights into the complex issue of Vladimir Nabokov's use of potential sources.

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NOTES

[1]Maar's argument has now been expanded and translated into English in *The Two Lolitas*.

[2]["It is quite probable that Vladimir Nabokov had read the story 'The Accursed Gioconda' by Heinz von Lichberg during his exile in Berlin—unless these parallels can be explained by other, more remote sources which have yet to be discovered."]

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